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U.S. AGENCY FOR
GLOBAL MEDIA

UNITED STATES
BROADCASTING
BOARD OF
GOVERNORS

330 Independence Avenue SW | Washington, DC 20237 | usagm.gov

Office of the General Counsel

March 10, 2020

RE: Request Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act – FOIA #20-001

This letter is in response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM) dated October 21, 2019, which the Agency received on the same day. In your request, you asked for the following --

“A copy of the Monthly Reports to the Agency (or its predecessor BBG) from IBB, VOA and RFE/RL during the time period of July 1, 2017 to date.”

The Agency has completed its search for and review of the records responsive to your request. Copies of nonexempt records are enclosed. We redacted signatures under FOIA Exemption (b)(6) (protecting information, the release of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy). We did not withhold any other information or records responsive to your request. The Agency is waiving all fees for this request and the enclosed records are provided to you at no charge.

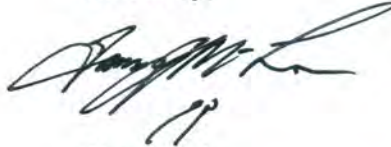
This concludes the Agency’s response to your request and it is now closed. You may contact me or the Agency’s FOIA Public Liaison at 202-203-4550 for any further assistance and to discuss any aspect of your request. Additionally, you may contact the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) at the National Archives and Records Administration to inquire about the FOIA mediation services they offer. The contact information for OGIS is as follows:

Office of Government Information Services
National Archives and Records Administration
8601 Adelphi Road-OGIS
College Park, Maryland 20740-6001
E-mail at ogis@nara.gov
Telephone at 202-741-5770
Toll free at 1-877-684-6448
Facsimile at 202-741-5769

Finally, if you are not satisfied with this response to your request, you may file an administrative appeal with the Agency by writing to: Chairperson, Access Appeal Committee, USAGM, Suite 3349, 330 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20237. Your appeal must be postmarked or transmitted by facsimile to 202-203-4548 within 90 days of the date of this letter.

If you have any questions regarding your request, please contact me at 202-203-4550 or the Office of the General Counsel at the above address or at foia@usagm.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dana Sade', with a stylized flourish below it.

Dana Sade
Assistant General Counsel

Enclosure

MEMORANDUM FOR: John Lansing, CEO & Director
FROM: Rob Fallon & Oanh Tran
DATE: August 8, 2017

SUBJECT: BBG Activities for June 2017

Overview

This report encompasses key events in June.

We remain focused on a number of threats and challenges across BBG – although RFA and RFE/RL remain the top targets for both intimidation and cyber attacks. VOA Mandarin Beijing Correspondent (b) (6) was assaulted by men claiming to be security guards while on assignment.

MBN experience a number of transmission issues for Radio Sawa. These issues were reported to and worked on by TSI.

Programming-wise, VOA News Center launched its Off the Highway series of reporting focused on voices from small town in rural America and provides VOA audiences a glimpse at a part of the United States, which is not as frequently covered as the coasts, and insight into a different American perspective. VOA also produced its Korean's first-ever TV program, Palisades Park People, a documentary-style series profiling the ordinary lives of Korean American immigrants living in Palisades Park, New Jersey, a small borough that is home to the largest Korean American community in the U.S. OCB held special coverage of President Donald Trump's announcement on changes to U.S.-Cuba policy. RFE/RL Pangea Digital launched a redesigned Current Time video highlights application for both Apple iOS and Android platforms that offers live video broadcast, full archives of Current Time TV shows, a TV scheduler and a sticky video player that minimizes in screen. RFA focused on the 28th Anniversary of Tiananmen and the 20th Anniversary of Hong Kong's, the former British colony, return to China. MBN prepared for the transition of its new President, Alberto Fernandez.

On the IBB side, Office of Policy and Research (OPR) submitted the draft strategic framework for FY18-22 to the OMB for review. OPR also wrapped up this year's Strategy Review process with a final set of meetings in early June. TSI secured an FM license in Brazzaville that will provide VOA with outstanding access to both capitals in the region. TSI also acquired new affiliation with Cameroon Radio and Television. Office of Public Affairs facilitated the CEO's participation in a closed luncheon at the Council on Foreign Relations to discuss Post-Cold War of Ideas, and the BBG's value as a critical soft and hard power tool especially within the Russian misinformation space. PA's press outreach generated two feature stories on Current Time: The Economist, posted "America's answer to Russian propaganda TV," following a day-long visit to the BBG/VOA; and CQ Magazine did a cover story, "Reality Rocked: Info Wars Heat Up between U.S. and Russia." Office of Human Resources processed 41 applications for the Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment (VSIP or Buyout).

THREATS AND CHALLENGES

VOA

- Mandarin Beijing Correspondent (b) (6) was assaulted by men claiming to be security guards while on assignment near the hospital where Nobel laureate and Chinese dissident (b) (6) was being treated. (b) (6) and a locally-contracted assistant suffered bruises and VOA equipment sustained minor damages. (b) (6) was currently on medical parole from a politically-motivated prison sentence after being diagnosed with a terminal form of liver cancer. He died on July 13.
- News Center's Moscow correspondent (b) (6) accreditation and visa renewal has been inexplicably delayed. While this has generally happened within a month with no interruption of his work in Russia, this year's accreditation was not renewed promptly. Since his visa was about to expire, he was told he would have to leave Russia and apply for renewal at the consulate in Washington, D.C. After two weeks here in Washington, (b) (6) still has no renewal of his accreditation, nor any explanation of why not. (Their guidelines do allow for up to two months for the process; that will expire at the end of July.) Now on previously-scheduled home leave, (b) (6) hopes the necessary approvals will come through in time for him to apply for and get a new visa so he can return to Moscow at the end of his leave.

RFE/RL

- On July 7, RFE/RL Turkmen Service freelancer (b) (6) marked two years since he disappeared while on a reporting trip to the resort city of Avaza, only to be sentenced in August 2015 to serve a three-year sentence on charges that human rights groups and a U.N. panel have denounced as politically motivated.
- (b) (6) a journalist and blogger in eastern Ukraine who contributes to RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service, remains missing and likely captured by Russia-backed separatists of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic.
- The trial of RFE/RL Crimea Desk contributor (b) (6) continued in Crimea's capital, Simferopol with hearings on June 21 and July 7.
- Digital Progress: RFE/RL's Persian Service, Radio Farda, achieved record activity on its website and app in June, with 15.4 million visits, 29.3 million page views, and 4.3 million unique visitors. A reminder – the Iranian government continues to block access to radiofarda.com, mobile users of the radiofarda.com receive text warnings that they are accessing an unauthorized site, and Iranian authorities continue to jam Radio Farda's AM signal.

RFA

- RFA Burmese reporter (b) (6) filmed an ethnic militiaman purposely run down by a car driven by a fellow militiaman in southern Shan State to "teach him a lesson". Police refuse to

handle cases like this involving the militias who are backed by Myanmar's army. The report received some 910K views and over 62K engagements. As a result, the reporter was threatened by militia for his report (TV/Radio) about lawlessness in nearby Namhsan (in Shan States), including this video. The reporter talked to both the man and to provincial authorities and found that it appears police are afraid to take any action on issues involving 'militias'. Local militias have demonstrated a "long reach". The reporter was brought to the Yangon bureau to work until it was safer for him to return home.

- Former RFA blogger (b) (6) was sentenced to 10 years in prison on June 29 for "propaganda against the state." An RFA Vietnamese report the next day on the U.S. State Department's call for the immediate release of blogger (b) (6) received 165K views and 62K engagements. The blogger is the third RFA contributor to be currently incarcerated in Vietnam.
- RFA continues to experience increased email phishing and hacking attacks this month. The President's mailbox has been targeted for phishing email numerous times in the past month which RFA blocked on its email gateway based on the pattern of the mail. The Production Manager's mailbox had repeated logon attempts from different Russian IPs. In the latter case, RFA ended up blocking the IP ranges of the attackers. In numerous other cases, RFA blocked the email by the Subject, the Sender or IP addresses. As a precautionary measure, RFA set up a system to continually scan all RFA file servers with four different Virus Scan Engines for malware to protect against compromised outside USB devices. In the last month, RFA got 1.28M threat emails out of 1.45M total email received, which account for 88.1% of its traffic.

MBN

- Radio Sawa Transmitter Issues
 - The Radio Sawa transmitter in Misrata, Libya seems to be off the air; IBB investigating.
 - It was reported on July 10 that reception seemed to be poor on the Al Hilla and Baquba transmitters in Iraq. MBN was notified on July 12 that operations were restored in Baquba. The transmitter was repaired and back on-air at full power.
 - Radio Sawa's transmitter in Ramallah has had an issue for a number of weeks; apparently another signal from outside the border is interfering with the Radio Sawa signal. IBB said that it has reached out to a contact at State to see if he could provide any assistance.

NETWORK MANAGEMENT, CONTENT AND INITIATIVES

VOA

- The News Center launched its Off the Highway series of reporting focused on voices from small town in rural America and their feelings about President Trump and his policies. The project brought together reporting by (b) (6) and (b) (6) of the News Center and (b) (6) of VOA Urdu. Off the Highway gives VOA audiences a glimpse at a part of the United States, which is not as frequently covered as the coasts, and insight into a different American perspective.
- VOA Korean's first-ever TV program, Palisades Park People, debuted last month. It's a documentary-style series profiling the ordinary lives of Korean American immigrants living in Palisades Park, New Jersey, a small borough that is home to the largest Korean American community in the U.S. The 10-episode series targeted to North Korean audiences aims to give them a firsthand glimpse of life in a free country as seen through the eyes of 10 Korean Americans. By profiling a different person in each episode, including a deputy mayor, a swimming coach, a chef, and a tailor who runs a successful business without speaking English, the series explores themes such as adjusting to life in America, preserving Korean culture, chasing the American dream, and overcoming adversity. All 10 episodes will be available in house and online by August 19.
- VOA Somali's town hall meeting on vaccine and autism held July 8 in Minneapolis attracted wide attention both domestically and overseas. Some 200 people from the large Somali diaspora community attended the discussion, which was carried live on national television in Somalia, as well as on Facebook and YouTube. Despite the ongoing widespread Internet outage in Somalia, the video on Facebook has garnered more than 13,000 views and 55 shares. The audio also aired on VOA Somali's Sunday morning radio show. In Minneapolis, two FMs - one Somali and one English - broadcast the discussion, four local TV stations covered it, and a National Geographic camera crew shot the event to include in an upcoming documentary about vaccinations. The event addressed rumors in the community surrounding childhood vaccines and autism. Minnesota is struggling with its biggest outbreak of measles since 1990, with 78 infected and nearly a third hospitalized. (b) (6) director of the Gargar Clinic and Urgent Care in Minneapolis, said, "Somalis are coming from an entirely different culture. Coming to America and having kids with autism is a double burden for them. It is very hard for them to cope with it [autism]... And it is very hard for them to get all the resources they need to cope with it." Watch the entire event, the Somali segment on YouTube, or the Somali segment on Facebook.
- VOA Thai reporting on the economic effect of the America First policy was cited by influential columnist (b) (6) in a July 5 Thailand Daily News op-ed. The column said the reports help illustrate what could happen to Thailand if it implements tough immigration law on undocumented laborers. Daily News, which owns one of the country's largest-circulation newspapers and a television channel, published this column shortly after VOA Thai started broadcasting VOA's Off the Highway series. In one segment, American farmers discuss their concerns about the America First policy.

OCB

- The main event during June/July was the special coverage afforded to President Donald Trump's enunciation of changes to U.S. Cuba policy, in a major speech on the subject made in Miami on Friday, June 16. Regular programming was interrupted beginning at 12:00 noon. Working as a multi-platform broadcast and with participation from various venues, OCB provided the people of Cuba with President Trump's speech from the Manuel Artime Theatre in Little Havana in which he maintained many aspects of the Obama policy but also significantly scrapped others, most notably U.S. travel to Cuba and the ability to carry out business from the U.S. with Cuban entities affiliated with GAESA, operated by the Cuban military and thus the Cuban state. The thinking behind the new policy is to deprive the Cuban state of funds that it presumably uses to repress the people and Cuba's peaceful opposition while maintaining engagement with civil society. We continued to canvass opinions and assess the possible impact of President Donald Trump's new policies towards Cuba.
- OCB continues to cover events in Venezuela, including coverage of the attack, presumably by President Nicolas Maduro supporters, on the Venezuelan parliament where several opposition legislators were beaten up. OCB also looked at developments inside Venezuela where public protests entered their third month and the death toll continued to rise, with at least 70 deaths reported so far. In Colombia, formal peace was declared as the 5 year dialogue between government and the FARC came to an end and the country enters a new period where the FARC will transition into a mainstream political opposition.

RFE/RL

- Pangea Digital launched a redesigned Current Time video highlights application for both [Apple iOS](#) and Android platforms that offers live video broadcast, full archives of Current Time TV shows, a TV scheduler and a sticky video player that minimizes in screen. Pangea Digital also developed a complex and comprehensive [Pakistan Census](#) infographic for Radio Mashaal that details data gathered per province since 1951; redesigned the [RFE/RL Brand Identity Standards](#) online style guide; and released a new Pangea version that includes E-book support, a sticky YouTube video player in Article content, and sharing of live blog entries.

RFA

- RFA's Hong Kong based stringer **(b) (6)** filed a series of reports on Kazakhs of Xinjiang. One of the reports was about the Kazakhs who live in Xinjiang but have already obtained a "Green Card" issued by the Kazakhstan government. Chinese authorities took away their green cards and passports. Since RFA aired and posted this report, Chinese authorities changed the policy by giving back the green cards to the Kazakhs who have obtained permanent resident status in Kazakhstan. RFA's source from Kazakhstan says Kazakhs are thrilled by the policy change and they thank RFA Mandarin for reporting their situation; now more and more Kazakhs have begun to use Wechat to disseminate and circulate RFA's stories in regard to their livelihood in the Kazakh community.

- Two major events took place in June: The 28th Anniversary of Tiananmen and the 20th Anniversary of Hong Kong's, the former British colony, return to China. RFA Cantonese did in-depth coverage on both historic events. RFA Cantonese successfully manage to produce a hub page with very limited staff featuring the betrayal and frustration of Hong Kong people under the so-called "one country, two systems" formula that China promises autonomy and judicial independence of HK. See [20th Anniversary of HK Handover Hub Page](#).
- RFA Korean took prompt action to interview agencies all over the world on North Korea travel after Otto Warmbier's death and covered the Warmbier incident in a three-part series. Based on RFA Korean's news reports on extensive cancellations and inquiries that North Korea travel agencies are having, Chosun Daily and many other major media in South Korea began reporting this matter in depth. BBC Asia Pacific monitoring team cited RFA's follow-up report on rejections of U.S. citizens for North Korea travel. U.S. Department of State responded to RFA's follow-up report on safety issues of U.S. citizens who are still travelling in North Korea that the Department cannot disclose details of the U.S. travelers in North Korea. In the meantime, the story was also posted on Korean Facebook page shortly after it was published on the web and reached a record high. [Yonhap News report in English here](#). [KBS pick-up in English here](#).
- After RFA Khmer reported on members of the National Election Committee in Tbong Khmum province having their pay cut, Committee members were called to receive their full pay. One day later, The National Election Committee issued a public "explanation" denying the RFA report as untrue and advising the media outlet to properly follow journalist codes of conducts and professionalism and avoid broadcasting defamatory fake news. Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM) executive director (b) (6) told RFA's Khmer Service that by refusing to grant rebroadcast rights to independent media groups, the government is effectively denying the public access to information and balanced news coverage. Civil society groups say a de facto monopoly on Cambodia's radio waves has allowed the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) to retain political control of the country's northeast, and they want the government to accommodate more independent media in the region.

MBN

- On June 13, MBN President Brian Conniff announced to the MBN staff that he was stepping down and Amb. Alberto Fernandez was being hired as the new president of the organization. The announcement was made at a Town Hall Meeting with BBG Chairman Ken Weinstein, BBG CEO John Lansing and Amb. Fernandez. The Town Hall Meeting was followed up by an external press release and an in-house announcement via email. Brian Conniff was to depart on July 14 and Amb. Fernandez was to start July 17.
- Alhurra's Facebook Page Reaches 10 Million 'Likes': In early July, Alhurra's Facebook page reached 10 million 'likes'. This is followed by Radio Sawa's Facebook page that has 7.7 million likes; the Al Youm program that has 2.7 million likes and Raise Your Voice that has 2.2 million.

CEO TEAM

OFFICE OF POLICY AND RESEARCH (OPR)

- OPR submitted the draft strategic framework for FY18-22 to the Office of Management and Budget for review. Prior to submission, OPR staffers held a series of briefings for staff at BBG/IBB and each of the USIM networks to discuss and solicit feedback on the framework, ultimately incorporating a number of staff and leadership suggestions into the submitted draft.
- OPR wrapped up this year's Strategy Review process with a final set of meetings in early June. Each service's target audience and high-level goals are now finalized, and the Research offices are working with services to set FY18 performance targets.
- On June 14, Director of Research (b) (6) presented the results of the BBG's Cuba Survey to the Board. Highlights from the survey include very high scores on many impact model indicators, as well as a confirmation of dual distribution strategy of SW radio paired with digital/social media which yields a weekly reach of 11.1% of Cubans adults. A full survey report is in preparation.
- (b) (6) attended the Global Media Forum in Bonn from June 19-21. At the sidelines of the Forum, (b) (6) participated in research discussions with colleagues at DW, as well in the founding meeting of the AIB Research Working Group, where she was able to include several issues of interest to the BBG (joint acquisition of forecast and other off the shelf data, working on joint standard measures especially for digital metrics) into the working group's Term of Reference.
- On June 29, (b) (6) concluded Phase 1 of the technical review for the Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA) portion of the new IARP solicitation. Contracts is planning to provide Phase 2 of the BPA evaluation by July 17, with an award hopefully forthcoming by July 20. The new International Audience Research Program (IARP) will also include an Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract for BBG surveys, for solicitation, which has not yet been issued. This is a concern.
- Two IBB Research Interns started at the beginning of June. To date, they have developed "Impact Overview" briefing document for a several Eurasian countries, which had been requested by a Senate Committee on Foreign Relations investigator. They have also completed a global survey response rate overview (requested by OMB) and a global overview of the use of various radio wavebands.
- In June, the Office of Policy continued ongoing efforts to produce short, dynamic social-media friendly video editorials highlighting U.S. priorities. The Policy Office released three video editorials based around an interview with Acting Assistant Secretary of State Virginia Bennett on human rights. The first – at the request of DRL – was on the U.S. – Vietnam human rights dialogue. The video was versioned by the Vietnamese service and received 41,000 views on Facebook. Office of Policy also produced videos on human rights in Cuba and on human rights in North Korea. The video on Cuba was versioned as a Punto de Vista

and carried on the LATAM satellite. The video on North Korea was versioned by the Korean service and will be carried on their social media.

DISTRIBUTION

- License for an FM in Brazzaville/Kinshasa: TSI secured an FM license in Brazzaville that will provide VOA with outstanding access to both capitals in the region. Brazzaville is home to 2 million people while Kinshasa, directly across the river from Brazzaville, has approximately 11 Million residents. With a combined target market of 13 Million Congolese and DRC inhabitants, VOA's FM presence in Africa is primed for a major audience increase.
- New Affiliation with Cameroon Radio and Television: TSI's (b) (6), relatively new on the job in Africa tells us that Dr (b) (5), director from CRTV – Cameroon Radio Television, came to the BBG's DISCOP booth and signed their contract to carry VOA content in their country. The non-payment contract is for 5 years. TSI's local staffer (b) (6) worked with CRTV for 7 months and contacting them twice a week every week.
- TSI Technicians Successfully Completed Difficult Maintenance in Burundi and CAR: Technicians from our Botswana Transmitting Station, in spite of many logistical hurdles, visited our FM stations in Bujumbura, Burundi, and Bangui, Central African Republic, to perform needed maintenance. The facility in Bangui is especially challenging due to the location and the fact that it is hosted by the Embassy with no technical personnel on site. The FM stations were left operating at full performance levels to ensure our audience is able to receive a strong, clear signal.
- TSI's Enterprise Platforms Team Completed Kuwait Technology Refresh: A multidiscipline TSI team completely revamped the IT infrastructure of this vital station. Upgrades included a completely virtualized server and storage architecture as well as improved connectivity to Wireless networks and TSI's government leading Cloud presence.
- TSI's Enterprise Telecom Upgraded Greenville Station with Complete Integration to Cohen Switch: Enterprise Telecom (T/CT) completed upgrade of Greenville Transmission Station phone system and integration with Cohen building PBX.
- TSI's Global Network Preparing Global Upgrade to HD Satellite Distribution for VOA Content: Joining the existing HD distribution for MBN's Alhurra Channel and RFE/RL/VOA's Current Time, TSI is preparing contracts and pathways for distribution of BBG content on the following global satellites:
 - TelStar 18 (Wei Chi)
 - Hotbird 13B (PNN, VOA)
 - AsiaSat 7 (VOA)
 - NSS-12 (VOA)
 - IS907 (VOA, PNN)
 - AFSat (VOA)
 - LANet (VOA)

- **TSI Continues to Increase Cohen Wireless Networking Capability:** TSI's Global Networks has now activated a whopping 889 wireless radios across the Cohen Building. The wireless network routinely carries daily traffic for over 1,600 unique users.

COMMUNICATIONS

- On June 1, CEO Lansing joined a group of media influencers for a closed luncheon at the Council on Foreign Relations to discuss Post-Cold War of Ideas, and the BBG's value as a critical soft and hard power tool especially within the Russian misinformation space. The event entitled "National Security in an age of Austerity," provided an opportunity to establish relationships with foreign policy influencers – to advance BBG mention in their foreign policy dialogue.
- Press outreach generated two feature stories on Current Time. Gary Epstein, media editor for The Economist, posted "America's answer to Russian propaganda TV," following a day-long visit to the BBG/VOA. CQ Roll Call foreign policy reporter Rachel Oswald highlights Current Time in a CQ Magazine cover story "Reality Rocked: Info Wars Heat Up between U.S. and Russia." Oswald expressed interest in CT during the recent BBG-GWU World Press Freedom Day event. Both articles offer an in-depth look at U.S. government efforts to respond to Russian disinformation/propaganda campaigns. Links are available on the "BBG in the News" page of the BBG's website.
- The 2016 BBG Annual Report is complete and available [here](#) (downloadable PDF). This year's report also has an interactive microsite. This digital companion features content from the official report and additional Network highlights. OPA annual report outreach objectives include distribution to (and engagement with) influencers and subject matter experts in USIM, public diplomacy, international affairs think tanks, media/journalism organizations, Congress, and U.S. Government agencies by way of social media, e-mail outreach, and in-person outreach.
- On June 30, OPA organized a briefing for prominent South Korean experts on ROK-DPRK relations, the North Korean economy, and security in Northeast Asia as part of the State's International Visitor Leadership Program. Participants were eager to learn about VOA/RFA approaches to broadcasting news and programming to North Korea. VOA Korean Service Chief (b) (5) discussed best journalism practices, challenges, the use of social and digital media, and how new technologies are shaping the way news is gathered, reported, distributed.
- The Internal Communications team coordinated across VOA, OCB and IBB offices on messaging related to the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey.
- Attached: OPA website analytics report – June 2017. This report details web traffic for the month of June (as compared to the month of May), including new vs. returning visitors, how long users were on the site, what they looked at the most, and how they came to the site. There was a spike in visitors on June 13 – this was due to the MBN announcement on Amb

Fernandez. Also, there was more traffic to the website due to social media during June (compared to May).

PERSONNEL

- RFE/RL Human resources director (b) (6) resigned for personal reasons, effective July 7, 2017. Senior Human Resources Manager (b) (6) has been named Acting Director of Human Resources, effective July 8; a search for the next director has been started.
- BBG Office of Human Resources processed 41 applications for the Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment (VSIP or Buyout).

MEMORANDUM FOR: Broadcasting Board of Governors
FROM: John Lansing, CEO & Director
DATE: August 24, 2017
SUBJECT: Monthly Report for August 2017

DISTRIBUTION UPDATE FOR CURRENT TIME

The distribution of Current Time continues to proceed apace. Current Time TV is now available to 7.3 million subscribers on 36 subscription satellite, cable and IPTV services in 9 countries in the region. The entire live stream is also available globally to another 75 million monthly unique users on FilmOn.tv and regionally to another 32 million monthly unique users on MeGoGo. The stream also goes out across Eurasia on the free to air Eutelsat HOTBIRD satellite which is received in 135 million homes. Negotiations with YES Satellite provider in Israel have been completed and Current Time is now available to a very significant in country Russian speaking diaspora and can potentially increase audience for the Current Time digital network.

SECURITY TURNSTILE PROJECT AT COHEN

The Office of Technology, Services and Innovation (TSI) has received proposed drawings for the installation of security turnstiles at both the C and 3rd Street entrances of the Cohen Building. This project, being run by GSA, is expected to be completed substantially under budget (\$800K Vs. \$1.2M) because GSA has adopted the design proposed by TSI's Facilities group and the IBB's Security team. GSA's official timeline has slipped to early January although a late December completion remains a possibility.

OFFICE OF POLICY AND RESEARCH (OPR)

- In late July the new International Audience Research Program (IARP) research contract was issued to 15 vendors. The contract, which covers the BBG's extensive audience research program, is valid for five years. A new structure—in which multiple pre-vetted vendors bid on each specific BBG study—will not only improve research quality (specific vendors on the contract specialize in particular regions or research methodologies) but also will bring down the cost per project due to the competitive nature of this contract. OPR is grateful to their colleagues in the Office of Contracts and the Office of General Counsel for their advice and support during the year-long process leading up to the contract award.
- OPR continues to work with the CFO's office, the networks, and IBB managers to finalize the FY 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, as well as the FY19 OMB budget submission, which will include a number of targeted investment proposals for key strategic priorities, such as combatting disinformation, countering violent extremism, and accelerating our shift to digital platforms.
- OPR arranged meetings and gave briefings to a number of outgoing State Department Public Affairs Officers and Information Officers to explain BBG's work and opportunities for partnership on areas of mutual interest.

TRANSMISSION / DISTRIBUTION

- Cambodian FM Affiliates Crisis – RFA and VOA FM affiliates are undergoing serious scrutiny by regulatory agencies in Cambodia. Issues such as taxation, # of broadcast hours and content are being brought into question in what might be a widespread effort to curtail their activities on behalf of BBG broadcasters. TSI is delineating contingency plans for

additional SW and MW coverage should this situation result in substantial loss of in-country FM distribution.

- **Cyber Security Update** – The BBG has now passed the seven year mark since it last experienced a server compromise. In May of 2010, we eradicated a persistent and complete infiltration by the Chinese Cyber Army and, since then, despite being constantly targeted by the most sophisticated state sponsored Cyber criminals in the world, and the constant news of government agencies and corporate giants being compromised, we have managed to stave off all server intrusions.
- **Satellite Network** – TSI has now developed the entire restructuring of the BBG's satellite distribution network and is currently procuring additional capacity to accommodate the growth in HD Television distribution for MBN at this time and for VOA when it begins migrating its programming to HD in early 2018. This includes additional transponder capacity on Telstar 18 (over China), Yahsat (Iran) Arabsat and Nilesat (Middle East) and Intelsat (Africa).
- **Contribution to Ukrainian Efforts to Combat Russian Propaganda** – The 134-meter tower (400 feet+) that TSI made available for use by Ukrainian radio and TV is now installed and in operation in Bakhmutivka, near the restricted area in East Ukraine. It was inaugurated on August 21st, 2017 by Ukraine's President Peter Poroshenko and it joins the three fly-away FM setups deployed late last year that will be further augmented with three additional of the Fly-Away setups as early as next month.
- **Transmitter Donation to Lithuanian Broadcaster** – TSI, via RFE/RL, made available a powerful 200 Kw AM transmitter that is being used to transmit programming in Russian and Belarussian to those respective countries. This transmitter is a substantial upgrade from the former, much older and soviet era, 70 Kw transmitter that it replaced.

MEMORANDUM FOR: John F. Lansing, CEO & Director
FROM: CEO Office
DATE: May 24, 2018
SUBJECT: BBG Activities for March and April 2018

Overview

This report encompasses key events in March and the early part of April. We remain focused on a number of challenges and opportunities across the BBG.

RFE/RL continues to encounter state-engineered roadblocks to operating in Russia and the Russian periphery, including attempts to block websites and to discredit the impartiality of network coverage. Since the conclusion of the Russian presidential election campaign in mid-March, RFE/RL has observed a significant increase in attention from Russian advisory, regulatory, and legislative bodies to its Russian-language Services.

RFA journalists from the Khmer and Uyghur Services continue to face danger in simply doing their jobs—Khmer journalist (b) (6) was accused by the Hun Sen government of being a spy and the families of six Uyghur reporters remain in detention in Xinjiang.

Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) officials continue to harass VOA Deewa reporters.

Programming-wise, OCB continues to fine-tune content workflows after a massive shift to a multi-platform programming model. Marti audiences can now access the same content across TV, radio, and digital. RFA Mandarin launched a new TV program, "Chatting on Religion," aimed at promoting religious freedom in China. The inaugural show was the first part of a three-episode production on Tibetan Buddhism.

A highlight for RFE/RL was Speaker Paul Ryan's visit to Prague. The visit came at a time of instability within the Czech government and served as an important expression of support by the U.S. for RFE/RL's presence in the Czech Republic, and more broadly of U.S. confidence in its Czech allies.

MBN saw an exciting addition to its leadership. On April 2, (b) (6) officially started his position as Senior Vice President for News, Programming and Transformation. In his role, he directs global programming operations for all MBN properties and program strategy across all platforms.

On the BBG side, TSI enhanced transmissions to North Korea, the eastern portion of Russia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). TSI also made gains in shoring up the security profile of the Cohen Building. As of March 12, all individuals entering or exiting the building approved government identification card are now required to use the newly-installed turnstiles.

THREATS AND CHALLENGES

VOA

- One of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) officials called in VOA Deewa reporter, (b) (6), for a talk in Peshawar. The ISI representative, that introduced himself by a single name (b) (6), spoke with the reporter in Urdu and inquired about VOA Deewa's operations and reporters. According to the service, these are typical harassment tactics by Pakistan's military intelligence agency. The ISI agents want to send an indirect message to the VOA reporters that they being watched.

RFE/RL

- In recent weeks, websites serving Uzbek Russian speakers (ru.ozodlik.org), Crimea (krymr.org), and the North Caucasus (kavkazr.com) sustained powerful distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks. Working in cooperation with access provider Akamai, RFE/RL was able to successfully mitigate the attacks.
- On March 26, Civic Chamber member Maxim Grigoriev charged that three of RFE/R L's regional websites, serving, Russia's mid-Volga and North Caucasus regions and Russia-annexed Crimea, were "working in unison with this unregistered candidate [Navalny]...against candidate Putin."
- Russian Senator Andrei Klimov said his Temporary Commission for the Defense of State Sovereignty would release a report following President-elect Putin's May 7 [naming 12 media outlets](#) (including Current Time, Radio Svoboda, and five regional Services) that aired, in their view, imbalanced coverage of the election and urging Russian voters to boycott the vote.
- On April 6, the Russian Internet regulator Roskomnadzor filed a complaint against the website of RFE/R L's Ukrainian Service (radiosvoboda.org), demanding the Service remove from both its website and from its YouTube channel a 2015 live-streamed video recording of a commemoration of Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity; on April 12, Roskomnadzor issued another takedown demand for an article on the Crimea.Realities website (ru.krym.org) in reference to a January 2018 article on the commemorations in the Czech Republic of the Soviet-era self-immolations of (b) (6), (b) (6), and (b) (6). RFE/R L did not comply with any of these demands.
- In eastern Ukraine, contributor (b) (6) continues to be held by Russia-backed separatists.
- In Turkmenistan, contributor (b) (6) remains in prison, serving the final months of a three-year sentence on charges RFE/R L believes to be entirely fabricated, and authorities continue to harass contributor (b) (6) and former contributor (b) (6). In March, RFE/R L received reports that police in Turkmenistan's northern Dashoguz province, the poorest in the country, were searching the mobile phones of teachers and other public employees in an effort to locate whoever might be "leaking" information about the state of affairs in the province to RFE/RL's Turkmen Service.

RFA

- RFA's Khmer Service came under attack again from Cambodia Prime Minister Hun Sen with the bizarre claim that Khmer Service journalist (b) (6) was working for him as a spy and had asked Hun Sen to protect him as he was afraid he would be killed by the CIA – just like (b) (6). Hun Sen launched the rant at a meeting of supporters in Australia on the eve of the ASEAN meeting. Hun Sen tried to characterize communications between (b) (6), his son (b) (6) and Cambodian general Mao Sophon as (b) (6) begging them for protection from the Americans when it was Hun Manet and the general who contacted (b) (6). U.S. Ambassador William Heidt said the charge that America was behind (b) (6) murder was "absurd" and "offensive"; and that the charges against (b) (6) were "silly" and "not even worth discussing." Meanwhile the Hun Sen government continues to attack the U.S. and opposition leaders and activists in Cambodia.
- RFA's Uyghur Service launched a hub page called "The Families Left Behind," which details the personal stories of six RFA reporters' families who are in detention in Xinjiang. The video on the hub page was watched by 30K+ people on YouTube and The Washington Post re-posted it on its homepage, attracting further viewership. The Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) released its 2017 annual report in March. In its Xinjiang section, RFA Uyghur reports are quoted at least 8 times and cited up to 40 times in the footnotes, demonstrating successful efforts to encourage Congressional attention to this matter.

NETWORK MANAGEMENT, CONTENT AND INITIATIVES

VOA

- VOA hosted a San Francisco screening of its documentary "Beyond the Unicorn, Africans Making IT in Silicon Valley" and a Facebook Live panel discussion with diaspora tech leaders following the screening. The event received more than 51,000 video views.
- On the heels of the 62nd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, the largest gathering on gender equality at the UN, the Voice of America hosted "Fearless Women on the Ground." The Facebook Live discussion, hosted by VOA French to Africa's (b) (6) at VOA's studios in New York, was focused on four women working on the front lines in the battle for gender equality in Nigeria, Tanzania, the Philippines, and Lebanon.
- VOA won Gold and Bronze World Medals during the 2018 New York Festivals International TV and Film Awards gala at the National Association of Broadcasters show in Las Vegas on April 10, 2018. *Boko Haram: Journey from Evil* placed first in the International Affairs category. In addition, VOA News Center's TV series *Off the Highway*, which focuses on voices from rural and small town America, won the Bronze medal in the Coverage of Continuing News category.

OCB

- As part of a major programming shift, OCB launched an early morning offering targeting rural demographics, several half-hour newscasts, additional hourly news bulletins, a general

sports talk show with live call-ins, an afternoon news deep dive, and an evening news analysis show. In addition, OCB revamped its morning programming block to include *Levántate Cuba* (Wake Up, Cuba), a three-and-a-half-hour morning current affairs magazine that is part of a larger effort to engage Cubans with reliable information and uncensored discussion.

RFE/RL

- On March 26, U.S. Speaker of the House Paul Ryan visited RFE/RL's Prague headquarters for a short tour, briefing on operations, and an interview with journalist (b) (6) on a wide range of issues related to U.S.-Russian relations. The next day, Speaker Ryan praised "the remarkable work" being done by RFE/RL and USIM during a speech before the Czech parliament.
- On April 2, RFE/RL welcomed U.S. Senator Rob Portman (R-Ohio), who was briefed on RFE/RL operations and sat for an interview with the Ukrainian Service, during which he discussed recently approved shipments by the U.S. of lethal defensive weapons to Ukraine.
- On March 9, the network honored the 65th anniversaries of the original Radio Liberty services - Russian, Azerbaijani, Georgian, Turkmen, Armenian, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Turkmen, Uzbek, and Tatar-Bashkir.
- President Tom Kent hosted an all-staff town hall following adoption of the FY 2018 budget and BBG CFO teams to review accounting and financial operations.
- The Pangea-Digital-developed RFE/RL mobile news app has been formally nominated for a 2018 Webby Award in the Mobile Sites and Apps: News category.

RFA

- RFA Korean conducted an exclusive interview with John Bolton, former United States Ambassador to the UN on March 20, three days before he was named as National Security Adviser. The interview was picked up by many major international media outlets. During the interview, Ambassador Bolton shared his thoughts on the US-North summit, the US's policy on North Korea, and military action of the US. He urged North Korea's denuclearization.
- On March 7, RFA Mandarin launched a new TV program, "Chatting on Religion", aimed at promoting religious freedom in China. The inaugural show is the first part of a three-episode production on Tibetan Buddhism.
- RFA cartoonist (b) (6) take on a recent "unofficial" visit to Beijing by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un was republished by the Washington Post.

MBN

- Alhurra-Iraq was the first to report on a potential scandal in the upcoming Iraqi Parliamentary elections. A candidate who was removed from the list of candidates accused a Member of Parliament of blackmailing him by asking him to pay to be on the list.

- MBN's Alhurra was awarded the Silver Medal at the New York Festivals-Film and Television for the best Promotional Program for its English sizzle reel showcasing *Exiting ISIS*. The *Exiting ISIS* promotional campaign (in Arabic) was named a finalist in the category of Best Promotional Campaign for a Documentary.

BBG

OFFICE OF POLICY AND RESEARCH (OPR)

- OPR staff continued to connect with State Department counterparts in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA), the Russia Influence Group (RIG), the ECA Countering Disinformation Working Group, EUR/PD, and the GEC.
- Beyond the State Department. OPR participated in meetings with OMB, Department of Treasury, Department of Commerce, and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY, SERVICES AND INNOVATION (TSI)

- TSI enhanced transmissions to North Korea by adding two hours (one hour of VOA, one hour of RFA) of medium wave radio transmissions from a very powerful medium wave transmitter in South Korea. Monitoring of these signals in various locations indicated that reception in North Korea should be good. These transmissions will now be a part of the BBG's ongoing services to North Korea.
- An opportunity was identified to provide an additional satellite platform for Current Time with exceptional coverage of the Eurasian land mass. Eutelsat 36B provides a free-to-air satellite programming bouquet, originated from the country of Georgia, which will allow Current Time to be seen in the far eastern portion of Russia.
- TSI has been building out a network of seven 24-hour FM stations that will deliver VOA programming to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Four stations (Goma, Kisangani, Bukavu, and Lubumbashi) have been completed and are now on air. Installations have been completed at two more locations (Matadi and Mbuji Mayi). Installation is in progress at the seventh location (Kananga), and this station should be on air within several months.

OFFICE OF CONGRESSIONAL AFFAIRS

- In addition to regular work related to the budget, Congressional Affairs began conversations with SFRC and others about the issue of labeling BBG broadcasts on YouTube and with SACFO about VOA taxation issue in Cambodia, and communicated important breaking news like the disappearance of RFA Uyghur reporters' families to our Hill contacts.
- Congressional Affairs continued to hold regular (often weekly) meetings with the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC), who has two staffers dedicated to BBG and public diplomacy.

MEMORANDUM FOR: John F. Lansing, CEO & Director
FROM: CEO Office
DATE: July 9, 2018
SUBJECT: BBG Activities for mid-April through mid-June 2018

Overview

This report encompasses key events ranging from mid-April to mid-June 2018. We remain focused on a number of challenges and opportunities across the BBG and its networks.

RFE/RL lost three members of its family on April 30, when a suicide bomber killed Kabul-based Radio Azadi reporters (b) (6) and (b) (6) Radio Azadi trainee (b) (6) and six other journalists as they were reporting in Kabul. Both RFE/RL and BBG held events to honor the fallen journalists, and issued statements condemning the violence and calling for an end to the targeting of journalists.

After being presented unacceptable conditions by the government of Pakistan for possibly obtaining permission to reopen their bureau in Islamabad, RFE/RL decided to close its bureau there. The bureau was first closed and sealed by the Pakistani government in January 2018. Despite the closure, Radio Mashaal, RFE/RL's Pashto-language Service for northwestern Pakistan, continues to operate.

Some unexpected good news came to RFE/RL on May 19 when Turkmen Service contributor (b) (6) was released after serving a three-year prison sentence. He was imprisoned on charges widely condemned as a brutal attempt to silence a journalist.

The government of Burundi suspended transmissions from VOA's 24 hour FM station in Bujumbura, effective May 7. Nevertheless, VOA content continues to be available in Kirundi and Kinyarwanda via shortwave channels, the web, and FM transmitters located in neighboring countries. The order was handed down 10 days ahead of an important country-wide referendum on May 17. TSI is working closely with VOA and other agency elements to restore these vital broadcasts as soon as possible.

On April 18, RFA Uyghur Service staff met with Heather Nauert, Spokesperson for the State Department and Acting Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, to discuss the detention of family members of six RFA Uyghur journalists. The next day, three Uyghur staff attended a State Department briefing where Nauert introduced them and expressed U.S. concerns over the detention of their family members and Uyghurs in general.

Programming-wise, the BBG's five-network project "The Dragon's Reach; Tracking China's Economic Power Play" premiered at the June Board of Governors meeting. The project examines how the 'Belt and Road Initiative' is transforming lives, reshaping landscapes, and tilting the geopolitical balance. The project collects reports across the globe where the BBG broadcasts, showing the BBG's massive international reach. Communication directors from each network joined the BBG in a week long social media promotion of the new project, managed by the BBG's Office of Public Affairs (OPA).

Another highlight for the BBG was the coordinated, comprehensive coverage of the June 12 Singapore summit between the leaders of the U.S. and North Korea. All five of the BBG networks, led by the VOA News Center, worked around-the-clock and around-the-world to produce an impressive number of live reports, web and radio packages, interviews with lawmakers and analysts, and live translations of President Trump's press conference. VOA contributor and *Plugged In* host Greta Van Susteren's interview with President Trump was the central piece of the coordinated coverage. All VOA language services versioned the interview and all BBG networks aired it.

A highlight for VOA was the official launch of its new VOA Women's Caucus, established to encourage all employees to play a part in including more women and their viewpoints in VOA's work. The caucus is chaired by VOA Uzbek Service reporter (b) (6) who is also the first VOA Uzbek journalist and only U.S. journalist to make the Uzbek government's recently released list of accredited foreign media correspondents.

MBN saw more talented additions to its senior leadership in recent weeks. (b) (6) joined MBN as the new Vice President of Broadcast Operations. He will strategically manage MBN's multimedia technical infrastructure to ensure high quality delivery of MBN broadcasts across all media. (b) (6) most recently worked at the AT&T Entertainment Group and has held technical management roles at Fox News, News Channel 8, and Worldwide TV News Corp. (b) (6) is the new Director of Digital Content. He joins MBN from Sky News Arabia where he held the Head of Digital Strategy role since its launch and was responsible for the development and expansion of all their digital platforms. And finally, Mr. (b) (6) is the new Senior Executive Producer for Programming. (b) (6) was most recently a co-founder and anchor with Egypt's Al Nahar TV network in Egypt and previously served as Al Jazeera English's Cairo bureau chief.

On the BBG side, TSI completed installation of the seventh and final station in a country-wide network of VOA FM stations in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In a recent Washington visit, U.S. Ambassador to Congo Todd Haskell expressed deep appreciation for the recent establishment of VOA FM stations in Brazzaville and Pointe Noire, further expanding BBG's FM coverage in this volatile region of Africa. On April 29, TSI began medium wave and shortwave transmissions of VOA Learning English programming to Rohingya speakers in Burma and in refugee camps in Bangladesh.

OPA led the BBG's World Press Freedom Day event with George Washington University and the Committee to Protect Journalists on April 25th. The event brought together BBG network heads, civil society organization representatives, and media and academia professionals to discuss press freedom trends. The in-person audience of over 100 and another 80 livestream viewers watched BBG leadership highlight growing audience numbers for Current Time, our efforts to support independent reporting during the Iran protests, and training and media development programming around the world.

THREATS AND CHALLENGES

VOA

- In addition to the suspension of FM broadcasts in Burundi, state security forces blocked VOA reporter (b) (6) from a ruling-party rally and seized his equipment. Officials later apologized and returned his equipment, but he was again prevented from reporting at another event. The local commune administrator and the leader of the pro-ruling party Imbonerakure ordered (b) (6) to leave the premises and warned him not to return.
- Another VOA stringer in Burundi, (b) (6) was forced by local security officials to give up his camera while covering the location of an attack that took the lives of 26 Burundians in mid-May. He refused to do so, and was taken to the local police station, where the memory card of the camera was confiscated and sent to the police spokesman in Bujumbura. (b) (6) has yet to receive it back.
- A VOA stringer in Rwanda, (b) (6) has been receiving unidentified threatening messages after he covered the protests of the Congolese refugees from Kiziba camp in the western province of Rwanda in March 2018. Rwandan government officials warned him that he may face consequences for "inciting Congolese refugees to disrespect Rwandan authorities."
- VOA's reporter in Benguela, Angola, (b) (6) is being sued in civil court by the daughter of former Angolan President and Africa's richest woman, Isabel dos Santos. (b) (6) wrote an article in December 2017 on corruption at the Angolan Red Cross, then led by dos Santos. A few months after the publication of the report, dos Santos quit her position citing "family reasons." (b) (6) has answered several questions about the report sent to him by the court in preparation for trial. The case also cites VOA Portuguese as the carrier of the report, but no legal documents have been formally served to VOA.
- Three VOA Vietnamese Service reporters were arrested and detained in mid-June as they covered violent demonstrations in Vietnam that erupted after the government announced plans to create economic zones that protestors said would favor Chinese investors. Despite this, the Service was able to file dramatic footage of the largest demonstration in Vietnam in decades, which was viewed more than three million times. The government later postponed a vote on launching the proposed zones.
- In Nicaragua, VOA Spanish's coverage of two months of violent protests in the capital city of Managua and beyond have kept information flowing to audiences even as VOA's leading affiliates were taken off the air. One director of local affiliate told VOA, "We would like to express a special thank you to the Voice of America for its support covering the escalating violence, repression, and threats to press freedoms in our country. The information from Washington is crucial."

RFE/RL

- RFE/RL Armenian Service journalists (b) (6) and (b) (6) were assaulted by police on April 21 and 22 while reporting on massive anti-(b) (6) government protests in Armenia. The protests resulted in the resignation of Prime Minister Serzh Sarkisian, a turn of events that was expansively covered by the Armenian Service.
- The RFE/RL Azerbaijani Service's website remains under a formal government ban imposed in May 2017. RFE/RL's English-language website has been periodically blocked in the country since January 2018.
- Current Time journalist (b) (6) and RFE/RL Russian Service contributor (b) (6) were detained by police while covering the May 5 demonstration called by opposition figure (b) (6). Both journalists were released without charge by Moscow police.
- A May 9 attack on longtime RFE/RL Turkmenistan contributor (b) (6) refuted claims made just days earlier in front of the UN Human Rights Council by the country's Deputy Foreign Minister that "the fact that Radio Liberty correspondents work freely in the country" proves that there is media freedom in Turkmenistan. (b) (6) was again accosted on June 9, that time by men on bicycles while she was visiting relatives in the town of Yoloten.
- In eastern Ukraine, contributor (b) (6) continues to be held by Russia-backed separatists.

RFA

- RFA continues to advocate on behalf of Uyghur Service family members. In addition to the meeting and press briefing with A/S Nauert, RFA leadership, the Uyghur Service, and BBG senior leadership have met with members of Congress to discuss the matter.
- April marked six months in prison for RFA Khmer Service journalists (b) (6) and (b) (6), who were convicted on charges of espionage. The South East Asian Press Association (SEAPA) issued a video calling for their release.
- Two RFA Burmese Service reporters were attacked in May. One was hit by a police baton at an anti-war rally that turned violent. Fortunately, he had a motorcycle helmet on so he was not injured. In Kachin State, another RFA Burmese reporter was punched by a police officer after attending a press conference.
- RFA's Khmer Service responded to government claims that Khmer Service Deputy Director (b) (6) was a spy for the U.S. government. (b) (6) told the Phnom Penh Post that a recording of conversations between him and Cambodian leaders was heavily edited and shows nothing more than a working relationship between a journalist and sources.

- RFA Vietnamese Service blogger (b) (6) was detained by police for 15 hours on May 25 as he was coming back from Thailand. Police asked him about his recent article about a land corruption allegation. Police demanded that he take the article down but it defiantly remains on RFA's website and Facebook.
- RFA Burmese Service's profile of a child soldier won a Bronze Medal in the New York Festivals TV/Film competition, as reported in the last monthly report. After the video was broadcast the former child soldier was arrested, convicted of defaming the military, and sentenced to two years of hard labor. Now prominent human rights attorney (b) (6) has stepped in to represent him on appeal.

NETWORK MANAGEMENT, CONTENT AND INITIATIVES

VOA

- VOA is unveiling a new plan to leverage its significant international reach in the fight against disinformation, propaganda and "fake news." The effort is being spearheaded by VOA and the Center for News Literacy at New York's Stony Brook University (SBU). The unique partnership between VOA and Stony Brook will create a new series on news literacy that uses VOA's reach to inform English speakers around the world.
- VOA Spanish has increased its production of content for radio and television targeted at Nicaraguan media partners. Given the political and social crisis in the country, radio and television stations have requested additional content. This will include reports and special interviews focused on U.S. policy towards Nicaragua and news and information regarding efforts of the diaspora community to support the country.
- VOA's Mandarin Service provided non-stop coverage of the historic inter-Korean summit, with an emphasis on U.S. perspectives and under-reported, insightful Chinese analysis. As part of its coverage, the Service aired an original documentary, produced two one-hour special live TV broadcasts, and continuously updated a live blog with over 100 posts by Mandarin reporters in Panmunjom, Washington, Beijing, Tokyo, Moscow, and Taipei. In addition, the service published over 160 videos that attracted over 800,000 views.
- VOA's Immigration Unit took first place honors in the Chesapeake Press Broadcaster's Association (CAPBA) annual awards show for its reporting on immigration in 2017. The multimedia online report, "2017 Immigration Year in Review," is a comprehensive look at U.S. immigration policy and covers a wide range of topics from the Administration's proposed travel ban, to the status of "dreamers," to President Trump's promise to build a wall between the United States and Mexico to curb illegal immigration.
- Elez Biberaj, Director of Voice of America's Eurasia Division, received a Lifetime Achievement Award on June 1 at the annual awards dinner of the Pan-Albanian Federation of America, the largest Albanian-American diaspora organization in the U.S. Dr. Biberaj was

honored for his contributions as a VOA journalist and in strengthening relations between Americans and Albanians.

- Representatives from seven Venezuelan digital media partners visited VOA Spanish. The meetings, organized by the BBG's Office of Marketing and Business Development, focused on ways to increase collaboration and Venezuela election coverage. The visiting Venezuelans stressed how important it is that VOA provides them with the U.S. perspective via high-level government and expert interviews.

OCB

- The most important content for the Martis in May was their multiplatform coverage of Cuban airline disaster. On May 18th, the Martis reported on one of Cuba's worst air disasters in which 112 people lost their lives shortly after takeoff from Havana. Immediately, the Martis reached its network of independent reporters and citizen journalists and provided multi-platform special programming throughout the night and over the weekend. Follow-up web and social media articles included revelations about the carrier, the dilapidated state of Cuban planes, and other critical information that was absent on state-run media.
- On May 19, Radio Marti added two new newscasts to its weekend offerings.
- On May 21, it launched a new one hour early morning show called "Contigo a las Cinco" ("With You at 5"), hosted by journalist (b) (6). Among other segments, the show features an interview segment dealing with a theme or subject relating to the Cuban countryside. The program is interspersed with news flashes and updates.
- Cuban dissident (b) (6) was arrested by the Cuban government on charges of spreading diseases but has Radio Marti to thank for exposing the baseless charges. Minutes after Radio Marti broadcast a story about (b) (6), he was released. The following day, he thanked the staff of the *Cuba al Dia* program during live broadcast and attributed his release exclusively to Radio Marti.
- A crew was sent to Singapore to cover the historic meeting between President Trump and Kim Jong Un in conjunction with VOA. Another crew was sent to Peru to cover the Summit of the Americas. Both teams provided live satellite transmission as well as video packages.

RFE/RL

- RFE/RL's Innovation Lab began work in April, which included a conversation with Haroon Ullah on the lab's mission and goals during Ullah's April 13 visit to Prague. More than 40 people are involved with the lab and 8 projects are already underway, including efforts to develop a process that makes it easier for journalists to create rich multimedia stories within the Pangea CMS.

- On May 25, the European Union's new law on the protection of personal data, referred to as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), went into effect. With its broadcast headquarters in Prague, RFE/RL activities are subject to GDPR—most significantly in the area of human resources employee data. RFE/RL has implemented new policies and procedures, updated privacy notices, provided training, and completed other items to address the most significant GDPR compliance areas.
- On June 1, RFE/RL welcomed Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Iran and Iraq Affairs, Andrew Peek, to Prague, where he met with senior RFE/RL staff and Radio Farda journalists.
- A number of Czech and U.S. officials made their way through Prague in the past several weeks, including Czech Foreign Minister Martin Stropnický; two House Foreign Affairs Committee staffers; and three Congressional staffers from the offices of Rep. Ed Royce, Rep. Jan Schakowsky, and the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.

RFA

- RFA was named a winner at the 2018 Gracie Awards for its in-depth webpage "The Rohingya: World's Least-Wanted People." The page's designer, (b) (6), accepted the Gracie award for best interactive news media website. The Gracies are sponsored by the Alliance for Women in Media which recognizes excellence among women creators in the media and entertainment industry.
- RFA's Mandarin Service and Cantonese Service worked together on a great impact story that followed (b) (6), the wife of dissident (b) (6) who was jailed and tortured in Xinjiang. (b) (6) to DC in April to seek help from Congress and government for the right to visit her husband. After that visit, she received notice from the Xinjiang prison authority that she would be permitted to visit her husband. RFA's Cantonese Service was the first to break the news. (b) (6) thanked the U.S. government and Congress for their help.
- The State Department released its International Religious Freedom Report for 2017 in May. RFA Uyghur, Tibetan, Mandarin and Cantonese Services' reports were cited more than a dozen times.

MBN

- Alhurra's new program, *Debatable*, continues to generate debate and discussion in the Arab press. During the month of Ramadan, revered journalist (b) (6) questioned and challenged certain interpretations of the Quran, leading to prominent media outlets such as Al Quds Al-Arabi and Al Jazeera to strike out against such a daring narrative.

- A 4short Alhurra-Iraq Facebook video called the “Secrets of Saddam Hussein” attracted almost one million views between 10 April and 7 June, a number equivalent to half of the site’s total Facebook reach. The video generated a lively conversation as well, with 3,503 comments received on current and future conditions of Iraq and the U.S. role in the country.
- With the assistance of the BBG, on April 16th, Alhurra HD and Alhurra Iraq HD networks became available for viewing via Nilesat. Nilesat has some of the most-watched satellites in the Middle East and North Africa. A few months prior, Alhurra-Iraq HD joined Alhurra HD on Arabsat, the second most-watched satellite in the pan-Arab region.

BBG

OFFICE OF POLICY AND RESEARCH (OPR)

- OPR hosted a well-attended and richly informed deep dive on Russia and Kremlin disinformation at the Cohen Building on April 18. Deputy Director Jeff Trimble moderated the discussion about the Kremlin’s evolving disinformation toolkit and the most effective ways in which U.S. international media can counter fake news and offer fact-based alternatives to Moscow’s global propaganda narratives.
- OPR has been very busy instituting a process for the Strategic Dive reviews with the networks which will coincide with its annual Language Service Review.
- Chief Strategy Officer Haroon Ullah organized a recent trip with CEO Lansing to Los Angeles to explore the tools that could enhance BBG’s capability to 1) reach and engage audiences in key strategic areas; 2) optimize program delivery by market and expand engagement on digital platforms; and (3) consider possible new partnerships with leading private-sector stakeholders.
- Haroon’s team has been working on an internal dashboard that provides near real time data from our research.
- OPR and Business Development staff have been working closely with State/R and Embassy Bujumbura on the shutdown of VOA transmissions in Burundi. The Embassy has provided valuable guidance to inform BBG’s appeal to the government of Burundi to reinstate VOA broadcasts.
- OPR staff joined the CEO’s office to brief newly appointed State Department Counselor Ulrich Brechbuhl on the BBG’s mission and operations.

OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY, SERVICES AND INNOVATION (TSI)

- The Johannesburg-based Regional Marketing Officer returned from a successful trip to Harare, Zimbabwe, where affiliate opportunities are opening up. One of particular interest is an opportunity with Zimpapers Private Ltd., a company that owns/operates newspapers and radio stations and has plans to launch TV channels soon. They have expressed interest in a partnership with VOA.
- The Cohen Building cafeteria closed at the end of March. GSA is continuing to work on plans to establish a micro mart food service in the Cohen Building basement but has been slowed by negotiations with their mandatory food service vendor.
- The OIG's entrance conference for the FY 2018 FISMA audit of the Information Security program at BBG was held on May 16. At this meeting, TSI gave progress reports on a number of activities and supply documents that address previous OIG recommendations. Documents included the formal delegation of authority to the CIO as well as a directive to the CIO to establish a CIO Council charter and an Information Security Risk Management Strategy for the Agency. The OIG's audit activities will begin immediately and continue through October.
- A new Inside BBG mobile site was launched that will give users of Agency issued mobile phones easy access to many of the key services available on desktop computers.
- TSI completed the selection of a new management team to head the Business Development office. Additional information will be sent to the CEO Office soon.

OFFICE OF CONGRESSIONAL AFFAIRS

- BBG has several Congressional Notifications (CN) currently pending with the Hill or that are being written with the intent to send to the Hill shortly. These include a 60-day CN to change the name of the BBG to the U.S. Agency for Global Media; a CN for VOA changes; a CN that, pending the support of the State Department, will enable VOA to broadcast in Lingala and Rohingya; and a CN that will incorporate BBG modernization measures. The FY18 program plan currently on the Hill also includes the notification for new programming, such as the 24/7 Persian-language global network, and RFE/RL's request to broadcast in Bulgarian and Romanian to Romania. The Congressional Affairs team continues to field questions about each CN.
- The Congressional Affairs team continues to track the status of the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on State, Foreign Operations (HACFO/SACFO) FY19 bills. The team has begun to receive informational requests that require a quick turnaround by the BBG and the networks.

- On April 27, the Lantos Foundation testified before the Congressional-Executive China Commission (CECC). Having received testimony in advance that contained inaccurate facts and a poisonous narrative about the BBG and internet circumvention, CEO Lansing wrote a letter to Chairman Rubio and Co-chairman Smith, pointing out these inaccuracies. While the hearing itself had a small Hill audience, and the CECC is known for its pronounced slant, the statement by Senator Rubio that the BBG should concentrate on access over content is being addressed in conversations with several Hill offices.
- On May 9, VOA Africa Division Director Negussie Mengesha testified before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations on the situation of VOA in Burundi. The Congressional Affairs team identified this opportunity to Hill staffers when radio broadcasts in Burundi were suspended, and worked with VOA and Committee staff to craft the statement delivered at the hearing.

OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

- Ken Dilanian's NBC News feature on Russian disinformation, "One tiny corner of the U.S. government pushes back against Russian disinformation," ran on April 16.
- On April 19, the internal communications team launched its first networking event to promote the internal communication site Workplace (www.yourworkplacecommunity.com).
- On World Press Freedom Day (May 3), OPA organized a plaque dedication ceremony honoring (b) (6), a freelance Somali cameraman killed while on assignment for VOA in a deadly attack in Mogadishu, Somalia on October 14, 2017. CEO Lansing, VOA Programming Director Kulu Chao, and Africa Division Director Negussie Mengesha each gave brief remarks in honor of (b) (6) sacrifice while stressing the BBG's unwavering and continued commitment in pursuit of press freedom around the world.
- The BBG partnered with Hudson Institute for a panel discussion about trends and insights on the information battlefield in Iran for an audience of Iran policy experts and thinkers. The May 29th event provided a platform for senior BBG leadership to share new data on the impact of international broadcasting efforts on Persian-language speaking audiences globally and for CEO Lansing to further socialize the upcoming 24/7 Persian-language global network. BBG Board Chairman Weinstein provided opening remarks, and the panel included (b) (6) from Hudson Institute, (b) (6) from AFPC, and BBG Chief Strategy Officer Ullah as moderator. VOA Persian Service Chief Setareh Sieg and RFE/RL Public Affairs Deputy Director (b) (6) also participated.

MEMORANDUM FOR: John F. Lansing, CEO & Director
FROM: The CEO Office Team
DATE: October 10, 2018
SUBJECT: USAGM Activities for mid-June through mid-September 2018

Overview

This report encompasses key events ranging from mid-June to mid-September 2018. We remain focused on a number of challenges and opportunities across USAGM and its networks.

A highlight for USAGM networks in June was their collaborative, comprehensive coverage of the Singapore Summit. All five of USAGM networks, led by the VOA News Center, worked around-the-clock and around-the-world to provide timely and comprehensive television, radio, and digital coverage and analysis of the June 12 Singapore summit between the leaders of the U.S. and North Korea. The News Center arranged 32 reporters, videographers and support staff from VOA, OCB, MBN and RFA; worked out credentials and logistics; laid out a joint coverage plan that played to the strengths of each network and minimized duplication; and organized sharing guidelines for the services and networks to share content.

On July 5, a Moscow court fined RFE/RL after ruling that it had failed to comply with a new Russian law regulating media outlets branded by the government as "foreign agents." The Duma is also debating amendments to a bill that would allow authorities to label private persons as "foreign agents" if they work for media outlets the Justice Ministry designates as "foreign agents." The Russian actions have met with strong responses. The major international news agencies, and even some Russian media, covered the court case and RFE/RL's statement. The State Department, the OSCE media representative, and CEO Lansing all issued statements.

Some good news came to RFE/RL as well: (b) (6) became the new director of Radio Farda on June 18. A prominent BBC Persian Service editor and TV talk show, (b) (6) has also served as a radio presenter and producer for BBC Persian and has built a significant presence on both Facebook and Twitter. He commonly goes by his middle name, (b) (6). He is a key player in the launch of VOA 365, USAGM's 24/7 Persian-language global network, and his efforts have been well-received by his VOA counterparts.

On August 22, the agency changed its name from the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) to U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM). On September 12, USAGM hosted a showcase event, using the new brand as a hook, focused on how the agency has changed in recent years to be a more nimble, impactful tool of U.S. foreign policy and national security on the 21st century information battlefield.

Around the world, USAGM journalists risk their lives and livelihoods every day to report the truth to audiences in media-restrictive environments. Despite the agency's best efforts to ensure the safety of its journalists abroad, the agency is limited in mobilizing resources and assistance consistent with appropriate policies, laws, and regulations. Thus, a team of USAGM representatives have been tasked with establishing an employee association to provide financial assistance to the families and survivors of USAGM journalists, stringers, or support personnel

who perish or become injured in the course of their USAGM duties. Currently, the group is finalizing a charter and by-laws to establish the employee association and aims to launch in the first quarter of FY 2019. Eventually, the group seeks to establish a 501(c)(3) foundation that can operate with the same capabilities. In order to establish the foundation, specific Congressional legislation is required to grant USAGM the proper authority. Legal language for that purpose was submitted into the budget submission to OMB for FY 2020.

On the talent front, (b) (6) joined the agency on August 6 as the new Director of Business Development. He is responsible for managing and expanding the agency's global array of radio and television affiliates and for establishing productive partnerships with other media enterprises. He joins USAGM after two decades of senior leadership and strategic advisory roles in media, technology, and investment sectors in the U.S. and internationally.

Also in June, (b) (6) joined USAGM as the new Director of the Office of Internet Freedom (OIF). His unique experience with the strategies, tactics, tools and technologies needed to combat internet censorship will move OIF forward in new and groundbreaking ways. (b) (6) has 23 years of experience working with journalistic organizations, including RFE/RL. He spent the last 12 years working at RFA where he served as Chief Security Officer from 2009 until 2015 and, most recently, as Director of Technology for the Open Technology Fund.

Public diplomacy expert Dr. Shawn Powers, Ph.D. joined USAGM as Senior Advisor in July. Reporting to the USAGM Chief Strategy Officer, Powers is focusing on strategic planning, innovation, research and evaluation, and policy coordination for USAGM, as well as positioning the agency within the broader U.S. government and with key stakeholders. Powers most recently served as the Executive Director of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy (ACPD), a body authorized by Congress to oversee and appraise U.S. Government activities that intend to understand, inform, and influence foreign publics. He is an award-winning author who brings more than a decade of experience working at the intersection of research, public diplomacy, development, technology, national security, and academia.

Other personnel changes included: Nnake Nweke, former Director of the Office of Internet Freedom Director, took on the role of the agency's first Chief Risk Management Officer to oversee all enterprise risk management efforts; Chris Luer, from the Office of Administration, became Deputy Director of OMS, assisting Marie Lennon in managing all six OMS offices; and three new attorneys joined the Office of General Counsel, including Deputy General Counsel Lillian Cheng and Associate General Counsels Matthew Conaty and James McLaren.

On the operations side, TSI launched a new lunchtime service for employees in response to a need for fresh food options in the Wilbur J. Cohen Building. The new in-house lunchtime alternative is called Fooda. Since September 12, a different restaurant each day has offered a variety of freshly-prepared, affordable meal options. The service has been very popular with employees so far. Fooda will continue to monitor demand and adjust quantities accordingly. In the meantime, USAGM continues to work out logistics with GSA on the establishment of a micro-mart in the basement of the building. Once the micro-mart is open, it will provide 24/7

access to a wide selection of pre-packaged foods. Fooda will operate in tandem with the micro-mart, as long as demand remains high.

USAGM received highlights in two high-profile places. First, Secretary Pompeo mentioned the USAGM's upcoming launch of a 24/7 Persian-language global network in his highly-covered Iran policy speech at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in California on July 22. He noted that the network will "span not only television, but radio, digital, and social media format, so that the ordinary Iranians inside of Iran and around the globe can know that America stands with them." Second, in the July 22 edition of *The Washington Post*, the editorial board weighed in on recent restrictions on press freedom and threats in Russia against RFE/RL and Voice of America. The editorial noted that a new "foreign agent" law in Russia applies only to "American organizations," which Russia claims has been in reciprocity for U.S. Department of Justice registration of RT, the "Kremlin's propaganda arm." However, the editorial goes on to note the USAGM-funded networks are not similar to RT and called for sanctions "if the Kremlin does not back off."

And finally, a meeting took place with Secretary of State Michael Pompeo September 12 to discuss the Agency's work in informing, engaging and connecting people around the world in support of freedom and democracy. The Secretary received updates on USAGM's work in bringing objective news and information to people in global hot spots and outlined the latest threats to USAGM journalists and staff across the globe. The Secretary underscored his and the State Department's continued support for USAGM mission and for the safety of its journalists.

THREATS AND CHALLENGES

VOA

- On August 1, Chinese police barged into the home of retired Shandong University professor Sun Wenguang and arrested him during a live interview with VOA's Mandarin Service. The incident drew international outrage and widespread media attention. VOA Mandarin pursued the story and more than two dozen news organizations – including The New York Times, Washington Post, BBC, CNN and NPR – published articles about the interview. Eventually, Professor Sun was allowed to return home under close watch and strict security on August 13. (b) (6), a U.S. citizen and full-time VOA Mandarin Service correspondent based in China, and VOA contractor (b) (6) attempted to interview the professor that evening, who talked from behind a closed door in a hallway. Five or six plain clothes and uniformed police confronted (b) (6) and (b) (6) in the hallway and told them to leave the building. Police then detained the two reporters and took them away in separate cars to a police compound. The whereabouts of (b) (6) and (b) (6) were unknown for several hours. (b) (6) equipment was confiscated and destroyed. The hours-long detention ended August 14 when both reporters separately notified VOA hours apart of their release from police custody. Both reporters were physically unharmed. USAGM and VOA reached out for support from the State Department and other offices. In an August 14 press briefing, State Department Spokesperson Heather Nauert expressed concerns about the detention of VOA's reporters and called on China "to

allow all individuals to express their views without fear of retribution and for journalists to be able to do their jobs without interference.

- VOA Spanish reporters (b) (6) and (b) (6) survived a week of reporting amid multiple stops and detentions by police, paramilitary, and military personnel in Nicaragua. On one occasion, they were briefly detained at the border of Costa Rica – their passports and press IDs taken – then let go.
- For a period of about 48 hours leading up and during to the Cambodian elections held on July 29, both VOA and RFA's Khmer-language websites were blocked by the government in that country. The block was lifted around the time voting concluded. The block was timed around the general election in which Prime Minister Hun Sen faced almost no challenge to his 33-year-old rule. Independent media came under increasing pressure from Hun Sen and his allies ahead of the vote. This move by Cambodian authorities follows the forced closure of the Phnom Penh bureaus of VOA and RFA in September 2017—this indicates that BBG networks remain a target of the Hun Sen regime. Both the [White House](#) and the [Committee to Protect Journalists \(CPJ\)](#) issued statements on Cambodia blocking media around the election. News organizations such as [Reuters](#) and [Aljazeera](#) picked up the story. CEO Lansing issued a [statement](#) and [tweeted](#) about it from his Twitter account. USAGM also [published a podcast episode](#) about the Cambodia national elections and massive media crackdown, the first episode of a new podcast about the work that USAGM journalists do. Despite the unexpected 48-hour blocking of its website, VOA's Khmer Service saw a 300% increase in web traffic and Facebook engagement during that period.

RFE/RL

- Ukrainian blogger and RFE/RL contributor (b) (6), held by Russia-backed separatists in Ukraine's eastern region of Donetsk since June 2017, has declared a hunger strike, according to longtime friend and former lawmaker (b) (6). (b) (6) [posted on Facebook on July 5](#) that (b) (6) began the hunger strike one week earlier. RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service has been unable to contact (b) (6) since his disappearance over one year ago.
- On August 28, the pro-Russian [Russkaya Vesna](#) website claimed that the Ukrainian military had invited foreign media to report on an operation in which Ukrainian special forces allegedly planned to detonate explosives under a bridge used by thousands of people in the town of Stanitsa Luganskaya, near the disputed eastern Ukrainian city of Luhansk. The article then published the personal details of 37 journalists it said were planning to cover the event. Eight of the journalists named are linked with RFE/RL – 2 with Current Time, 3 with the Russian Service, 3 with the Ukrainian Service's Donbass.Realii unit. RFE/RL is monitoring the situation.
- On September 4, RFE/RL learned that the Russian state-sponsored actors known as "APT28" (a.k.a. Fancy Bear, Pawn Storm, Sofacy Group, STRONTIUM) had on July 3, 2018 registered the domain "rferl-mysharepoint.com" as a spoofed version of RFE/RL's Microsoft

SharePoint domain, in a clear attempt to infiltrate its networks. RFE/RL's IT staff blocked access by this domain and continues to investigate.

- RFE/RL expressed outrage at a Ukrainian court's decision granting the country's prosecutor-general's office access to 17 months' worth of mobile phone data belonging to RFE/RL investigative journalist (b) (6).
- At least three Kazan-based freelance correspondents with the Idel.Realii Russian-language website have been targeted since August 14 in a campaign of harassment, in which a regional Telegram channel has published details from the correspondents' private lives and called the journalists subversive foreign agents. On or about August 30, one of the Idel.Realii freelancers was followed and harassed by unknown persons; RFE/RL is investigating the incident.

RFA

- The situation with RFA Uyghur missing family members continues unabated although there has been a significant uptick of awareness. Six U.S. Senators penned a letter to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo urging pressure on China's government to provide information about the relatives of reporters with RFA's Uyghur Service. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo penned an op-ed on July 24th entitled "Religious Persecution in Iran, China Must End Now." In this op-ed, which was published by USA Today, Sec. Pompeo specifically raised the case of RFA six journalists.
- Eight members of Congress—including Alan Lowenthal and Steve Chabot—wrote a letter to U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia William Heidt, calling on him to secure the release of the two imprisoned RFA Khmer reporters. Uon Chhin and Yeang Sothearin were taken into custody on November 14 last year and face possible jail terms of up to 15 years if convicted. The pair denies the charges, but have been denied bail. No date has been set for the hearing of their case. At the same time, as a measure of RFA Khmer's popularity in the country, its Facebook fans grew by another 100K to over 5.7 million (there are 6.8 million Facebook users in the country).
- Meanwhile, two former RFA Cambodian journalists have been released on bail from their nine months in jail. The threat continues and more than a dozen former RFA journalists are continuing to live in hiding with no prospects of safety for them or their families.
- RFA's contributors in Vietnam have seen increased harassment and intimidation. One jailed videographers was beaten in custody to supply a false confession used in legal proceedings against a high profile activist. When he recanted his forced false testimony, he was taken away. Vietnamese authorities are openly "instructing" RFA contributors on how to conduct their work and asked for information sharing.
- RFA Vietnamese Blogger (b) (6) was detained by police for 15 hours at the airport on May 25 when he came back from Thailand. Police questioned him about his recent article (on RFA) about a land corruption allegation.

- RFA Mandarin learned in August that an interviewee was detained for 10 days for taking interviews with RFA. The Mandarin Service report in April 2017 covered the protests by Inner Mongolian herders against the state-run enterprise' pollution of grassland with diseased pig carcasses. The interviewee, (b) (6), was detained for 10 days in June 2018. The official detention notice directly mentioned RFA and Mandarin reporter (b) (6).
- RFA Burmese lost its only broadcast on terrestrial TV in Myanmar after the government informed our affiliate, DVB, that it could not carry RFA if RFA continued to use the word "Rohingya". After RFA accompanied DVB to the Ministry of Information meeting, DVB informed RFA that the broadcast on June 11 would be the last until such a time as RFA would agree to use the government's pejorative term "Bengali."

NETWORK MANAGEMENT, CONTENT AND INITIATIVES

VOA

- VOA's News Center has released a new documentary series profiling Americans caught up in the opioid epidemic. The series, The Damage Done, will run through the end of the year, with new episodes released every two or three weeks from one of three locations: Miami, Philadelphia and Nashville, N.C. These are intimate, non-narrated pieces of 10-14 minutes that take viewers into the streets, courts, homes, funerals, protests, counseling sessions, family fights, and other real-life, real-time events of the subjects.
- VOA and the Zimpapers Television Network teamed up for the first televised presidential debate ahead of Zimbabwe's first election since the fall of Robert Mugabe last November. VOA Straight Talk Africa host (b) (6) joined ZTN anchor Ruvheneko Parirenyatwa in Harare for the freewheeling debate that was carried live on more than 80 African television and radio affiliates as well as Facebook Live.
- VOA Tibetan launched a new show that focuses on the changing role of women around the world. *BhoMe - Women Transforming* examines the fundamental changes taking place globally, from the home front to all spheres of human activity, and discusses it in the Tibetan context.
- VOA Korean released a moving new documentary about North Korea's abduction of Japanese citizens. Pain with No End features emotional interviews with victims and their families as they detail their painful ordeal of separation and waiting.
- In mid-June, VOA was first by several hours to report on an al-Shabab attack in Somalia that killed one American Special Forces soldier and wounded four others. (b) (6) with the Somali Service first got wind of the attack and contacted national security correspondent (b) (6) at the Pentagon. (b) (6) was able to confirm details of the attack and both he and (b) (6) began tweeting about it 2-1/2 hours before the New York Times tweeted its first report. Reuters followed with its report about half an hour after the Times, crediting VOA.

- Nearly one million people voted in a first-ever VOA Afghan Service website competition among Afghan journalists. Dozens of reporters were asked to submit their most creative reports. VOA's digital editors posted the 10 best reports on VOADari.com and VOAPashto.com websites and visitors were asked to vote for their favorite.
- As one of the few independent news organizations able to operate inside Cambodia, VOA Khmer was uniquely positioned to provide comprehensive coverage for Cambodian audiences of the country's controversial July 29 national election. VOA Khmer's team of multimedia journalists reported from at least four provinces on voting day, producing timely updates that included Facebook Live broadcasts, radio reports, and social media posts in Khmer and English that have all received high engagement.

OCB

- This past summer, Radio Marti premiered a new line-up of weekend programming for audiences in Cuba and around the world. The lineup includes the satirical comedy show "Magdalena de Cuba," "En familia con Alfredo Rodríguez," "Las Mujeres de Cuba" (The Women of Cuba), and "Venezuela en Crisis" that reports on the dire situation in Venezuela. These established programs are now joined by "RM en el aire" (Radio Marti on the Air) that presents a variety of news and information, followed by "La medicina al día" (The Daily Medicine), informing and providing advice about the latest advances in the world of medicine. Human Rights activist Rosa María Payá hosts "Tú decides" (You Decide), and historian Gustavo León presents "Cita con la historia" (Appointment with History) that counters false narratives propagated by the Cuban government. Additional shows include "Arcoiris" (Rainbow), a show dedicated to the LGBTQ community in Cuba, "Ventana a Miami" (Window to Miami) that presents successful Cuban exiles living and working in South Florida, and "Postmoderno" (Post Modern) where Radio Marti's audiences can listen to American music that is banned on the island.
- Radio Marti expanded its Monday-Friday hard news programing and added a new shortwave frequency to continue to impact its presence on the island.
- The program "En Debate" moved from radio to become a dynamic multimedia program that includes video of social media messages and phone communications with Cuba.
- To better inform the Cuban people, OCB has taken extraordinary effort to expand its live programming on TV and radio. *Antena Live*, its signature newscast, was expanded to a one hour live show.
- In the past months, the Martis have traveled to Nicaragua and Colombia to cover what has become a top story in the hemisphere. In Nicaragua, the Martí crew gave viewers a firsthand account of the political turmoil in the Central American country with stories for various newscasts radio programs. A 30-minute special called "Nicaragua en Crisis" was not only shared across all Martí platforms but also aired on America TEVE in Miami.

- In Columbia, the team covered the inauguration of the country's new president, Ivan Duque. The team interviewed President Duque two days into his new term and also sat down with his foreign policy team, including Colombia's new ambassador to the U.S. and Secretary of State. On the Colombia-Venezuela border, the team interviewed the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, regarding a crisis that sees more than 5,000 Venezuelans crossing the border every day.
- In August, OCB partnered with Freedom House to launch a project about human rights in Cuba. Called "Cubano conoce tu derechos" (Cubans – know your rights), the project consists of a dedicated hotline service through which any Cuban can share a human rights violation. The news department of Radio and TV Marti will verify all complaints received and, in addition to publishing the journalistic investigations on its different platforms, will send the information to Freedom House for global distribution. With this system, Freedom House will be able to better report the cases directly to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (CIDH) or to the United Nations.
- The network hosted Congressional visits from U.S. Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL), U.S. Representative Ted Yoho of the Florida-North Area, and U.S. Representative Ron DeSantis, who represents Florida's 6th Congressional District. On July 31, OCB also received a visit by Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (Florida-27th Congressional District), who participated in our programming to discuss transgender issues.

RFE/RL

- Working with VOA, RFE/RL launched a rebrand of "Current Time America" in past weeks. Current Time developed new TV, Internet and social media branding and graphics packages for its primary news programs - "Новости" ("News", top-of-the-hour news briefs), "Главное" ("Newsday", the rebranded main Current Time daily news program), "Азия" (the rebranded Current Time Asia), and "Вечер" ("Evening", the rebranded Timur Olevskiy Hour). "Азия", produced from Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, launched on August 13, while "Новости", "Главное", and "Вечер" debuted on September 10.
- RFE/RL headquarters hosted William Hybl, Vice-Chairman of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, in July.
- (b) (6) joined RFE/RL's Georgian Service in Prague in June, after spending her first several weeks as the Georgian Service's new Director working in Tbilisi. A prominent former journalist with Georgia's Rustavi 2 television channel, (b) (6) joins RFE/RL after serving as a Georgian diplomat in Washington, DC.

RFA

- On September 20, RFA debuted a documentary about former Uyghur inmates of the notorious "political re-education camps" in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). The documentary, called *Behind the Walls: Three Uyghurs Detail their Experience*

in China's Secret 'Re-education' Camps, was shown at the National Endowment for Democracy in Washington, D.C. It features recent interviews with three former detainees describing conditions in these facilities – which have been estimated to hold or to have held in excess of 1 million people from XUAR. RFA's Uyghur Service is the only Uyghur-language news service outside of China.

- Senator Marco Rubio penned a powerful op-ed on Wall Street Journal "China's Campaign against Muslim Minorities." In his piece, Rubio gave great credit for RFA reporting on Chinese political re-education camps and mentioned the cases of family members of Uyghur journalists. He suggested U.S. sanction Chen Quanguo and other Chinese officials responsible for the massive human rights violations of the Uyghur people.
- RFA Uyghur Service's continuous reports on Xinjiang's re-education camps drew more attention in Western media. Foreign Policy's 'China's Mass Internment Camps Have No Clear End in Sight' cited RFA Uyghur five times with a conclusion warning for the worst outcome. It states, "... mass murder and genocide do not look like impossible outcomes [for Uyghurs]." The Wall Street Journal also published an editorial discussing the dire human rights situation in Xinjiang quoting RFA's coverage. The Atlantic published a powerful piece in August entitled "China is Treating Islam like a Mental Illness" almost completely based upon RFA's exclusive report on the Chinese government's rationale to send Uyghurs to political reeducation camps.
- RFA Vietnamese was the first to report on the beating and arrest of American (b) (6) in Ho Chi Minh City. (b) (6) was dragged off to jail during mass protests against government plans to grant long-term leases to foreign companies, especially China. (b) (6) was later released after diplomatic pressure from Congress and the State Department. Meanwhile, RFA Vietnamese's coverage of rare public protests across the country went viral.
- On June 29, RFA was saddened by the news that Dick Richter, the network's founding president, passed away at age 88.

MBN

- As Alhurra prepares for an overhaul of the network, many of the old programs ended in August, as one of the last steps toward the final transition.
- Alhurra's new program, *Sam and Ammar*, recently hosted an episode dedicated to remembering the Holocaust that was filmed at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. Reaction to (a subtitled version of) the episode has been very positive including from Mary Kissel of the Wall Street Journal Editorial Board and Daniel Benaim of the Center for American Progress, to name a few. Many cited the importance of the subject matter and the quality of the program.
- Alhurra filmed the pilots for two new programs based in Beirut. The first program, *Forbidden*, will provide a platform for intellectual and moderate voices whose work is

banned in the Arab World. The second program, *Islam Hur* (Arabic for 'Free Islam'), focuses on the concept of instilling "free, moderate Islam" into our lives.

- In early August, Alhurra's primary distribution path for both Alhurra's pan-Arab channel and Alhurra-Iraq transitioned off of NileSat 201 and onto Eutelsat 7 West. The footprint coverage remains the same however the transponder change created an interruption for Alhurra and Alhurra-Iraq viewers. This was due to a resulting change to the downlink parameters, as well as the virtual channel assignments. MBN worked on a variety of methods to alert viewers to the new locations of the channels.
- In July, MBN started construction on two television studios in its Springfield headquarters. The new studios will provide MBN with a unified, contemporary look and feel. This applies not only to the high-end visual set elements but will also incorporate all new state of the art, low energy lighting.
- On September 7, Ambassador Fernandez met with Ambassador James Jeffery, Special Envoy for Syria and Joel Rayburn, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Levant at the State Department.

USAGM

OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY, SERVICES AND INNOVATION (TSI)

- VOA has remained off the air in Burundi since May 7. The Government of Burundi ordered a six month suspension of transmissions from USAGM's 24 hour FM station in Bujumbura effective May 7. Even though local elections, the event believed to have triggered the shutdown, concluded in mid-May, the new chair of the Communications Ministry in Burundi has so far refused a request to meet with a USAGM/VOA delegation to review the suspension. It is reported that the Minister may now be willing to receive a delegation, and TSI is preparing a request to seek a formal invitation. TSI is also working closely with VOA and other Agency elements to restore these vital broadcasts as soon as possible.
- The expansion of USAGM 24 hour FM stations in Africa continues. VOA Director Amanda Bennett will visit the region on July 24 to participate in dedication ceremonies for the new USAGM 24/7 FM station now operating in Brazzaville, Congo. During her Africa journey, she has also been invited to meet with David R. Gilmour, the U.S. Ambassador to Lomé, Togo, where USAGM is also building a new 24/7 FM station. Ambassador Gilmour has been a strong supporter of VOA presence in Togo. Installation is also progressing on the USAGM 24/7 FM in Mogadishu, Somalia.
- (b) (6) Director of the BD European Marketing Office, has been helping to coordinate possible USAGM participation in a joint DG-7 venture to launch a satellite TV service for Turkey. Representatives from the BBC, Deutsche Welle, France Media, and the USAGM plan to continue their discussions in July.

- The new CIO Council, modeled after the very successful ICC with representatives from each USAGM broadcasting network, held their first meeting on June 21. CEO John Lansing approved and signed the council charter formally establishing the CIO Council as the agency body to establish Information Technology (IT) policy, review IT investments, receive reports on investment performance, provide guidance on IT management practice, and reach agreement by consensus. The coordination of IT policy and practice will benefit the agency in important ways including further bolstering IT security.

OFFICE OF CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER (OCFO)

- To-date, the House Appropriations Committee approved an agency funding level of \$807.686 million (the same level as Congress enacted for FY 2018), and the Senate Appropriations Committee approved an agency funding level of \$814.186 million.
- The OCFO submitted the first U.S. Agency for Global Media budget request to OMB by the deadline of Monday, September 10. The FY 2020 request totals \$807.686 million, which matches the FY 2018 level enacted by Congress and the FY 2019 level approved by the House Appropriations Committee and aligns closely with the Senate Appropriations Committee level. Throughout the Fall, the CFO will also continue to provide updates on FY 2020 negotiations with OMB, in addition to other fiscal matters. The FY 2020 President's Budget is statutorily due to Congress on Monday, February 4, 2019.
- The OCFO spent September working with the federal entities and grantees to begin FY 2019 on October 1st under a continuing resolution, which could last past the November congressional elections. The CFO will partner with Congressional Affairs to keep the CEO informed of appropriation actions by Congress and management of funding under any continuing resolutions going into the Fall.
- During the First Quarter of FY 2019, the CFO anticipates completion on the Booz Allen Hamilton grantee consolidation study, which staff will update the CEO on as preliminary and final findings become available.

OFFICE OF CONGRESSIONAL AFFAIRS

- Congressional Affairs fielded multiple Hill inquiries on the July 19 *New York Times* article about RFE/RL's Facebook practices, including a formal letter from Sen. Menendez, Ranking Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Congressional worked with RFE/RL to compile detailed information in response to the inquiries and prepare a CEO response to Sen. Menendez. Congressional is helping to lead the Smith-Mundt task force discussions with all five BBG networks.
- USAGM received a letter of inquiry from House Foreign Affairs Chairman Royce requesting data on four networks' paid social media advertising and compliance with the Smith-Mundt Act. The letter includes several requests for data and information, including data relating to all social media advertising across four networks, social media budgets, and marketing

research. Congressional Affairs team met with Committee staff, who agreed to redefine and narrow the scope of the request, and worked with all entities involved to extract the data and respond to the oversight request.

- Following several Congressional Affairs visits to the Hill around the plight of the Uyghur service's relatives, Senators Mark Warner (D-VA) and Gardner (R-CO) sent a letter to Secretary of State Pompeo on July 26 requesting high-level engagement with the PRC government on this matter. Four bipartisan senators – Kaine (D-VA), Rubio (R-FL), Markey (D-MA), and Daines (R-MT) – joined the letter. The Senators requested a briefing by the State Department on efforts to date to secure the release of the relatives.
- CEO Lansing and Office of Internet Freedom (OIF) Director Chad Hurley briefed Senator James Lankford (R-OK) on USAGM's internet freedom programs. Senator Lankford is especially concerned about the implications of USG funding for Tor, a circumvention tool that has also been linked to criminal activity. CEO Lansing assured the Senator that USAGM funding has only been applied for the purposes authorized by Congress. Senator Lankford expressed interest in continuing to work together on anti-censorship technologies and diversification of circumvention technologies funded by USAGM.
- Congressional Affairs also organized briefings with the House Foreign Affairs Committee and Senate Foreign Relations Committee professional staff for OCB Director Tomas Regalado. These briefings provided an introduction to the new director and an opportunity for staff to engage him on their policy priorities for Cuba and OCB's broadcasting activities.
- In terms of other briefings and outreach, at the request of HFAC, Congressional facilitated a briefing with the new director of the Office of Internet Freedom and Chief Strategy Officer to discuss USAGM's internet freedom programs. Congressional also initiated outreach to the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, a Congressionally-mandated research organization that reports to Congress and wrote about VOA Mandarin in its 2017 Report, and provided a briefing and Cohen Building visit.
- Congressional helped produce and then transmit several Congressional Notifications (CN) that have since been approved by the Hill, including USAGM rebranding and the OIF spend plan. A CN on the addition of the Lingala and Rohingya languages for VOA broadcast is pending approval on the Hill.

OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

- To launch the new USAGM brand, the Public Affairs team implemented a phased rollout plan with two initial events. On August 22, it held an internal celebration event at the Cohen building that coincided with the official transition of the BBG website to the new USAGM website. CEO Lansing hosted senior staff, network heads, and employees for remarks and multimedia presentations. Staff had an opportunity to network and learn more about the new brand and how it ties in with CEO Lansing's five priorities, audience goals and strategy, and modernization plans.

- On September 12, a larger external event was held at the National Press Club. It included remarks from CEO John Lansing, Ambassador Ryan Crocker, Congressman and House Foreign Affairs Committee member Francis Rooney (FL-19), Acting Under Secretary of Public Affairs and Public Diplomacy Heather Nauert, and Chairman Ken Weinstein, as well as multimedia presentations about USAGM's progress since 2015 and network accomplishments. The event space was transformed with USAGM's new branding and featured an interactive monitor on display allowing attendees to learn more about USAGM programming and impact via a modified version of the dashboard. Notable attendees include congressional staff, U.S. Department of State public diplomacy leadership, foreign diplomats, former and current network heads, and reporters and journalists. The event was the second official event in a multifaceted re-branding roll-out strategy.
- On June 18, OPA partnered with USAGM Workforce Support and Development to schedule and host a Health and Wellness fair in the Cohen Building with staff. Special guests included CEO Lansing. Attendees were able to learn more about the resources available to them as it relates to remaining healthy, and managing a work life balance. Multiple health experts provided information and guidance on the best way employees could use each resource.
- On June 27, OPA worked with the CEO Office's Chelsea Milko to schedule and host a brown bag for Nathanson Scholar Alumni and new candidates. Special guests included Matthew Walsh. Alumni attendees shared advice and an overview of their experience. New candidates were able to ask questions and share what they hope to gain from the experience.
- USAGM OPA drafted and distributed several press releases including network coverage of the U.S.-North Korean summit and the appointment and swearing in of Tomás Regalado.

OFFICE OF POLICY AND RESEARCH (OPR)

- On July 25, OPR hosted a deep dive and informal conversation on China's disinformation strategy with a panel of experts. Experts included Shanthi Kalathil, Director of the International Forum for Democratic Studies at the National Endowment for Democracy; Robert Daly, Director of the Wilson Center's Kissinger Institute on China and the United States; Matthew Baise, Director of Digital Strategy at VOA; and Sophat Soeung, Khmer Service at VOA. Haroon Ullah, Chief Strategy Officer, moderated the conversation. The conversation drew on diverse expertise from a standing-room-only crowd, which included participants from the interagency, non-governmental organizations, think tanks, and USAGM, to discuss possible solutions to China's aggressive and widespread actions to control the media and information space inside of China and regionally.
- As part of USAGM's interagency coordination and international outreach efforts, Chief Strategy Officer Haroon Ullah attended the D-ISIS Coalition Communications Working Group meeting in Washington and the Global Engagement Center's second Messaging Integration Challenge workshop in London.

- The Military Intelligence Support Team (MIST) for Bosnia/Moldova visited USAGM on August 1. Chief of Staff Matt Walsh briefed MIST on USAGM operations worldwide and OPR analysts informed the group about USAGM operations in the Balkans and Moldova.
- OPR worked with TSI to install flat screen TVs around the Cohen Building to display the agency's breakthrough digital dashboard and enable services and divisions to see audience metrics in real time.



To: John F. Lansing, CEO & Director
From: The CEO Office Team
Date: April 29, 2019
Subject: USAGM Activities for January through March 2019

OVERVIEW

This report encompasses key events ranging from early January through the end of March 2019. We remain focused on a number of challenges and opportunities across USAGM and its five networks.

A highlight for USAGM this quarter was the March 5 unveiling of VOA 365 at a showcase event on Capitol Hill. Expanding on VOA Persian's and Radio Farda's reach and measures of trustworthiness, the new network will confront the disinformation efforts of the Iranian regime and enhance U.S. efforts to speak directly to the Iranian people at a pivotal time in U.S.-Iran relations. The event convened Hill staff, think tank experts, members of the media, and others for two panel discussions: first, on media and politics in Iran and second, as a showcase of VOA 365. The event was the first in a series of roll-out events for the new global language network; other engagements through fall 2019 will include events in LA, NY as well as DC roundtables with targeted stakeholders.

Also on the network side, RFE/RL soft-launched its restored Romanian Service on January 14 with both a website and social media platforms, including a Facebook page that already has 22,000 followers. RFE/RL restored its Bulgarian Service on January 21. In less than two months, Bulgarian received 25,000 followers and Romanian received 36,000 followers on their respective new Facebook pages.

In a troubling new chapter in Southeast Asia media repression, RFA announced that one of their Vietnamese contributors, (b) (6), was reportedly abducted in late January in Bangkok, Thailand, where he had traveled to seek political asylum. For weeks, there had been no word from (b) (6), a weekly contributor for RFA's Vietnamese Service blog. This disappearance is a very alarming example of the many threats to free press and the safety of journalists around the world. CEO Lansing issued a statement expressing concern over the incident and welcoming the investigation launched by Thai authorities into (b) (6) whereabouts. RFA President Libby Liu penned a compelling WSJ op-ed about how Vietnam is tightening controls on dissents and targeting journalists. Advocacy groups including Amnesty International, Reporters Without Borders, and the Committee to Project Journalists issued their own reactions. On March 20, RFA reported the whereabouts of (b) (6), who is currently being held in a Hanoi prison.

As part of its continuing response to the OCB/Soros issue, USAGM concluded its human resources investigation of the incident in late February. USAGM issued a statement from CEO Lansing about the conclusion of the investigation and the agency's continued response. The agency remains committed to ensuring a thorough and transparent investigative process and, using recommendations from our independent content auditors, to improve competencies and enhance professionalism throughout OCB, including further disciplinary actions as warranted. Also this quarter, USAGM responded to possible editorial and/or corruption issues within RFE/RL's Tajik language service (known locally as Ozodi). The agency learned that a Wall

Street Journal reporter was writing a story about the concerns; [Eurasianet](#) and [Open Democracy](#) ran pieces about the same general issues. The chief accusations seem to be that Ozodi's coverage is too favorable of the government and may be not appropriately balanced and that USAGM did not competitively award contracts to a local station in Tajikistan. Over the past several months, USAGM has heard concerns raised by several interested groups and is in the process of gathering relevant information and facts. It seems like there may be some legitimate concerns gone unaddressed at RFE/RL under previous leadership; however, it also appears to be that many of the allegations are not true. RFE/RL released a [statement](#) from Acting President Daisy Sindelar in an effort to get ahead of the likely WSJ article. As soon as Daisy became aware of the general allegations raised, she immediately put an aggressive investigation response in motion, including directing internal and external content reviews, referring allegations to the OIG, and considering HR actions pending review results. USAGM is confident that RFE/RL now is handling this issue thoroughly and responsibly, and we are coordinating closely with them. In addition, USAGM is still coordinating with State as many of the allegations against Ozodi were brought to RFE/RL's attention by State.

On the USAGM operations side, the agency experienced an orderly return to normal operations following a late January deal to end a five-week partial government shutdown. USAGM worked with its payroll provider to get back-pay processed for all federal employees as soon as possible. During the shutdown, USAGM senior staff worked closely every day with the five networks and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to lessen the burden on all USAGM staff. Senior management focused on making employees feel truly welcome, answering human resources and pay-related questions, and exploring options for recognizing the contributions of the employees who worked without pay during the shutdown.

Also on the USAGM operations side, and in accordance with USAGM's passback instructions from OMB, the agency submitted a Congressional budget justification for \$628.1 million for FY 2020. This request is \$179.8 million below the FY 2019 enacted level of \$807.9 million. The request represents a reduction of 22 percent, which is in line with similar reductions proposed by the Administration within the State-Foreign Operations appropriations accounts.

In an effort to maintain the agency's strong relationship with stakeholders on Capitol Hill, CEO Lansing met with the Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator James Risch (R-ID), to brief him on USAGM and the agency's new initiatives, such as VOA 365. The two discussed the importance of the firewall for journalistic credibility and the impact of USAGM networks on providing truthful alternatives to state-sponsored propaganda. CEO Lansing also met with Senator Johnny Isakson (R-GA), Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on State Department & USAID Management, which has jurisdiction over USAGM. The CEO and Senator spoke in-depth about VOA's impact in Africa and Senator Isakson complemented the new efforts to revamp Persian language programming. In addition, CEO Lansing met with Rep. Tim Burchett, R-TN, a new member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. CEO Lansing introduced the agency to the Congressman, and briefed him on USAGM's major initiatives.

In early March, the USAGM Employee Association, a support network for fallen and injured journalists, officially launched with its first official meeting in the Cohen Building. Association leadership presented an overview of the structure and governance of the organization, adopted

bylaws, and discussed plans for fundraising and elections. Once the Association's 501(c)(3) status is finalized, a donation page will be available on the website and will contain details about how individuals can donate.

On the personnel side, Matthew Walsh became Deputy Director for Operations in mid-February. In this role, which is a new position within USAGM, Matt manages all day-to-day operations of the Agency on behalf of the CEO and serves as the lead agency coordinator on major, cross-cutting initiatives, such as USAGM's Modernization Agenda.

And finally, USAGM welcomed former President of NBC News Steve Capus on board as an expert consultant in late February. Steve has been a news leader for over 25 years and has vast experience with multi-platform media. Until recently, he was the Executive Producer of CBS Evening News, and was instrumental in helping them win the best ratings of the decade for the 2015-2016 television season. Steve will work very closely with the CEO Office and OPR on updating the agency's strategic plan and launching global Mandarin. In addition, he will work with the ICC to provide expert advice and guidance on emerging trends in broadcast and digital journalism to international audiences.

THREATS AND CHALLENGES

VOA

- As of March 29, VOA reporters in Burundi are now forbidden to provide any coverage of any story on any platform. The decision by Burundi's Communications Commission includes extending the May 2018 suspension of VOA FM programming. VOA Director Amanda Bennett issued a statement. Before Burundi suspended broadcasts, VOA content reached 57 percent of adults each week. Independent research surveys showed that more than 90 percent of that audience reported that they trust the news and information that VOA provided. VOA content will continue to be available in Kirundi and Kinyarwanda via shortwave channels, on the Internet and on FM transmitters located in neighboring countries. A working group is looking to alternative distribution methods and keeping discussions open with the Burundi government to get back on the air.
- VOA Kurdish Service Diyarbakir stringer, (b) (6), was summoned by Diyarbakir's anti-terror police directorate during the week of February 11, 2019. This was a follow up of her December 2018 summon. She has been charged with 'promoting terror' stemming from her 2014 and 2015 reporting for VOA on a funeral in Diyarbakir for People's Protection Units (PYG) fighters killed in battles against ISIS in the Syrian-Kurdish area; the meeting of the Congress of Democratic Societies (KCD); and the people of south-east Turkey supporting Kurds in Kobani, Syria. The stringer does not know when her court hearing will be.

RFE/RL

- RFE/RL Ukrainian Service freelancer (b) (6) continues to be held incommunicado by Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine's so-called Donetsk People's Republic. Reporters Without Borders featured Aseyev's case in their Worldwide Round-Up of journalists killed, detained, held hostage, or mission in 2018, released on December 14.

- (b) (6) who disappeared in June 2017, was last seen publicly in a highly questionable video confession that aired on Russian state TV channel Rossiya 24 on August 17, 2018.
- On February 8, RFE/RL expressed its alarm over a criminal investigation that has been brought against journalist (b) (6) by Russian law enforcement authorities for purportedly “justifying terrorism” in remarks she made on an Ekho Moskvyy-affiliated radio station in the northwestern Russian city of Pskov. In addition to her association with Ekho Moskvyy-Pskov, (b) (6) is a Pskov-based freelancer for RFE/RL’s Russian Service.
- On March 12, a court in Zhanaozen, Kazakhstan, found RFE/RL Kazakh Service correspondent (b) (6) guilty of refusal to follow police orders and fined her 50,500 tenges (\$135). (b) (6) rejected the charge as politically motivated. She was detained on March 1, her third detention in a month, apparently for reporting on continuing protests by residents demanding jobs. (b) (6) is a recipient of the International Women’s Media Foundation’s 2017 Courage in Journalism Award. The Committee to Project Journalists issued an alert expressing concern about (b) (6) detentions and fine.
- RFE/RL’s Tatar-Bashkir Service received several reports on December 24 that access to the Russian-language Idel.Realii website has been blocked for employees and visitors to numerous government agencies in the Russian republic of Tatarstan, allegedly “to improve the efficiency of civil servants.” RFE/RL continues to track the situation.

MBN

- In a sad piece of news for MBN, Alhurra TV’s (b) (6) was murdered in Baghdad on January 9. Local reports say that he was shot and that his money and car were taken in the deadly robbery. (b) (6) colleagues in Iraq say that he was a dedicated worker who had a positive attitude and always looking for ways to help others. (b) (6) worked as a cameraman for the news, as well as the *Raise Your Voice* program “Light Among Us.” MBN remains in touch with (b) (6) family and local authorities.
- Since the outbreak of demonstrations in Sudan and the extensive, balanced coverage that MBN has given the events, the Sudanese authorities have obstructed the work of Alhurra’s reporter in Khartoum. It started with MBN’s request to renew his journalist accreditation on Jan. 24 that was delayed for approximately two weeks. On Feb. 14, Sudanese authorities informed the correspondent that approval was granted, only to be retracted again on Feb. 24. In spite of repeated requests, the government has still not granted the correspondent’s their credentials.

NETWORK MANAGEMENT, CONTENT AND INITIATIVES

VOA

- Although launched in early December, VOA’s new show called *Our Voices* is making an impact across Africa. The half-hour English TV program focuses on African women’s empowerment throughout the continent. The show has four core hosts from different corners of the continent, representing different cultural, religious and socio-political backgrounds. *Our Voices* launched with the help of over twenty affiliate TV partners in Africa.
- VOA Learning English’s staff members travelled at the end of March to the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, to conduct training for a group of 100 English teachers. The training program included follow-up virtual classroom sessions, as well as

VOA Learning English content made accessible at the camp's learning centers and through mobile devices. The team was invited by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to provide six days of intensive training on teaching techniques and methods. The teachers, in turn, will use the acquired knowledge to train another 3,000 teachers to provide English lessons for refugees in the camp.

- VOA plans to roll out its own CMS in May 2019, focusing on English-language content to start. TSI is providing support as needed. This pilot will be tested and, if effective, scaled up to include content in other VOA languages and, eventually, across all the USAGM networks.

OCB

- In April, the network added several new programs, including *Prensa Libre* (Free Press), a current events analysis program hosted by a panel of exiled Cuban journalists; *Soy Guajiro* (I am a Cuban peasant) featuring agricultural news, interviews and music for those that live in the Cuban countryside; *90 Millas* (90 miles), an analysis and interview program on topics relating to the USA and Cuba; and *La religion in Radio Marti* (Religion on Radio Marti), an inspirational, multi-denominational religious program aired on weekend mornings.
- Television Marti has offered extensive coverage of the ongoing crisis in Venezuela. This has included special programs and breaking news on the topic. TV Marti has carried several of President Juan Guaido's speeches as part of its comprehensive coverage of the crisis and sent a crew to cover the distribution of the humanitarian aid provided by USAID.
- Radio Marti has begun broadcasting one MLB baseball game to Cuba each week, with the play-by-play commentary provided by Radio Marti sportscasters.

RFE/RL

- While in Washington in late January, RFE/RL Acting President Daisy Sindelar met with Czech Ambassador to the U.S. Hynek Kmonicek, staffers for Congressional Freedom of the Press Caucus co-chair Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA), and several State Department public diplomacy officers responsible for RFE/RL's area of operation. In addition, Daisy briefed NGO representatives on RFE/RL operations in Russia at a roundtable organized by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).
- The RFE/RL Georgian Service documentary *The Pankisi Stigma* won the [EU Prize for Journalism in Georgia](#), being named the best feature story in broadcast or online media. Documentarians visited northeastern Georgia's remote Pankisi Gorge in the spring of 2018 to report on the lives of a Muslim minority there. Established in 2012, the European Prize for Journalism "encourages professionalism and ethical conduct in Georgian journalism, by awarding the best work in print, broadcast, online, and photo journalism."
- RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service launched a collaborative fact-checking project called [ElectionsWithoutLies](#), bringing together several prominent Ukrainian media outlets. Every week, statements by top presidential candidates are fact-checked, and the findings are published simultaneously by several media outlets including [Ukrainska Pravda](#), [Novoye Vremya](#), [Kyiv Post](#), [VoxCheck](#), and [Hromadske TV](#). The project complements the Service's new youth-oriented video show, [Newsroom](#), focused on explaining key or interesting developments of the day in a lighter, more humorous format.
- RFE/RL marked the 25th anniversary of its Balkan Service on January 31, and the 2nd anniversary of the 24/7 Current Time digital and TV network on February 7.

- At the request of USAGM, Pangea Digital released the Pangea Content API. Developed in coordination with Akamai and following strict security protocol and industry standards, the API allows any Pangea-supported Network the flexibility to develop their own apps, OTT platform, microsites, or any digital product without using the Pangea framework.

RFA

- RFA Mandarin's video team spent the past four months producing a special project to highlight China's potential economic landmines. The Mandarin Service has done a deep dive into some of the "gray rhinos" that are rearing their heads in China now – everything from bad debt in the bank system to the real estate bubble to issues with the state-owned enterprises, any of which could have a disastrous effect on the burgeoning middle class in China. The four-episode *Gray Rhino* series has earned over 250K views on YouTube alone. A significant number of audience comments stated that RFA is an objective, trustworthy source in the Chinese-speaking world.
- RFA Vietnamese senior editor (b) (6) enjoyed rare access inside Vietnam to cover the U.S.-North Korea summit in Hanoi and made the most of the opportunity. Among the hundreds of international journalists who descended on the Vietnamese capital for the Feb 27-28 summit, she broke the news that Vietnamese activists and democracy advocates were being kept under police watch at their homes as President Donald Trump prepared to meet North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.
- After RFA Uyghur Service broke the story on the arrest of Kyrgyz scholar (b) (6) by the Chinese authorities, it immediately caused a ripple effect in Kyrgyzstan. It turns out that (b) (6) is a Member of Parliament in Kyrgyzstan. This has put Kyrgyzstan in an awkward position whether to raise the issue of (b) (6) detention with China. Kyrgyzstan has been cautious not to raise the ire of China with the detention of some Kyrgyz by the Chinese authorities in the past year. RFA Uyghur will follow future developments on this.
- RFA's popular Khmer Service, which has long been in the vanguard of independent journalism on Cambodia, was honored at the New York Festivals TV and Film Awards for a documentary on the 1997 violent coup by ruler Hun Sen against his own co-premier. "Justice or Impunity?", reported by service senior editor (b) (6) with video editing by (b) (6) was a bronze award-winner in the human rights category. It examined the deaths of officials and troops loyal to the ousted premier Norodom Ranariddh. Two decades on, and those killings remain unpunished.

MBN

- Although this happened in December, it deserves special mention in this report. MBN launched the first ever newscast that was live and simultaneously formatted for HDTV (16:9) and mobile phones (9:16). This allows the broadcast to fill the viewers' entire screen on their phone, opposed to having a smaller horizontal image where it is difficult to see details. By implementing this change, MBN provides the digital viewer a much better experience without compromising the television broadcast.
- In March, an Alhurra.com video profiling a Muslim women living in the U.S., was named a finalist for Webby award, one of the highest honors handed out in the internet community. "The Power of Forgiveness" was nominated for the Best Shortform Documentary. Winners will officially be announced on May 13th. The woman's son, who served in the U.S. Navy,

was gunned down and left in the streets for \$40. She talks about the pain of losing her son and the strength her faith gave her to forgive the murderer.

- MBN hosted a delegation of Congressional staffers at its Dubai bureau on March 17th. The group toured the new facility and meet with MBN President Amb. Alberto Fernandez. The delegation also met with several Alhurra producers and anchors to discuss the transformation and witness a town hall meeting. The visit to MBN was in coordination with USAGM Congressional Affairs.
- For years, MBN and many of the major pan-Arab media outlets, tended to ignore the Maghreb region of Northern Africa. That started to change with the launch of MBN's MaghrebVoices.com, a website dedicated to the Maghreb. That success was followed by the relaunch of Alhurra's programming schedule, which now includes two daily hour-long newscasts dedicated to covering this under reported region. When protests and fighting started in the Northern Africa nations of Algeria and Libya recently, MBN had the resources in place to provide its audience with the latest breaking news out of those countries.

USAGM MANGEMENT

OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY, SERVICES AND INNOVATION (TSI)

- Clean-up and damage assessment continues in the wake of massive Typhoon Yutu, which inflicted extensive damage on USAGM shortwave transmitting sites at Tinian and Saipan in the Northern Marianas Islands on October 24-25, 2018. Saipan station staff restored the first transmissions from a single antenna on February 22. These transmissions included vital RFA and VOA transmissions to North Korea and RFA transmissions to China. A second antenna at the Saipan station should be operational by the end of April. Commercial power has not yet returned to the station on Tinian, slowing recovery efforts there. Station staff are continuing to do other antenna repairs with available resources at both the Saipan and Tinian stations but this will be a slow process, probably extending over several years. USAGM Congressional Affairs staff are looking to secure additional resources in a proposed disaster recovery supplemental appropriations.
- TSI is working with MBN to explore restoring satellite service on Nilesat for Al Hurra broadcasts. TSI is also working with OCB to establish a channel on a satellite platform that will give very good direct to home coverage throughout Cuba.
- On March 14, BD signed an affiliate broadcast agreement with Ahadu FM in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Addis station will broadcast VOA Amharic live, Monday through Friday from 21:00-22:00 local time. Repeater transmitters will also broadcast the programming from this Addis based station in Adama, Hawassa, Dibre Birhan, Dire Dawa, and Gondor. VOA's program will carry on their Facebook page as well and on You Tube.
- After two years of applying for an FM license in Lusaka, the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) of Zambia finally granted USAGM a conditional license. BD's Johannesburg office is coordinating with Embassy Lusaka to process payment. The station should be on air by early June 2019.

- BD has expanded affiliates for Current Time with new stations taking "Asia 360," VOA's "Great American Road Trip" programs, and "Details." Current Time now has 90 distributors in 20 countries and 50 affiliates (9 of them in Russia).
- TSI's Information Security team is making very good progress on the Corrective Action Plan to address recommendations from the Inspector General's recent Audit of USAGM's Information Security Program. The agency should be in a good position to resolve many of the outstanding recommendations from the 2018 and earlier reports when the OIG begins their next FISMA audit sometime this spring.

OFFICE OF CONGRESSIONAL AFFAIRS

- Congressional Affairs hosted new staffers from the Senate Appropriations Committee and Senate Foreign Relations Committee during their recess week.
- Congressional Affairs met with the offices of Representatives Kaptur and Dingell to discuss their interest in resuming operations in Hungary. Kaptur and Dingell co-chair the House Hungarian Caucus.
- The Congressional team led Hill outreach on the release of the FY20 President's Budget. Congressional led a briefing to House appropriations staff with CFO Grant Turner's participation, and conducted a multiple individual briefings with the offices of Members of appropriations committees. Several staff expressed interest in visiting USAGM and VOA, and Congressional will work to set up those visits.
- Congressional Affairs arranged a week-long visit by House Foreign Affairs Committee staffers to visit USAGM operations abroad. The staffed, led by Tim Mulvey, Communications Director for Chairman Engel, visited MBN studios in Dubai, the Kuwait Transmission Station, and RFE/RL headquarters in Prague.
- At the request of Congressman Tom Rooney (R-FL 17th District), Congressional Affairs hosted a delegation from the Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans (PAAIA) to USAGM and VOA. PAAIA leadership met with VOA Persian and RFE/RL to learn about Persian language programming, observed the VOA Persian studios, and received a briefing on USAGM impact in Iran.

OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

- On February 15, CEO Lansing released a statement to USAGM stakeholders on the agency's modernization reforms and forward momentum.
- On February 27, CEO Lansing released a statement on USAGM's response to the OCB Soros production.

OFFICE OF POLICY AND RESEARCH (OPR)

- OPR spent much of this quarter working on a CEO request for a detailed audit and account of the editorial processes of each of USAGM's networks. OPR was charged with collecting, reviewing, and organizing the network editorial processes for Board review. OPR will compile their findings in a final editorial best practices/expectations document in an effort to improve the program review processes across the networks.

- OPR oversaw an independent review of OCB's programming in order to assess compliance with USAGM and OCB legislative requirements and established and codified journalistic principles detailed in the VOA Charter and related doctrine. Reviews were conducted in-language (i.e. Spanish) by five independent journalism experts who assessed OCB's digital, radio, and TV programming. Panelists are reviewing, collectively, 200 hours of OCB content that was randomly selected by OPR in order to systematically assess OCB's compliance with the agency's established journalistic standards. Panelists were provided content spanning nine months (April-December 2018) and responded to a survey for each program or story reviewed. Stories or programs flagged as problematic were then reviewed together during an in-person discussion amongst all the panelists and OPR staff on March 29. After a day-long in-person discussion, initial findings and recommendations will be drafted, reviewed by OPR, and then finalized for presentation to the CEO and Board. A draft report will be submitted to the Board in May.
- OPR organized a senior-level retreat for USAGM and network senior staff on March 4-5 at RFE/RL's Washington, D.C. offices. The retreat's primary goal was to assess agency-wide and network-by-network progress on key strategic priorities, and to map out a collective path forward for continued modernization. The retreat was broken up into four major sessions: (a) discussion of strategic vision; (b) future of infrastructure; (c) editorial independence and quality assurance; and (d) improved interagency collaboration and strategic partnerships.





To: John F. Lansing, CEO & Director
From: The CEO Office Team
Date: July 31, 2019
Subject: USAGM Activities for April through June 2019

OVERVIEW

This report encompasses key events ranging from early April through the end of June 2019. We remain focused on a number of challenges and opportunities across the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM) and its five networks.

A key highlight for USAGM this quarter was the first-of-its-kind Media for Democracy Forum. On May 7, USAGM hosted the event at the U.S. Institute of Peace, bringing together media experts, practitioners, opinion leaders, and policy makers to identify solutions to the biggest threats to free media and explore the most immediate and relevant information technology trends for journalism.

USAGM Board of Governors Chairman Ken Weinstein opened the day-long event and USAGM Director and CEO John F. Lansing and technology expert (b) (6) provided keynote address. Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX) and Congressman Chris Stewart (R-UT) offered remarks at the Media for Democracy Forum, where both Members gave strong endorsements of the work of USAGM and its journalists, as well as the role of a free press in a democracy. The forum also featured speakers and attendees from National Endowment for Democracy, Freedom House, The Atlantic Council, The Hudson Institute, Departments of State and Defense, USAID, IREX, CNN, Deutsche Welle, University of Southern California, as well as all five USAGM networks, among other prominent government, non-government and civil society experts and groups.

Another highpoint for USAGM this quarter was the April 12 release of the State Department Office of Inspector General (OIG) report on a targeted inspection of USAGM governance. To quote the OIG's topline finding in this report: "The governance structure in place at the U.S. Agency for Global Media since 2015—led by a Chief Executive Officer supported by a bipartisan board that had transitioned to a more advisory role—significantly improved executive direction of the agency compared to the board-led governance structure in place during OIG's 2013 inspection."

The report also includes praise for USAGM's efforts in strategic planning, increased collaboration among the networks, rebranding efforts, and security upgrades, among other areas. The report points out areas in which we can do better and makes specific recommendations for improvement. In response, CEO Lansing assigned his senior staff to address each of OIG's five recommendations and implementation is already underway. Chairman Weinstein and CEO Lansing sent a letter to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to update him on the agency's continued modernization and included the OIG's recently published inspection report.

On May 3, the agency commemorated World Press Freedom Day, a day to recognize the fundamental principles and human right of press freedom, and a significant day of observance across USAGM. Both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate introduced nearly identical resolutions marking the day, which mention that USAGM's networks "report and broadcast news, information,

and analysis in critical regions around the world” while its “journalists regularly face harassment, fines, and imprisonment for their work.” A number of USAGM-branded projects and products were planned for the day, including the public launch of USAGM’s all-network collaborative web project on press freedom, *The Fight for Press Freedom*, and a [public statement from CEO Lansing](#).

Successes on the network side were numerous this quarter, especially for MBN. The MBN/Sawa transformation took place on June 30. MBN launched a transformed Sawa Levant stream targeting Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinian Territories. The radio network will be modeled after the successful Iraq stream of Radio Sawa and include long-form news and information programs, as well as a call-in program, that are specific to the Levant. The new Sawa increases the amount of news and discussion programs to more than 17 hours each day. The change comes as part of MBN’s ongoing transformation of its radio, television and digital platforms. Sawa can be heard on MW and FM transmitters in Lebanon, Jordan, and the Palestinian Territories, with several transmitters broadcasting into Syria and to the Arabic-speaking population of Israel. Sawa also broadcasts on a network of FM transmitters in Iraq for its Iraq stream. As MBN realigned Radio Sawa radio transmissions to focus on more intensive information services to Iraq and the Levant regions, TSI helped to coordinate the technical realignment of these transmission services.

USAGM swept up impressive hardware at this year’s Murrow Awards. RFE/RL and RFA were named winners of the prestigious 2019 National Murrow Awards. This is the first time the two networks have received this honor, presented by the Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA) for “demonstrate[ing] the spirit of excellence that Murrow set” as a standard in electronic journalism. RFE/RL won for Multimedia in the [Television Network](#) category. The eleven examples of exceptional RFE/RL news reporting and journalistic skill according to RTDNA judges are available [here](#). RFA Mandarin’s video, *The Women Against the State*, earned the distinction in the juried contest’s category of Excellence in Video. The video focuses on the aftermath of China’s “709” Crackdown – a nationwide roundup of lawyers and legal activists that began in July 2015 – and the wives of those still held in custody today. USAGM issued this [press release](#) about the networks’ achievement.

A number of ongoing challenges remain for the USAGM networks. On March 29, the Burundi National Council of Communication issued decisions suspending VOA’s broadcasts in that country indefinitely and also suspending BBC’s license to operate. The decision extends the May 2018 suspension of VOA FM programming in the country. Perhaps more concerning, the decisions also forbid any journalist – Burundian or foreign – inside Burundi to provide information to VOA or BBC. USAGM remains concerned about the safety of stringers in the country and views this expanded ban as a significant threat. In response, the Office of Policy and Research (OPR) worked with the Office of Public Affairs (OPA) to provide input to the State Department for a statement from the podium calling on the government of Burundi to rescind their decision to suspend VOA. While TSI explores other options to replace the now silenced FM station in Bujumbura, VOA content will continue to be available in Kirundi and Kinyarwanda via shortwave channels, on the internet, and on FM transmitters located in neighboring countries.

On May 21, as part of the sweeping reform effort at the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB) and response to the Soros issue, the agency released the results of the external, third-party audit of OCB content. OPA distributed a [CEO statement](#) to key stakeholders and the Office of the CEO (OCEO) began convening a weekly working group to move forward on the key findings of the report.

Along the same line of OCB reform, CEO Lansing, Deputy Director for Operations Matt Walsh, Acting Chief Strategy Officer Shawn Powers, Senior Advisor and Strategist to the CEO Steve Capus, and Special Assistant to the CEO Office Chelsea Milko visited OCB headquarters in Miami, Florida, on June 13. The team met with several members of OCB senior management to move forward on the reform recommendations. In addition, CEO Lansing and Director Regalado participated in a town hall with OCB employees.

On the USAGM operations side, the agency received its FY20 mark from the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations. The topline funding total for the agency stayed at the FY19 level of \$807.9M (\$798.2M for IBO, and \$9.7M for BCI). However, the House report outlines some substantial shifts within that topline. The mark for OCB is \$12.97M, a decrease of \$16.17M from FY19. VOA receives an increase of \$9.94M for a new total of \$260M. IBB is marked for an increase of \$1.23M. Both RFE/RL and RFA see an increase of \$2M, and MBN received an increase of \$1M. The report also outlines the Committees interest in the expansion Current Time, North Korean and Uyghur-language programming as well as maintaining programming on Tibet, the Balkans, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. USAGM Congressional Affairs continued to respond to Senate inquiries as they developed their bill.

THREATS AND CHALLENGES

VOA

- VOA Zimbabwe Service stringer (b) (6) was detained after taking photographs at a police roadblock. He contacted the Media Institute of Southern Africa, which sent attorney (b) (6) to the Rimuka police station where he was being held. (b) (6) was released after three hours without charge. He intends to sue the arresting officer for unlawful arrest.
- VOA South Sudan stringer (b) (6) was detained by security officers after interviewing children shining shoes near the customs market for a story on child labor. Security officers released her after several hours but kept her recorder. They said that the equipment would be returned to her when she showed proper press accreditation.

RFE/RL

- Ukrainian Service freelancer (b) (6) continues to be held incommunicado by Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine's so-called Donetsk People's Republic. (b) (6), who disappeared in June 2017, was last seen publicly in a "[highly questionable](#)" video confession that aired on Russian state TV channel Rossiya 24 on August 17, 2018.

- An American citizen, who is on an RFE/RL contract as a Central Newsroom journalist based in Kyiv, Ukraine, recently discovered his personal apartment was surreptitiously entered. This journalist is known to report on very sensitive issues. In response, Corporate Security had a physical security check and a Technical Security Counter-Measures (TSCM) sweep done on the apartment. The TSCM sweep discovered a flowerpot filled with concrete located in the kitchen of the apartment that contains an inactive electronic surveillance device. On our request, the Regional Security Officer (RSO) from the US Embassy-Kiev retrieved the flower pot for examination which continues. Additional information revealed that the flower pot was a gift from the contractor's landlady; RFE/RL has since discovered that the landlady's mother is likely an employee (or former employee) of the Security Services of Ukraine (SBU).
- On April 3, veteran RFE/RL correspondent in Turkmenistan, (b) (6) was killed in a car crash as he was returning to his home in Ashgabat from a reporting assignment in the western province of Balkan. RFE/RL Turkmen Service reporting on Turkmenistan's hazardous roads, including by Bugaev, led Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov to publicly reprimand his Interior Minister Isgender Mulikov on April 4 for failing to rid the roads of private taxis "that violate the rules and cause accidents".
- Pressure on RFE/RL journalists in Kazakhstan continues to build, during a period of instability in the country coinciding with the sudden resignation in March of longtime President Nursultan Nazarbayev. On April 2, a regional court in western Kazakhstan upheld a lower court decision to fine correspondent Saniya Toiken the equivalent of \$135 for refusing to follow police orders while covering a protest over jobs in the western city of Zhanaozen. Toiken, a 2017 recipient of 2017 Courage in Journalism Award from the International Women's Media Foundation, is appealing the ruling. The same day, (b) (6) a correspondent for Current Time, was fined the equivalent of \$66 by a court in the Kazakh capital, now called Nur-Sultan, for allegedly assaulting a teenage girl while reporting on demonstrations there last month. (b) (6) says the girl was trying to prevent her from documenting the arrests of several protesters. Video from the rally shows police telling RFE/RL correspondents to report about a nearby concert and "positive things," and failing to intervene. Two RFE/RL Kazakh Service cameramen – (b) (6) and (b) (6) – had problems involving their cars. In one case, the car was broken into and robbed, while the car of the other cameraman was blocked in a free parking zone, effectively keeping both from documenting the rallies.
- In May, RFE/RL Kyrgyz Service investigative reporter (b) (6) was harassed physically and legally, in retaliation for his in-depth reporting on corruption in his home town of Osh. (b) (6) April 17 investigation into "How Tax Evasion Works For Businessmen In Osh" led Kyrgyzstan's Financial Police to launch a criminal investigation –and one of the targets of the investigation, a retired police colonel and so-called "godfather" of a hidden business empire to file a lawsuit, which was withdrawn on May 7 following a massive public outcry.



- At a time when Tajikistan seeks to crack down on independent voices, RFE/RL Tajik Service's website has been completely blocked within the country since May 7, following an extended period of being partially inaccessible.
- On May 13, another investigation into underground casinos in Osh resulted in a physical attack on (b) (6) outside a hotel where one of the casinos is thought to be located, during which (b) (6) face and hands were scratched and his clothes were torn. On May 13, RFE/RL reported that a journalist from Radio Liberty's Kyrgyz Service, known locally as (b) (6), was attacked in the city of Osh in southern Kyrgyzstan as he was shooting a video about underground casinos. Unknown men attacked journalist (b) (6) as he was shooting a video about places where underground casinos are presumably located. A correspondent from the local NUR television channel was also attacked.
- Also on May 13, RFE/RL Armenian Service reporters were threatened and harassed as they reported on the trial in Yerevan of former Armenian president Robert Kocharian on charges of overthrowing the constitutional order during the final weeks of his decade-long rule that ended in April 2008.
- RFE/RL's Georgian Service covered aggressive anti-LGBT rallies in Tbilisi, just days before gay-rights activists plan to hold a series of events to mark "Tbilisi Pride" week. The Service journalist and Vaclav Havel Journalism Fellow (b) (6) was verbally assaulted during one such a rally on June 7. He was wearing a red T-shirt, and anti-gay protesters mistook him for an LGBTQ activist. Police officers intervened and advised RFE/RL's journalists to leave the scene, in order not to irritate the protesters. At that point, other journalists came to support (b) (6) explaining to police that he was simply covering the story.
- In June, two RFE/RL reporters were briefly detained as they covered the controversial presidential election in Kazakhstan on June 9. This was one day after Kazakh authorities denied accreditation to seven RFE/RL journalists who had traveled to Kazakhstan from other countries to report on the vote. Another six RFE/RL journalists were not allowed to report on the balloting from Kazakh embassies in Prague, Moscow, and Kyiv.
- On June 13, RFE/RL Tajik Service reporter (b) (6) was attacked by a bus conductor while reporting on public transportation problems in the capital, Dushanbe. After (b) (6) asked the conductor his name, the driver of the bus tried to grab (b) (6) camera. Later, the driver cursed and intimidated the reporters until they left the scene. The conductor and driver of the bus were angered that RFE/RL asked them why they hadn't left the station as scheduled. The whole incident was filmed and included in the report. The head of RFE/RL's bureau in Dushanbe has filed a formal complaint with the police, who promised to investigate.
- The website of RFE/RL's Radio Mashaal continues to be blocked in much of Pakistan.

RFA

- RFA Vietnamese broke news in March on the fate of two of its journalists who have fallen foul of the communist government in Vietnam. On March 20, RFA reported the whereabouts of blogger (b) (6) who had been missing since submitting an asylum application with the U.N. in Thailand in late Jan. (b) (6) in Canada told RFA that the prominent writer is in a Hanoi prison.
- RFA Vietnamese also reported, with considerable relief, that cameraman (b) (6) who is serving a 7-year prison term for his coverage of an environmental disaster, has ended a hunger strike he staged for 12 days starting in late Feb. to protest beatings by police and prison guards. RFA Viet received that news in a phone interview on March 26 with (b) (6) who cited a letter from (b) (6). He ended his strike after a visit from family members urging him to start eating again.
- In June, Human Rights Watch published a piece calling for Cambodian authorities to drop all charges against two former RFA Khmer employees. In November 2017, two former RFA employees, former chief photographer (b) (6) and former office manager (b) (6) were detained by Cambodian authorities and charged with spying. Last year, Cambodia's government released the two in a move seen as a government attempt to improve its image after a controversial election. The two former employees face trial in Phnom Penh at the end of July. RFA, USAGM, and the press freedom community continue to demand that all charges against them be dropped and their case dismissed. RFA's Phnom Penh bureau remains closed since a crackdown by Hun Sen's government in September 2017.
- RFA's radio signal to western china (Tibet and Uyghur regions) still have limited capabilities and poor audibility, despite Herculean efforts by TSI to create a redundant and resilient satellite plan for RFA in Asia after recent AsiaSat and Telstar challenges. RFA remains concerned that the Chinese government's advanced voice recognition technology is keeping its Uyghur reporters from making contact in the region.

NETWORK MANAGEMENT, CONTENT AND INITIATIVES

VOA

- VOA Learning English's staff members travelled at the end of March to the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, to conduct training for a group of 100 English teachers. The training program included follow-up virtual classroom sessions, as well as VOA Learning English content accessible at the camp's learning centers and through mobile devices. The team was invited by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to provide six days of intensive training on teaching techniques and methods. The teachers, in turn, will use the acquired knowledge to train another 3,000 teachers to provide English lessons for refugees in the camp.

- VOA won three medals at the 2019 New York Festivals International TV and Film Awards ceremony at the National Association of Broadcasters show in Las Vegas on April 9, 2019. VOA's documentary, *Displaced*, detailing the experiences of the Rohingya Muslim refugees currently living in the Kutupalong camp in Bangladesh, won a Gold World Medal in the International Affairs Documentary category, a Silver World Medal in the Best News Documentary/Special News Program category, as well as a United Nations Department of Public Information (UNDPI) special Bronze Award. VOA contributor (b) (6) and a camera crew shot the documentary in the Rohingya refugee camp last summer. The team detailed the experiences and current living conditions of more than 700,000 displaced Rohingya Muslims that sought refuge in Bangladesh, after Burmese military operations in neighboring Myanmar caused them to flee. In addition to the multi-winner documentary *Displaced*, VOA's digital project, *Cambodia Adrift*, was a finalist in the Digital Special Event category.
- VOA's Georgian Service, along with U.S. Representatives Ted Poe (R-TX) and Gerry Connolly (D-VA), as well as Kenneth Angel, managing director of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), received Georgian Publishing House Sakhelebi's award for its contributions to U.S.-Georgian bilateral relations. Sakhelebi, is a Georgian partner of The New York Times annual project Turning Points. The award recipients were honored on April 11 at a reception hosted by the Georgian Embassy at the U.S. House of Representatives Rayburn building foyer. The event also served as a celebration for the centennial anniversary of the Georgian parliament.
- On World Press Freedom Day, May 3, VOA launched its new press freedom project—A Free Press Matters. The campaign will document the challenges, threats and intimidation facing journalists worldwide, and the creative and courageous ways that journalists are using to deliver news despite serious risks. A new press freedom microsite is available on www.voanews.com and will feature relevant content contributed by VOA's global broadcasting teams.
- VOA and USAGM, alongside the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and IREX hosted a panel discussion on May 30 at the Embassy of Uzbekistan in DC. Topics of discussion included U.S.-Uzbek cooperation, new international activities, and reformation in the economic and media sectors of the country. The event featured Javlon Vakhobov, Uzbek Ambassador to the United States; Lisa Curtis, Deputy Assistant to the President and National Security Council Senior Director for South and Central Asia; Dr. Frederick Starr, Chairman, Central Asia - Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program; and (b) (6) Journalist, VOA's Uzbek Service.
- VOA had its best showing ever in this year's Chesapeake Associated Press Broadcasters Association contest with first-place finishes in five of the 39 large-market TV and radio categories and another two second-place finishes. A total of 22 broadcast stations took part this year in the annual competition, including all the major network affiliates in Washington and Baltimore. The winners were announced on June 8 in Ocean City, MD. The VOA

winners were (b) (6), (b) (6), and (b) (6) in the Outstanding Public Affairs category for *The Damage Done: Living America's Opioid Nightmare*; (b) (6) in the Outstanding Feature or Human Interest Story category for *Love and Barbeque*; (b) (6) and (b) (6) in the Outstanding Digital Feature Project category for *Greenland is Melting*; (b) (6) in the Outstanding Specialty Reporting category for *Military Beat*; (b) (6), (b) (6) and (b) (6) in the Outstanding Enterprise Reporting category for *Macy's Hijab Debate*. The second-place finishers were (b) (6), (b) (6) and (b) (6) in the Outstanding Digital News Project category for *Women and the Midterms*; and (b) (6) and (b) (6) in the Outstanding Digital Feature Project category for *Reflections on Race in the Military*.

- On World Refugee Day, June 20, VOA received a Gabriel Award for its film *Displaced*, which documents the experiences of the Rohingya Muslim refugees currently living in the Kutupalong camp in Bangladesh. The VOA documentary received first place in the "Hot Topic: Human Dignity – English Television" category as well as an honorable mention in the "Special or Documentary – Less than 60 Minutes" category. More information is available in this [VOA press release](#).

OCB

- On Monday, April 8, Radio Marti began airing a 12 half hour documentary series on the Cuban Catholic Church that grew up in exile. The series focuses on the events and people that came together as a result of the Cuban exodus fleeing the Cuban dictatorship.
- *Arcoiris* (English: Rainbow), a one hour weekly Radio Marti show highlighting the LGBTQ community in Cuba and around the world, is resonating with Cuban audiences. The program, hosted by Joe Cardona, is committed to sharing a wide array of perspectives with listeners on the island. *Arcoiris* seeks to engage audiences on the social, historical, political, and health issues particularly faced by the Cuban LGBTQ community. So far, *Arcoiris* has received steady, positive feedback on social media and listeners say that it is a respected radio show among the LGBTQ community in Cuba.

RFE/RL

- On April 2, RFE/RL Regional Broadcasting Director (b) (6) and Tajik Service Director (b) (6) tendered their resignations, effective immediately. (b) (6) was succeeded by Kyrgyz Service Director (b) (6) on an acting basis; (b) (6) is stepping in as Kyrgyz Service Director. (b) (6) is succeeded by Central Asia News Service project leader (b) (6).

- Five young journalists from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Russia participating in the 2018-2019 class of the Vaclav Havel Journalism Fellowship visited Washington from April 1-5. While in Washington, the Fellows spoke at a public event at the National Endowment for Democracy; toured Washington bureaus of CNN, NBC/MSNBC, and Al Jazeera; met with senior journalists at the Arizona State University's Cronkite School of Journalism (b) (6), the University of Maryland's Phillip Merrill College of Journalism (b) (6), and the National Press Club (b) (6); and met with McCain Institute Director, Ambassador (b) (6).
- In response to its website blockage, the Tajik Service increased content production for [YouTube](#) and other social media, launched [Telegram](#) and [YandexZen](#) accounts, and reactivated its newsletter. During the week of May 5-11, the Service's YouTube channel registered a 20 percent increase in YouTube views over the previous week, registering some 3.8 million views and now has more than 690,000 subscribers.
- The Bulgarian Service organized a [formal dedication of its bureau](#) in the Bulgarian capital, Sofia, on June 12, attended by U.S. Ambassador to Bulgaria Eric Rubin, and other dignitaries. The launch event comes as [pressure builds locally](#) against the Service following the recent publication of its [successful](#) anti-corruption [exposes](#).

RFA

- Reporting by RFA's Burmese Service video journalist (b) (6) on fighting in Shan State highlighted the abduction of a village administrator. (b) (6) had traveled to [the scene of clashes](#) between the Burmese military and two rebel groups, the Shan State Progressive Party and the Ta'ang Nationalities Liberation Army in Namtu township, where the village of Mongmu was still smoldering after houses were hit by heavy weapons. About one week after [his report](#) was broadcast on March 28, the administrator was freed by rebels. RFA had been the only media organization to report on his abduction.
- RFA's Lao Service led coverage of the detention of three U.S. citizens who were picked up by authorities as they distributed Christian material in northern Laos. The [story broke](#) on April 12 after a representative of the Wyoming based group Vision Without Borders contacted the Lao Service. RFA was the first news outlet to confirm the detentions with Lao police. Few news organizations have a window on events in Laos, and RFA's reporting was cited by [The Associated Press](#) and other outlets. RFA was also out front in covering the [April 18 deportation](#) of the three Americans. Among the unlucky ones is a local Christian in southern Savannakhet province, whose arrest and beating was reported by RFA on April 25. RFA obtained a photo of the man in detention, [wearing shackles](#). An official of the ruling party organization that handles religious affairs in the communist nation claimed the man was arrested for illegal logging not for his religious beliefs. Predictably, none of these incidents were reported by Lao state media.

- RFA's Khmer Service won a [Bronze World Medal](#) in the 2018 New York Festivals TV & Film Awards in the category [Human Rights](#) reporting for its documentary entitled *Impunity and Justice*. The report looks back at Cambodia in July 1997, when second minister Hun Sen launched a bloody coup against the first prime minister, Prince Norodom Ranariddh. Hundreds were injured or killed, including at least 60 loyalist to the Prince who were executed extra-judicially. Over two decades later, some are still fighting to bring those responsible for the murders to justice.
- RFA's Mandarin Service was awarded a [Finalist Certificate](#) for its special news report entitled *The Women Against The State*. To date, it has already been three years since China's 709 Crackdown that shocked the world. Since July 9, 2015, more than 300 human rights lawyers and citizen activists have been arrested, summoned, and criminally detained nationwide. To date, the Chinese government has continuously harassed 709 family members. The more intense the crackdown, the stronger the women-led pursuit of justice.
- On June 24, RFA received honors for two news features at the 2019 [New York Festivals Radio Awards](#), an annual juried competition recognizing achievements in broadcast media. RFA's Mandarin Service won a [Silver Medal](#) in the News Features category for its [Gray Rhino series](#), a set of short videos focused on China's financial sector and its risks for ordinary citizens. RFA Korean Service's [North Korean Refugees in Canada](#) was a finalist in the same category.
- After nearly a year off the terrestrial television airwaves in Myanmar, RFA's Burmese Service resumed its regular broadcasts on May 17 that had been [suspended](#) over a dispute over RFA's insistence on using "Rohingya" to describe the Muslim minority of that name. RFA Burmese now has seven weekly, half-hour slots on the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) channel. While news consumers in Myanmar increasingly use Facebook to access RFA content, research last year suggested that the shows aired on DVB accounted for about one-quarter of RFA Burmese audience in the country.

MBN

- An Alhurra.com video titled [The Power of Forgiveness](#) won the People's Voice Award in the category of Best Documentary: Shortform at the 2019 Webby Awards. The video profiles a Muslim women living in the U.S. whose Navy veteran son was gunned down and left in the streets for \$40. She talks about the pain of loss and the strength her faith gave her to forgive the men who murdered her son.
- In April, Alhurra Television co-sponsored the 14th annual Erbil International Book Fair, one of the largest cultural events in Kurdistan, Iraq. Considered a bridge between the Arabic and Kurdish cultures, the ten-day event attracted publishing industry professionals from over 30 countries. During the conference, Alhurra hosted a panel discussion on the portrayal of terrorism in art, featuring [\(b\) \(6\)](#) the host of *Debatable*, one of the channel's most talked about shows.



USAGM MANGEMENT

OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY, SERVICES AND INNOVATION (TSI)

- Clean-up and repairs continue at USAGM's Tinian and Saipan transmitting stations in the wake of last October's devastating super Typhoon Yutu. Two antennas repaired at the Saipan site and one antenna repaired at the Tinian site are now in operation. The local staff at the transmitting stations continues to work diligently to restore as many transmissions as possible with available resources. They hope to restore five out of 14 antennas by the end of FY 19.
- Business Development's (BD) Latin American Marketing Office hosted a three-day conference at Washington headquarters for visiting Nicaraguan / Venezuelan affiliates, all of whom have been experiencing media repression in their home countries.
- BD has expanded affiliates for Current Time with new stations taking "Asia 360," VOA's "Great American Road Trip" programs, and "Details." Current Time now has 90 distributors in 20 countries and 50 affiliates (9 of them in Russia).
- BD finalized a broadcast agreement at the end of April with the Democratic Voice of Burma to begin to air RFA's Burmese language TV programming once again.
- BD has been working on developing a market competitive Over the Top (OTT) / Video on Demand (VOD) platform, branded individually, for use by USAGM's five broadcast networks. OCB launched their OTT platform in late May. Launches of platforms to serve RFA and Al Hurra will follow soon thereafter.
- The Office of Inspector General (OIG) held an entrance conference for the beginning of their FY19 Federal Information System Management Act (FISMA) audit of USAGM information systems and policies on May 9. We were very pleased to report that the agency has completed an Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) Framework, Information System Risk Management (ISRM) Framework, and ISRM Strategy. The agency expects to close all outstanding FY 18 recommendations by the end of FY 20.
- The expansion of USAGM 24 hour FM stations in Africa continues. New station implementations are proceeding for Lusaka, Zambia, and Gaborone, Botswana. Relocations and performance upgrades will enhance existing USAGM stations in Bangui, Central African Republic, and Juba, South Sudan. It is also designing low power FM transmitter implementations for the Kakuma and Dadaab Refugee Camps in Kenya.
- TSI is assisting OCB in installing three more modern and reliable shortwave transmitters at the Greenville Transmitting Station for broadcasts to Cuba, repairing the Marathon medium

wave antenna towers, and acquiring a more cost-effective satellite service to replace Hispasat.

- The agency awarded a contract on June 4 for a new Nilesat channel for MBN's Alhurra service.
- VOA Urdu TV affiliate Aaj TV was forced off the air in Pakistan after it refused to drop the VOA program from its lineup. The affiliate has since been placed back on cable systems, but they are still unable to air the VOA Urdu program.
- The Government of Ukraine is seeking resources to establish a medium wave transmitter to broadcast USAGM and other programs to Crimea. TSI and other agency elements will provide assistance, and Embassy Kiev may be able to grant funding.

OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT SERVICES

- Since May, the agency provides mandatory firewall training to all employees and contractors, beyond the mandatory training for VOA staff that is already in place. In the past, many USAGM and OCB staff members are unaware of the firewall's existence, importance, and function. USAGM's Office of Workforce Support and Development (OWSD) offers the training, which specifically answers the most common questions related to the firewall, which include "What is the firewall?" and "What is a firewall violation?"
- The Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey opened for a six-week period from May 21 to July 5. This year, the agency's response rate reached 51%, about 7% down from the previous year. The highest response rate came from VOA and the lowest came from OCB.
- USAGM closed its latest buyout period on June 21. The final number of accepted/finalized buyout offers is 40.

OFFICE OF CONGRESSIONAL AFFAIRS

- In April, Ambassador Crocker and Director of Congressional Affairs Ellona Fritschie attended a meeting with House appropriators. CEO Lansing joined Ambassador Crocker and Ms. Fritschie for a meeting with Senate appropriators. These meetings provided an opportunity to highlight the strategic priorities of USAGM and its networks, and to seek high-level support for FY20 funds.

- For World Press Freedom Day, OPA featured [a blog from CEO Lansing](#) which was widely distributed via PR Newswire and cross-posted on the Department of State's Dipnote blog page, providing it with even greater visibility.
- OPA supported the "[Media for Democracy Forum](#)" at the U.S. Institute of Peace on May 7 which brought together media experts, practitioners, opinion leaders and policy makers to identify solutions to the biggest threats to free media and explore the most immediate and relevant information technology trends for journalism.
- [The Washington Post](#), [Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas](#)(blog), [Miami Herald](#), and [Voice of America](#) published stories on the results of the external audit of OCB content, released on May 21. OPA distributed a [CEO statement](#) to key OCB and USAGM stakeholders. Both the report and statement are available on the USAGM.gov website.

OFFICE OF POLICY AND RESEARCH (OPR)

- On April 2, VOA and the Office of Policy and Research (OPR) organized a deep dive on Ethiopia. The event discussed Ethiopia's rapid and challenging transition to democracy, as well as VOA's substantial reach and impactful presence in the country's politics. Panelists from academia and government discussed Ethiopia's dramatic political reforms and the challenges facing the country. Key stakeholders from the State Department, think-tanks, and other interagency partners participated, as did USAGM journalists who cover this target area by producing timely, relevant, fact-based content.
- On May 23, USAGM hosted a deep dive on the geopolitics of the news. (b) (6), visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University and a senior fellow at the Center for Media, Data and Society at Central European University, joined USAGM to discuss the current state of global media and the critical role that journalism plays in foreign affairs. Shawn Powers, USAGM Acting Chief Strategy Officer, moderated the discussion. The premise of this discussion was that the institutions that support Western journalism are in decline. The vacuum is filled by non-Western outlets from countries like China and Russia, and both countries are filling in this gap rather rapidly and have budgets that go way beyond what we are investing in public broadcasting in the West. The implications of this phenomenon go beyond the balance and accuracy of international reporting.
- Acting Chief Strategy Officer Shawn Powers published an explanation of the Agency's research methods and global reach estimates, published via USC's Center on Public Diplomacy on April 3, entitled [USAGM'S Global Reach: More than Meets the Eye](#).

- In May, CEO Lansing and Ambassador Crocker met with House Foreign Affairs Committee Ranking Member Mike McCaul (R-TX). They discussed agency operations and leadership, as well as the situation in the Middle East.
- CEO Lansing met with Congressman Dean Phillips (D-MN) and briefed him on the agency, its global networks in Russian and Farsi, and the firewall.
- CEO Lansing met with Senator Todd Young (R-IN), who serves on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The CEO briefed the Senator on the agency and its networks, discussed USAGM's work in Russia, China, Iran, and Venezuela, and spoke in depth about how the agency monitors its impact.
- CEO Lansing, Ambassador Crocker, and the Congressional Affairs team met with SACFO staff (b) (6) and (b) (6) to discuss the agency's proposal to move to a new building.
- A professional staff member of the Senate Appropriations Foreign Operations Subcommittee visited USAGM operations in Montenegro, Czech Republic, Ukraine, and Georgia in late April.
- Congressional Affairs conducted outreach with nearly 25 offices on the release of the OCB content review in late May. In addition to the Senate appropriations meeting, CEO Lansing and Director Regalado briefed House Foreign Affairs Committee staff on the report and areas of reform at OCB.
- Congressional Affairs, along with VOA and OGC, briefed Senate Foreign Relations Committee and Homeland Security Committee staff on the denial of VOA contractor petitions for citizenship by USCIS. These denials have resulted in the loss of work authorization for some contractors. The Senate staff offered to inquire with USCIS on their policies and seek clarity on why these petitions are being denied.
- During the Memorial Day recess, Congressional hosted staff from Senator Cardin and Reps. Kaptur, Bishop, and Phillips for a visit to the Cohen building. Staff spoke with VOA leadership in the Eurasia division, visited the Current Time studio and the Network Control Center, and received a briefing on USAGM research and impact evaluation.

OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

- OPA organized the April 4 USAGM Global Town Hall. The video is available on [Workplace](#) and [SharePoint](#).
- Wall Street Journal published a piece on RFE/RL's Tajik Service on April 25, detailing inquiries from State and OIG about biased reporting, and noted that both departments declined to comment. [Government Executive](#) ran a piece on [RFE/RL's rebuttal](#) and stories were also published in the [Columbia Journalism Review](#), [O'Dwyer's PR News](#), and [Politico](#).