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From: Board of Governors

Date: March 6, 2019

Subject: **Minutes of the USAGM Board Meeting of March 6, 2019**

The Board of Governors for the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM) met today in the Cohen Building (USAGM headquarters) in Washington, D.C. The meeting was open for public attendance as seating capacity allowed and for public observation via streaming on the USAGM website.

The meeting was attended by the following Board members:

Chairman Kenneth Weinstein  
Governor Leon Aron  
Governor Michael Kempner  
Governor Karen Kornbluh  
Michelle Giuda, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs

Governors Ryan Crocker and Jeffrey Shell were not in attendance.

The agenda of the meeting is set forth in Attachment 1.

Chairman Weinstein called the meeting to order and noted that the meeting was being held in compliance with the Government in the Sunshine Act and streamed live over the internet at the USAGM website. A digital recording of this meeting can be found at the agency's new website—[www.usagm.gov](http://www.usagm.gov).

The Chairman began by welcoming Michelle Giuda, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs. On February 5, Secretary of State Pompeo delegated to Ms. Giuda the authorities of the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. Ms. Giuda said that it was her honor to participate as Secretary Pompeo's representative on the Board and she looks forward to working with everyone at USAGM.

The Chairman turned to the topic of threats to press. He expressed, on behalf of the Board, condolences to the Alhurra family on the death of Alhurra-Iraq assistant videographer Samer Ali Shakara. Samer was just 29 when he was killed in Baghdad on January 9 after an apparent carjacking that turned fatal.

Every day, journalists for the networks of USAGM risk harassment, physical harm, and imprisonment simply to do their jobs. In recent months journalists from Vietnam to Venezuela, Uzbekistan to Ukraine, have felt increasing pressure.

## VIETNAM

Popular blogger and RFA contributor Truong Duy Nhat has been missing for more than three weeks since he fled his home in Da Nang, Vietnam, for neighboring Thailand to seek asylum. It is feared that Mr. Nhat was abducted and taken back to Vietnam for imprisonment and interrogation.

Also in Vietnam, RFA contributor Nguyen Van Hoa remains imprisoned, serving a 7-year sentence, after daring to report on protests following a toxic-waste spill in 2016. He has been repeatedly beaten in detention and forced to make a false confession, which Vietnamese authorities used to convict an environmental activist. Mr. Hoa recanted that confession at a court hearing last August, possibly subjecting himself to renewed torture.

## SUDAN

Since the outbreak of demonstrations in Sudan and the extensive coverage that MBN has given the events, the Sudanese authorities have been obstructing the work of the Al Hurra reporter, Abdelbagi Alawad Aldaw Mohamed, in Khartoum. After a two week delay he was finally granted journalist accreditation. However, the Sudanese government has retracted those credentials without explanation.

## RUSSIA

Russian officials have launched a retaliatory criminal investigation into Radio Svoboda contributor Svetlana Prokopyeva in a clear attempt to silence the journalist. She faces up to seven years in prison on charges of “justifying terrorism.” Human Rights Watch has condemned the investigation as a “misuse of anti-terrorism laws to stifle free speech.” Reporters Without Borders has called the investigation “baseless”

## UKRAINE

RFE/RL Ukrainian Service freelancer [Stanislav Aseyev](#) continues to be held incommunicado by Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine’s so-called Donetsk People’s Republic. Aseyev disappeared in June 2017 and was last seen publicly in a “[highly questionable](#)” video confession that aired on Russian state TV channel Rossiya 24 on August 17, 2018.

## VENEZUELA

A VOA Spanish reporter was followed to her hotel by Venezuelan paramilitary police after she’d spent time reporting from Caracas. The owner of the hotel as well as the guests stopped the police from entering the premises. The journalist is taking necessary precautions to remain safe.

## IRAQI KURDISTAN

On February 5 the car of a VOA Kurdish Service stringer was set on fire outside of his home. Authorities discovered evidence of arson and are investigating. Another VOA Kurdish stringer has been charged with “promoting terror” in retaliation for reporter done in 2014 and 2015. The stringer’s court date has not yet been set.

## PAKISTAN

[Pressure](#) on RFE/RL’s Pashto-language operations in Pakistan have intensified since the forced closure of its Islamabad bureau last year. For the past six months, Mashaal’s website has been blocked throughout the country. RFE/RL freelancers working in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province

have also faced significantly increased pressure in the past two months from Pakistani intelligence agencies.

## UZBEKISTAN

RFE/RL correspondents continue to be harassed and [persecuted in Uzbekistan](#). A home owned by RFE/RL Uzbek Service journalist Shukrat Babajanov was seized in August by a court in Uzbekistan; Babajanov claims the seizure is an act of political retribution motivated by his work for RFE/RL and that it follows a pattern of other actions by the government against him and his family.

Turning to Board business, Chairman Weinstein stated that the presence of five or more Governors satisfies the Board's quorum requirement, permitting the Board to conduct business based on majority vote. He said that the Board had received by email materials for the consent agenda on February 22, 2019. He added that he did not receive comments from any Governors.

Ms. Guida moved to table Board consideration of the agency's Smith-Mundt guidelines, pending further review by the State Department's legal team. Chairman Weinstein seconded the motion. Without objection, the Board unanimously voted to table the vote on the Smith-Mundt guidelines. Chairman Weinstein then moved for adoption of the remainder of the consent agenda. Governor Kempner seconded. Without objection, the remainder of the consent agenda was unanimously adopted by the Board.

In accordance with the Board's prior protocol for allowing members of the public to speak at meetings, the Chairman invited the public to address the Board for three minutes. No members of the public were present to speak at the meeting.

Next, Chairman Weinstein asked CEO Lansing to report on agency operations since the last Board meeting.

CEO Lansing began by noting two personnel updates. First, he welcomed Steve Capus, former President of NBC News, who started on February 19 as a consultant. Steve serves as an expert to CEO Lansing and USAGM, providing advice and guidance on various aspects of broadcast and digital journalism to international audiences.

CEO Lansing then spoke about the December 7, 2018 appointment of Daisy Sindelar to the role of Vice President and Acting President of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Daisy joined RFE/RL in 2001 and has extensive knowledge of RFE/RL's programming and operations as well as fluency in the Russian language.

CEO Lansing then turned to the U.S. International Coordinating Committee (ICC) to highlight their progress in several key strategic areas of USAGM. Before he invited each of the ICC to give a brief report, CEO Lansing highlighted some recent key events, including the February 7 soft launch of VOA 365, a 24/7 Persian-language global network, and a March 5 VOA 365 showcase event held on Capitol Hill.

The CEO also gave an update on the OCB Soros issue, including the agency’s fulsome response, which includes a recently completed, comprehensive human resources investigation of the incident and an independent third-party review of OCB content.

VOA Director Amanda Bennett spoke about a new show called *Our Voices*, which launched in early December 2018. It is a half-hour English TV program focusing on African women throughout the continent and around the world. Director Bennet also highlighted VOA’s comprehensive coverage of the Venezuela crisis.

Office of Cuba Broadcasting Director Tomas Regalado briefly talked about the Marti’s special series called “Cuba 60 Years.” He also spoke to OCB’s current coverage on-site at the border of Colombia and Venezuela and the network’s slate of new TV shows.

RFE/RL Acting President Daisy Sindelar gave an update on RFE/RL’s efforts to provide uncensored local and regional news, responsible discussion, and open debate via radio, television, and digital media. Acting President Sindelar also introduced Radio Farda’s new director, Medhi Parpanchi, and spoke about recent attacks on journalists working for the Ukrainian Service’s Schemes Unit. She also showed a promo for the network’s re-launched Bulgarian Service and highlighted a new bureau in Kiev, Ukraine.

RFA President Libby Liu explained RFA’s Mandarin Service 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 China’s domestic economic situation. President Liu emphasized that RFA programming does not push values or judgements but rather provides its audience with evidence to make their own decisions.

Finally, Ambassador Alberto Fernandez, President of the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN), delivered an update on progress made since the relaunch of Alhurra Television four months prior. Under Ambassador Fernandez’s leadership, Alhurra has expanded its news coverage and narrowed the divide between traditional broadcast and modern digital platforms.

In closing, Chairman Weinstein stated that the next Board meeting will be held at USAGM headquarters in Washington, D.C., on June 5, 2019. He said that the Governors were encouraged to give input regarding other topics that they may like to see addressed at the next meeting.

The Board of Governors agreed to the following decision elements (decisions were adopted by a unanimous vote unless otherwise indicated):

1. Adoption of Minutes of November 14, 2018 Board Meeting. The Board adopted the minutes of the November 14, 2018 meeting of the plenary Board as set forth in Attachment 2.
2. Resolution Honoring 20th Anniversary of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty’s Balkan Service. The Board adopted the resolution honoring 20th anniversary of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Balkan Service as set forth in Attachment 3.

Other Attendees:

The following persons were also present during all or part of the meeting: CEO and Director John Lansing; Chief of Staff Matthew Walsh; General Counsel and Board Secretary David Kligerman; Managing Director Oanh Tran; Director of Global Communications and Office of Public Affairs Nasserie Carew; Acting Chief Strategy Officer Shawn Powers; Expert Consultant Steve Capus; Special Communications Advisor Matt Schuck; Director of Technology, Services, and Innovation Terry Balazs; Director of the Office of Congressional Affairs Ellona Fritschie; Special Assistant Chelsea Milko; Writer-Editor Laurie Moy; Special Assistant Yuna Jacobson; Public Affairs Detailee Freshta Azizi; Chief Financial Officer Grant Turner; Amanda Bennett, Director of the Voice of America (VOA); Sandy Sugawara, VOA Deputy Director; Kelu Chao, VOA Programming Director; Bridget Serchak, VOA Public Relations Director; Natalie Liu, VOA Public Relations Detailee; Tomas P. Regalado, Director of the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB); Emilio Vazquez, OCB Deputy Director; Jorge Jauregui, OCB Central News Director; Daisy Sindelar, Acting President of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL); Nenad Pejic, RFE/RL Editor-in-Chief; Christine Fetzko, RFE/RL Chief of Staff; Ben Herman, RFE/RL General Counsel; Mehdi Parpanchi, RFE/RL Director of Radio Farda; Libby Liu, President of Radio Free Asia (RFA); Alberto Fernandez, President of the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN); Deirdre Kline, MBN Communications Director; Jennifer Hall Godfrey, Chief of Staff for the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy & Public Affairs; and Joe Tordella, Special Assistant, Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy & Public Affairs.

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Kenneth Weinstein  
Chairman

Witnessed:

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David Kligerman  
Board Secretary

Attachments:

1. Agenda of the March 6, 2019 Board Meeting
2. Minutes of November 4, 2018 Board Meeting
3. Resolution Honoring 20th Anniversary of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Balkan Service

**BROADCASTING BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

**March 2019 Meeting Agenda**

(ALL MEETINGS ARE AT THE COHEN BUILDING, UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.)

**Wednesday, March 6**

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**11:00 - 12:00 Board of Governors' Open Meeting (USAGM Conference Room)**

- A. Chairman's Remarks
- B. Consent Agenda
  - Draft Minutes of November 14, 2018 Board Meeting
  - Draft Resolution Honoring the 25th Anniversary of
  - Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Balkan Service
  - Draft USAGM Smith-Mundt Guidelines
- C. Public Comment
- D. CEO & Director's Report
- E. Other Items for Consideration at Next Board Meeting

## ATTACHMENT 2

From: Board of Governors  
Date: November 14, 2018  
Subject: **Minutes of the BBG Meeting of November 14, 2018**

The Board of Governors for the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM) met today at the headquarters of the Middle East Broadcasting Networks in Springfield, Virginia. The meeting was open for public attendance as seating capacity allowed and for public observation via streaming on the USAGM website.

The meeting was attended by the following Board members:

Chairman Kenneth Weinstein  
Governor Ryan Crocker  
Governor Michael Kempner  
Governor Karen Kornbluh (by telephone)  
Governor Jeffrey Shell  
Jennifer Hall Godfrey, Chief of Staff for the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy & Public Affairs

Governors Leon Aron and Jeffrey Shell were not in attendance.

The agenda of the meeting is set forth in Attachment 1.

Chairman Weinstein called the meeting to order and noted that the meeting was being held in compliance with the Government in the Sunshine Act and streamed live over the internet at the USAGM website. A digital recording of this meeting can be found at the agency's new website—[www.usagm.gov](http://www.usagm.gov).

The Chairman began by noting that it has been three years since the Board last convened at MBN headquarters and, since that time, there have been some incredible changes, including a revitalized look and feel for Alhurra Television, taking place under the leadership of MBN President Alberto Fernandez.

The Chairman turned to the topic of threats to press. He noted that at every meeting the Board focuses on the sacrifices of USAGM journalists, but that they were not the only ones risking their lives to report the news. He spoke for the Board and all of USAGM leadership when he said that the brutal murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi is abhorrent and inexcusable. This portends a dangerous worldwide trend. Khashoggi's killers must be brought to justice. Like Khashoggi, the Chairman added that USAGM journalists understand the importance of telling the truth and they take great risks to provide it. He then asked the Board to turn their attention to a short video about some of the recent threats that USAGM journalists faced since the last Board meeting.



## Turkey

In October, Voice of America's (VOA) Uzbek stringer Mr. Abdumalik Bobaev was detained by Turkish police while he was trying to cover an event outside the Saudi Embassy in Istanbul. He was released the next day, but has been forbidden to leave Turkey.

## Ukraine

In August, a Ukrainian court granted the country's [prosecutor-general access to 17 months' worth of mobile phone data](#) belonging to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) investigative journalist Natalie Sedletska. Ms. Sedletska's program, [Schemes: Corruption in Details](#) had been reporting on [several investigations](#) involving [senior Ukrainian officials](#), including the [prosecutor-general](#), Yuriy Lutsenko. The data he sought included texts, recordings and locations, which would have compromised the confidentiality of Ms. Sedletska's sources. On September 19, a European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) stepped in with an "interim measure" halting the move until further notice.

Also in Ukraine, Stanislav Aseyev, a Ukrainian blogger and RFE/RL contributor, continues to be held by Russia-backed separatists. USAGM and its Board are joined by increasing number of high-level support in calling for his release, including the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Representative on Freedom of the Media, Harlem Desir, and the U.S. delegation to OSCE's Human Dimension Implementation meeting.

## Middle East

As the anticipated relaunch of Alhurra became regional news, virulently pro-Iranian media outlets organized a campaign to attack Alhurra and its relaunch. These outlets have used rumor, innuendo and outright false information to argue that Alhurra's mission would change. Despite the campaign, Alhurra's successful relaunch was well-received throughout the region.

## Russia

Bashkortostan-based online newspaper "Ekonomika I Myi" ("Economics and Us") published an attack on RFE/RL's idel.realii regional website and one of its journalists. The article sought to undermine the journalistic credibility of correspondent Artur Asafiev, and cast idel.realii and RFE/RL's Russian Service as enemies of the Russian state. It noted the Justice Ministry's "foreign agent" finding and drew conspiracy theories linking the network to Boris Nemtsov and Alexei Navalny, World War II fascism, and radical Islam.

## Vietnam

Radio Free Asia (RFA) contractor Nguyen Van Hoa, who is serving a seven-year sentence, continues to be held in deplorable conditions in a Vietnamese prison. In a letter dated September 19, he writes that he was forced to give false testimony against a political activist, he has been beaten, and he is continuously denied the freedom to exercise his faith while in prison. RFA and USAGM leadership are concerned about his condition and call for his immediate release.

Turning to Board business, Chairman Weinstein stated that the presence of five or more Governors satisfies the Board's quorum requirement, permitting the Board to conduct business based on majority vote. He said that the Board had received by email materials for the consent agenda on October 31, 2018. He added that he did not receive comments from any Governors.



Ms. Jennifer Hall Godfrey moved for adoption of the consent agenda. Governor Kempner seconded. Without objection, the consent agenda was unanimously adopted by the Board.

In accordance with the Board's prior protocol for allowing members of the public to speak at meetings, the Chairman invited Anne Noonan of the Committee for U.S. International Broadcasting, to address the Board for three minutes.

Next, Chairman Weinstein asked CEO Lansing to report on agency operations since the last Board meeting.

CEO Lansing began by noting how the USAGM advances U.S. national interest by providing audiences in closed societies, or where free media is not yet fully established, with consistently accurate, compelling, and professional journalism. He noted that USAGM networks pursue this mission through their own engaging content on television, radio, internet, social and mobile platforms.

CEO Lansing then turned to the U.S. International Coordinating Committee (ICC) to highlight their progress in several key strategic areas of USAGM.

VOA Director Amanda Bennett spoke about VOA 365, led by VOA in collaboration with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, targeting audiences inside Iran and the global Iranian diaspora in major cities around the world. The network will aim to reach Iran's young, diverse audiences in Iran and around the globe to deliver modern graphics, fresh content, and live simultaneous translation of major current affairs events.

RFE/RL Acting President and Editor-in-Chief Nenad Pejic talked about the impact broadcasters are having in RFE/RL target countries and how it is changing the power dynamic between average people, government officials, and the media. He also described the recent series of cyber-attacks on USAGM sites, mainly Current Time.

Office of Cuba Broadcasting Director Tomas Regalado has been implementing positive programming changes for the Martis. He briefly highlighted new programming at TV Marti that includes 15 new programs. He noted that, in 2019, it will be a big year for the Martis as they will be diligently covering 60 years of Castro in Cuba.

RFA President Libby Liu gave an update on how RFA continues to break news on China's Surveillance State, the incarceration of Muslim minorities, and the massive expansion of orphanages/boarding facilities for Muslim children. She reported that RFA also continues to inform the rest of the nation about what the Surveillance State and the Social Credit System mean to even majority Han Chinese citizens.

Ambassador Alberto Fernandez, President of the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN), described the network's recent transformation, including a completely new on-air look and feel for Alhurra Television and the addition of several hours of new and highly-regarded content. He noted that, for the first time ever, MBN is now broadcasting live programming out of its new bureau in Dubai, straight to audiences around the Middle East. He invited MBN's Senior Vice

President for News, Nart Bouran, to walk the Board through the details of how the network's transformation agenda was implemented.

CEO Lansing shifted gears to update the Board about USAGM's submission to the Office of Management and Budget of its annual Performance and Accountability Report (PAR), providing consolidated performance and financial information for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018. This integrated presentation of the agency's program performance, financial accountability, and managerial effectiveness is intended to assist Congress, the President, and the public in assessing USAGM's performance relative to its mission and strategic goals and stewardship of the resources entrusted to it. The FY18 PAR details substantial improvements in the agency's global reach, finding that the programming by USAGM's five networks was consumed by a worldwide audience of 345 million people in 58 languages each week, an unprecedented year-on-year increase of 67 million people. CEO Lansing then asked Acting Chief Strategy Officer Shawn Powers for additional details of the latest research and global reach, specifically in the key strategic countries such as China, Iran, Russia, and Ethiopia.

In closing, Chairman Weinstein stated that the next Board meeting will be held at USAGM headquarters in Washington, D.C., on March 6, 2019. He said that the Governors were encouraged to give input regarding other topics that they may like to see addressed at the next meeting.

The Board of Governors agreed to the following decision elements (decisions were adopted by a unanimous vote unless otherwise indicated):

1. Adoption of Minutes of September 5, 2018 Board Meeting. The Board adopted the minutes of the September 5, 2018 meeting of the plenary Board as set forth in Attachment 2.
2. Resolution Honoring the 20th Anniversary of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Broadcasting in the Persian Language. The Board adopted the resolution honoring 20th anniversary of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty broadcasting in the Persian language as set forth in Attachment 3.
3. Resolution Proposing Board Meeting Dates in 2019. The Board adopted the resolution proposing Board meeting dates in 2019 as set forth in Attachment 4.

Other Attendees:

The following persons were also present during all or part of the meeting: CEO and Director John Lansing; Chief of Staff Matthew Walsh; General Counsel and Board Secretary David Kligerman; Managing Director Oanh Tran; Director of Global Communications and Office of Public Affairs Nasserie Carew; Acting Chief Strategy Officer Shawn Powers; Special Communications Advisor Matt Schuck; Director of Technology, Services, and Innovation Terry Balazs; Director of the Office of Congressional Affairs Ellona Fritschie; Special Assistant Chelsea Milko; Writer-Editor Laurie Moy; Chief Financial Officer Grant Turner; Amanda Bennett, Director of the Voice of America (VOA); Negussie Mengesha, VOA Director of Africa Division; Tomas P. Regalado, Director of the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB); Nenad Pejic, Acting President of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) and Editor-in-Chief; Stephanie Schmidt, RFE/RL Budget Director; Ben Herman, RFE/RL General Counsel; Libby Liu, President of Radio Free Asia (RFA); Bernadette Burns, RFA General Counsel; Alberto Fernandez, President of the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN); Kelley Sullivan, MBN

Vice President for Administration and Finance; Deirdre Kline, MBN Communications Director; Nart Bouran, MBN Senior Vice President for News; and Joe Tordella, Special Assistant, Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy & Public Affairs.

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Kenneth Weinstein  
Chairman

Witnessed:

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David Kligerman  
Board Secretary

Attachments:

1. Agenda of the November 14, 2018 Board Meeting
2. Minutes of September 5, 2018 Board Meeting
3. Resolution Honoring 20th Anniversary of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Broadcasting in the Persian Language
4. Resolution Proposing Board Meeting Dates in 2019

**RESOLUTION HONORING THE 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF  
RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY'S BALKAN SERVICE**

**March 6, 2019**

WHEREAS, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) launched the South Slavic Languages Service on January 31, 1994, with programming in the Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian languages for the peoples of the former Yugoslavia and will be celebrating the 25th anniversary of these programs in 2019;

WHEREAS, RFE/RL's South Slavic Languages Service, later renamed the Balkan Service, has earned the trust and confidence of large audiences across the Western Balkans region with its multimedia reporting in support of interethnic tolerance, democracy, economic reform, human rights, the rule of law, Euro-Atlantic integration; and against extremism, propaganda and disinformation, and corruption;

WHEREAS, RFE/RL's Balkan Service was created at the height of the Bosnian War, "to serve as a daily reminder to the peoples of the former Yugoslavia that conflict was not preordained, that they once lived together in peace and could do so again, given the will."

WHEREAS, one of the Service's first programs in 1994, "Bridge," hosted by Omer Karabeg, recently celebrated its 1,000 episode and continues to encourage dialogue and understanding by bringing together people of diverse backgrounds;

WHEREAS, in 1996, the Service commenced production of the weekly 30-minute program "TV Liberty," which continues to appear on more than 30 local TV stations throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina;

WHEREAS, in 1998, the Service and its many affiliate partners throughout Bosnia created a jointly produced program, "Radio 27," as a manifestation of this commitment to pan-Bosnian cooperation, and "Radio 27" continues to air today;

WHEREAS, during the 1999 NATO bombing campaign in Serbia, RFE/RL worked with the Voice of America, British Broadcasting Corporation, Deutsche Welle, and Radio France Internationale to assemble joint, 24-hour international program streams for Serbia and for Kosovo;

WHEREAS, according to a poll published by a prominent Belgrade newspaper in July 1999, RFE/RL was the most listened-to international broadcaster during the NATO bombing campaign, and according to a survey conducted by U.S. Agency for Global Media during the October 2000 post-election crisis in Yugoslavia that led to the fall of Slobodan Milosevic, RFE/RL was the most listened-to broadcaster in Serbia – domestic or international – during the crisis;

WHEREAS, the Service expanded in March 1999 to provide content in the Albanian language to Kosovo, in June 2000 to provide content in the Montenegrin language, and in September 2001 to provide content in the Macedonian language;

WHEREAS, since the end of hostilities, the Balkan Service has remained deeply engaged with its audiences throughout the former Yugoslavia, and has reinforced its reputation throughout the region as a platform to break communications barriers, to enable moderate political figures and groups throughout the region to express and reconcile their differences, and to build cooperation among the peoples of the sovereign successor states;

WHEREAS, in Serbia, the Service was the only media to air news of the war-crimes charges filed against Bosnian Serb military leader Ratko Mladic, as well as the voices of the survivors of the Srebrenica massacre and siege of Sarajevo;

WHEREAS, the Service’s website, slobodnaevropa.org, is one of the most reliable news websites in the region, providing its audiences with up-to-the-minute coverage of current events, using diverse multimedia content – in 2018, the site averaged over 500,000 visits and 870,000 page views per month – and has a devoted following on social platforms, with more than 210,000 followers on Facebook and 30,000 subscribers to its YouTube site;

WHEREAS, in 2018, the Service established digital units in Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia – Balkan countries where Russia actively exerts its influence – to provide an alternative to disinformation, and in Kosovo and Bosnia to address extremism in the region and to provide a platform for engagement and respectful discussion about why people become radicalized and driven to violence, and how the cycle can be stopped; and

WHEREAS, according to RFE/RL Vice President and the Balkan Service’s first Director, Nenad Pejic, “The media situation in the Balkans today is in many ways worse than in the time the Balkan Service was established, which is why our presence in the Balkans is even more important today;”

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Board of Governors and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the U.S. Agency for Global Media that we celebrate and commemorate the 25th anniversary of RFE/RL’s Balkan Service.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board and CEO applaud and thank current and former members of the Balkan Service for their commitment to their audiences and their dedication to professional journalism.