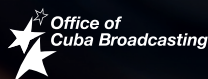


# 2022 Annual Report

U.S. AGENCY FOR GLOBAL MEDIA



# An Ever More Necessary Mission



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The U.S. Agency for Global Media has played a vital role in broadcasting the most important news of 2022 to people around the world, reaching larger audiences than ever before. News from our networks — Voice of America (VOA), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB), Radio Free Asia (RFA), and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN) — has made a significant impact on those who live in areas where information is denied and controlled. Our networks have brought viewers in media-repressed environments exclusive interviews, original investigations, and comprehensive reports, giving them a full and accurate picture of important events. Our content is a critical lifeline to those subjected to extremist rhetoric and disinformation.

Journalism is getting more dangerous around the world — and ever more necessary. Authoritarian governments are becoming ever more ruthless in keeping uncensored news from their citizens. USAGM’s dedicated staff has continued to get information into China, Russia, and Iran despite those governments’ increasing ferocity in shutting down the independent voices of their own people. Together we continue to provide truthful, factual and nonpartisan knowledge of the world to audiences in Africa and Latin America, where China and Russia are increasingly trying to drive out these alternative voices and replace them with dis- and mis- information.

For much of 2022, I watched how the dedicated staff of USAGM and its networks brought truthful, trustworthy, factual news to places that would have no other access to it, despite the challenges and personal risks they faced in doing so, generating and delivering content for 410 million people per week. I want to thank Kelu Chao and Brian Conniff for their service to the agency. Beginning in January 2021, Kelu served as Acting CEO and Brian as Deputy Director.

The courage and determination of our reportorial staff inspires me every day. We remain committed to our mission of informing, engaging, and connecting people around the world in support of freedom and democracy regardless of the risk. I am grateful to be able to work alongside such talented and dedicated staff as we continue into 2023.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda Bennett". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Amanda Bennett  
Chief Executive Officer  
U.S. Agency for Global Media





# A Global Demand for Truth

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*Video journalist Serhiy Lysenko working on a report for VOA Ukrainian in Kyiv, Ukraine, March 9, 2022. (VOA)*



# A Unique and Vital Role

The world is awash in information. The challenge for audiences everywhere is figuring out what’s true. USAGM’s public service media networks serve a vital purpose — countering mis- and disinformation and providing fact-based alternatives.

Each USAGM network — Voice of America (VOA), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB), Radio Free Asia (RFA), and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN) with the support of the Open Technology Fund (OTF) — fulfills distinct roles in their respective markets. VOA provides comprehensive regional and world news to its local audiences while also covering the United States

in all its complexity. RFE/RL, RFA, and OCB act as surrogate broadcasters, providing access to professional and fact-based regional and local news. MBN serves as a hybrid of the two models, providing accurate and comprehensive news about the region and the United States. OTF works to advance internet freedom worldwide, enabling audiences to access and share independent news and empowering our journalists

to do their jobs without fear of repressive censorship or surveillance. USAGM networks reached 410 million people on a weekly basis during 2022 — an increase of 16 million people in a single year. This audience growth comes at a time when autocratic regimes are actively blocking access to independent media or criminalizing its consumption.

The control room at VOA’s studio 51 in Washington, DC. (VOA)



## BY THE NUMBERS

ANNUAL BUDGET FY 2022  
**\$885 million**

EMPLOYEES  
**3,941**

LANGUAGES  
**63**

MEASURED AUDIENCE  
**410 million**

**50** overseas bureaus and production centers

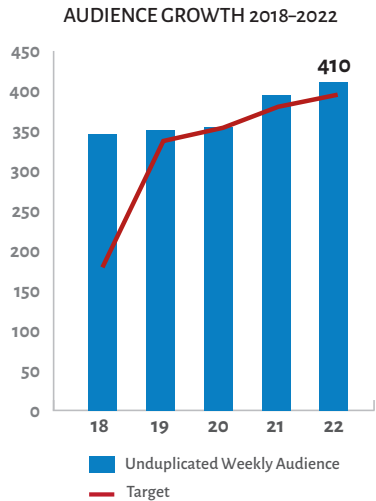
Nearly **200** operational transmitters for TV, FM, MW & SW at 100 transmission sites in over 30 countries worldwide

**4,284** television, radio, and digital affiliates across the globe

**568** radio and TV affiliate networks that serve multiple cities or markets

## AUDIENCE GROWTH

Overall USAGM growth was **19%** over the past four years, now totaling **410 MILLION** unduplicated users across all media



## MEASURED WEEKLY AUDIENCE PERCENT GROWTH 2018-2022

**VOA**  
326M **↑18%**

**RFE/RL**  
40.6M **↑20%**

**RFA**  
58.3M **↑15%**

**MBN**  
27.4M **↑11%**

**OCB (NA)**  
No new survey since 2017

## DIGITAL AUDIENCES

Web and mobile traffic continued strong growth in FY 2022, with an average of more than an **18%** year over year increase across the networks

**487 MILLION** weekly average digital video views across all networks/ services in FY 2022  
Platforms included are websites, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram

## CIRCUMVENTION

OTF provides a range of tools to help audiences overcome internet restrictions. In FY 2022, these tools saw significant year-on-year growth.

**94%** increase in weekly unique users  
2,980,770 in FY 2022

**67%** increase in weekly unique visits  
13,307,670 in FY 2022

## USAGM networks broadcast in 63 languages





# Reaching Audiences That Need Us

USAGM prioritizes reaching audiences in areas where independent information is blocked, where disinformation and propaganda are rampant, and where audiences are subject to extremist rhetoric.

## Where Information Is Denied

As historic anti-COVID-19 demonstrations erupted across China and its autonomous regions in November, **RFA'S CHINESE SERVICES** produced full-scale and timely coverage. During this period, RFA saw record high engagement on social media, as **RFA MANDARIN's** Twitter following increased threefold and web visits doubled.

Our global network thwarts China's efforts to suppress information domestically and internationally. For example, reporters from **VOA'S**

**CHINA BRANCH** traveled to the Solomon Islands to document China's pressure to suppress foreign journalists providing coverage in that country. VOA's on-the-ground reporting from this Pacific Island nation provided essential original reporting on China's bilateral security agreement, financial investment, and construction initiatives there.

## Where Information Is Controlled

**CURRENT TIME's** "Footage vs. Footage" reported on the narratives

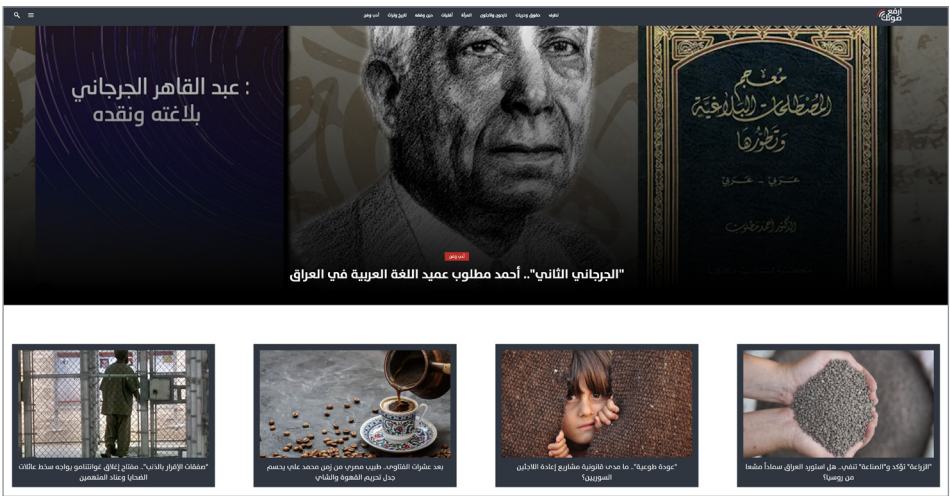
promoted by Russian state media about the assassination of right-wing media star and daughter of a prominent Kremlin-connected far-right ideologue, Darya Dugina. The report examined the discrepancies in the purported evidence presented by the Russian Federal Security Service, which claimed to have cracked the case in less than two days and blamed Ukraine for the assassination.

**VOA'S RUSSIAN SERVICE** covered the assassination with a broader international perspective, examining the event's larger significance and providing analysis of who might have been behind the assassination and what it could portend for Russia's relations with the West.

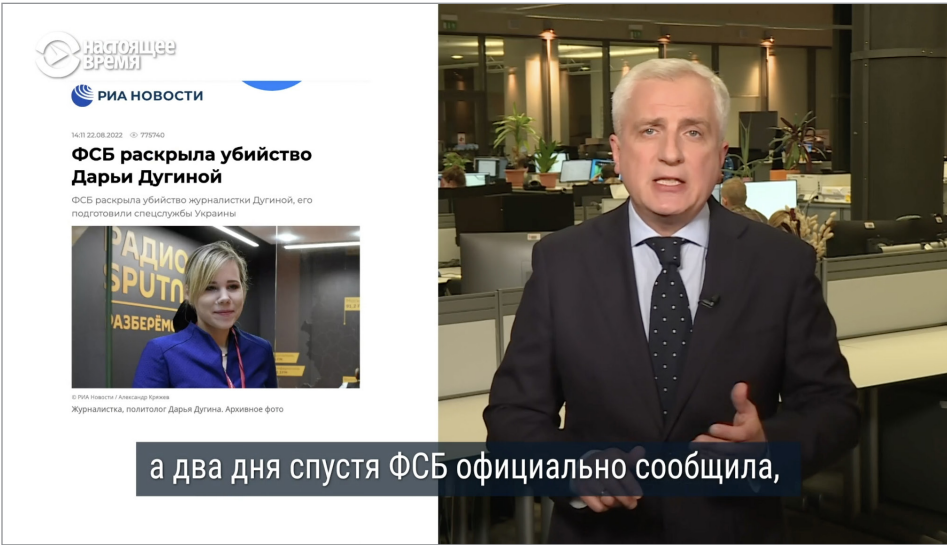
## Where People Are Subject to Extremism

ISIS left a wake of devastation in Iraq that continues to affect people and communities to this day. **MBN** examines these ongoing ramifications with local and international perspectives. In 2022, [Irfaasawtak.com](https://www.irfaasawtak.com) (**RAISE**

**YOUR VOICE**), MBN's digital platform dedicated to covering the root causes of extremism, explored the rehabilitation challenges facing child survivors of ISIS. Audiences tuning into its news program "In Iraqi" heard about children being detained by ISIS and held in the Al Hol camp from the perspective of the Special Representative of the U.N. Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict.



MBN's Irfaasawtak.com (Raise Your Voice) encourages discourse and feedback. Many readers use the comments section to share their stories with videos and photos. (MBN)



Andrey Cherkasov on Current Time's "Footage vs Footage." (Current Time)

VOA uncovers the complex factors and root causes that have left communities vulnerable to extremist messaging. In Cote d'Ivoire, for example, VOA reported how nomadic communities of the Fulani ethnicity are more frequently arrested and labeled as terrorists and how jihadist groups have leveraged these discriminatory arrests to exploit ethnic tensions and expand their recruitment activities. Other experts interviewed by VOA claim child poverty and food insecurity in Nigeria have contributed to the recruitment and deployment of child soldiers by the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP).



Interview with Fulani community leader Amadou Sidibé in Kong, Ivory Coast. (Henry Wilkins/VOA)





# Providing Accurate, Compelling, and Impactful Content

Journalism is at the heart of our work, and building trust in our brands is of paramount importance. USAGM networks create compelling and impactful content curated to support active and democratic societies. All programs are tailored to meet the needs of target audiences and add significant value compared to competitors.

*Haydé Adams, anchor of "Straight Talk Africa," a weekly show that analyzes the news and emerging trends shaping African societies, from VOA's English to Africa Service. (J. Michael Whalen/VOA)*



## Responding to the War in Ukraine

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 inflicted chaos and carnage within the country, upended regional politics, and triggered destructive second and third-order impacts worldwide, including food and economic insecurity.

RFE/RL provided extensive on-the-ground coverage of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, including the impact of the conflict in Russia, Belarus, and other neighboring states. RFE/RL-produced videos garnered more than 825 million views via Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram during the first week of the invasion (February 23–March 1, 2022).

With some 150 journalists and technicians spread out across Ukraine and on the frontlines, RFE/RL's comprehensive coverage of the first hours of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine earned a coveted [2022 Online Journalism Award for Breaking News](#).

Russia's attack also forced hundreds of journalists out of Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine to new safe havens in Riga, Latvia, and Vilnius, Lithuania. Despite the disruptions, RFE/RL journalists were able to locate [mass burials](#) in Mariupol, document the [search for Russian sailors](#) killed in the sinking of the Moskva cruiser, [report extensively on "filtration"](#) of Ukrainian refugees, and [track local opinion](#), antiwar activism, and [spontaneous demonstrations](#) inside Russia against the Kremlin's ["partial mobilization"](#) of reserve military forces.



RFE/RL's Maryan Kushnir was with Ukraine's 30th Mechanized Brigade near the key Ukrainian city of Bakhmut in October 2022. (RFE/RL)

This work has not come without risk or personal sacrifice. A Russian missile strike on Kyiv on April 28, 2022, [killed](#) RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service producer Vira Hyrych. RFE/RL journalists in both the Kyiv and Lviv bureaus were forced to report from standby studios in underground garages to avoid Russian missile attacks, while field reporters regularly came under [hostile fire](#) while on combat reporting assignments.

VOA'S [UKRAINIAN SERVICES](#) responded with new initiatives and a surge in programming, primarily focusing on breaking news complemented by official and expert perspectives from the United

States. Programming included hours of simultaneously-translated official statements, major addresses, policy pronouncements, press conferences, congressional hearings, and U.N. Security Council sessions, allowing skeptical audiences to engage with news events in real time and to judge the situation on the ground for themselves.

VOA also provided extensive coverage of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's historic visit to Washington, D.C., including the live streaming of President Zelenskyy's address to Congress and his joint press conference with President Biden, with simultaneous translation into both Ukrainian and Russian. [VOA'S UKRAINIAN SERVICE](#)

live coverage attracted more than 2.3 million views and was restreamed by at least 18 Ukrainian networks; [VOA'S RUSSIAN SERVICE](#) featured a 1.5-hour special broadcast of Zelenskyy's speech which garnered more than 300,000 views. VOA correspondents located at the White House and Congress provided live coverage that was cited by Deutsche Welle, BBC, and many Russian-language outlets in the region.

VOA provided extensive coverage of the war and its broader global impact across 48 languages. Services within [VOA'S AFRICA DIVISION](#) depicted the economic impact of the war on the continent; [VOA'S MANDARIN SERVICE](#) aired an exclusive interview with a Chinese blogger based in Odessa whose YouTube and WeChat

videos undercut the official Chinese narrative; [VOA'S TURKISH SERVICE](#) reported on Ukraine's use of Turkish drones and on Ukrainian refugees and Russian dissidents fleeing to Turkey.

Meanwhile, Russia spread disinformation about the war through its international propaganda channels. The Chinese amplified Russian disinformation to audiences in Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East.

For five weeks following the invasion, [MBN'S ALHURRA TELEVISION](#) provided live breaking news 21 hours a day with correspondents located in Ukraine, the Polish/Ukraine border, Russia, and London, as well as the White House, State Department and Pentagon. "Alhurra Investigates"

explored the Russian war crimes in Ukraine, a story that was not widely reported in the Arab press.

The [OFFICE OF CUBA BROADCASTING](#)'s Deputy Director Alvaro Alba provided expertise on Ukraine and Russian disinformation to audiences in Cuba as well as to affiliates throughout Latin America.

"We want to thank USAGM and Martí for having had the opportunity to have someone like Alvaro (Alba) who made us understand, in a very clear way, what is happening in Ukraine."

—Radio Centro (Ecuador)

Special programs featuring Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's March 2022 video address to the United States Congress, reactions from United States lawmakers to his speech, live reports from VOA reporters from the Capitol and the White House, and expert analysis garnered more than 2.4 million views across English, Russian, and Ukrainian digital properties within hours.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy speaks to the U.S. Congress by video to plead for support as his country is besieged by Russian forces, at the Capitol in Washington, Wednesday, March 16, 2022. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite, Pool)

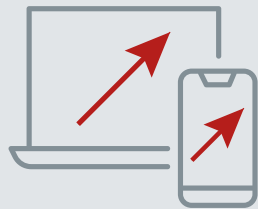




## Responding to Crisis Situations



To date, Radio Farda has confirmed the identities of 353 protest casualties in 24 of Iran's 31 provinces, including dozens of women and children. (RFE/RL)



VOA'S PERSIAN SERVICE paired extensive live reporting on protests inside Iran with coverage of solidarity campaigns around the world.

During the protests, the service distributed

**1,500**

eyewitness videos from inside Iran, including

**350**

videos sent exclusively to VOA by citizen journalists and witnesses

The service accrued

**395.2** MILLION

social video views (a **280%** increase) between September 2022 and January 2023

Website traffic saw

**62.3** MILLION visits

(a **161%** increase)

### Protests in Iran

When Iran's morality police arrested 22-year-old Mahsa Amini for allegedly breaking the country's hijab rules, [RFE/RL'S RADIO FARDA](#) broadcast the [first interview](#) with her mother. On that day, September 16, just hours before Amini's death became widely known, her mother said "My daughter was in perfect health before her arrest." International media outlets, including the Washington Post, published the interview with attribution to RFE/RL's Radio Farda. Later that day, after a Tehran hospital confirmed Amini's death, nationwide protests broke out — the biggest challenge to the rulers of the Islamic Republic of Iran in decades.

VOA'S PERSIAN SERVICE and [RFE/RL'S RADIO FARDA](#) covered the historic demonstrations that followed Amini's death documenting the number of demonstrators killed by security services and telling the stories of individual victims.

After 16-year-old Nika Shakarami was beaten to death by security forces, [VOA'S PERSIAN SERVICE](#) provided an exclusive interview with her mother. In the interview, Mrs. Shakarami described how the Iranian government was pressuring the family with threats

and intimidation after she filed a complaint about her daughter's death. The interview attracted more than 1 million views on Instagram alone. Like Mahsa Amini, Nika Shakarami became one of the key symbols of the Iranian anti-hijab protests.

To date, [FARDA](#) has [confirmed](#) the identities of 353 casualties in 24 of Iran's 31 provinces, including dozens of women and [children](#). Through deeply sourced investigative reporting, exclusive interviews with protesters' [families](#) and friends, and verified [user-generated content](#), RFE/RL journalists documented the truth about the regime's victims — including their [identities](#) — despite the Iranian government's ongoing campaign to [deceive](#) the public and [intimidate](#) minority communities.

In September alone, [RFE/RL'S RADIO FARDA](#) garnered an unprecedented 364.5 million views on Instagram, a 206% increase in video views compared to the previous month. Audience engagement remained strong between September 2022 and January 2023 racking up more than 2.0 billion total video views on Instagram.

VOA also provided global coverage as raging protests in Iran sparked solidarity movements abroad. [VOA'S TURKISH SERVICE](#) provided extensive coverage of women protesting in Istanbul, and millions tuned in for [VOA'S KURDISH](#)

[SERVICE](#)'s live coverage of protests in Washington, New York, and Sulaymaniyah, Iraq. VOA also showed solidarity movements in America, as hundreds gathered in Washington, DC's Freedom Plaza, lighting candles and chanting "Women! Life! Freedom!" VOA coverage of the DC event attracted more than a million views across digital platforms. An exclusive [VOA PERSIAN](#) interview with Reza Pahlavi attracted more than three million views across digital platforms.

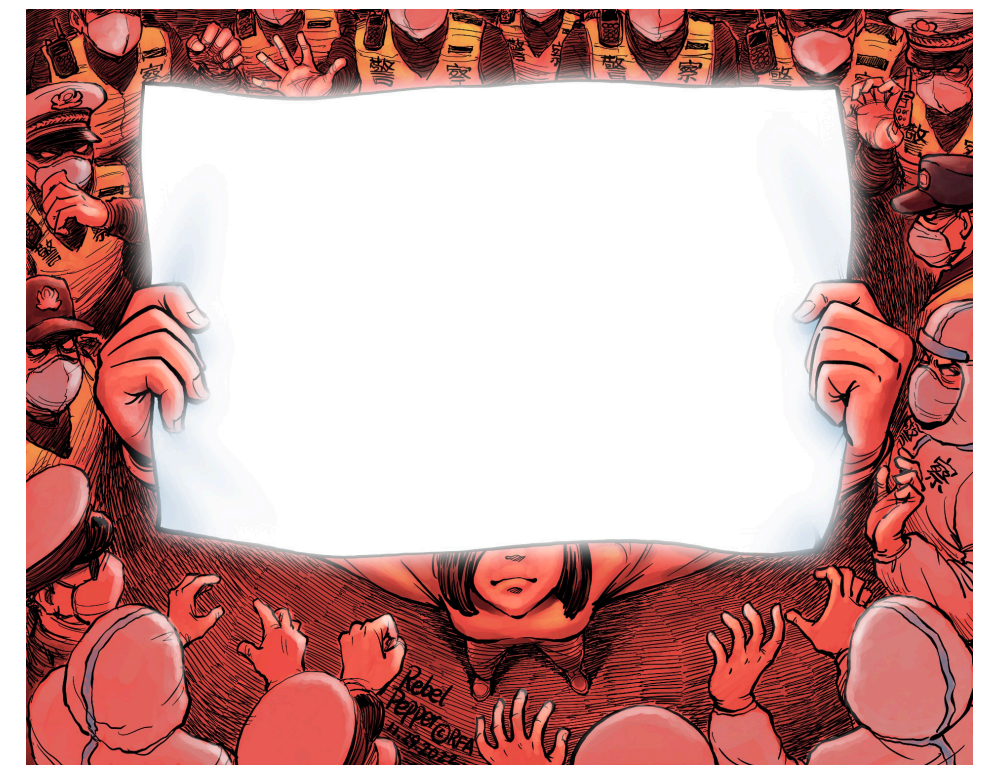
### COVID Protests in China

In November, [RFA'S MANDARIN SERVICE](#) released a short social media video capturing the protests in different cities in China against

the government's strict zero-COVID procedures. That video was viewed more than 4 million times on Twitter and received almost 900K engagements. [VOA](#) reported on the disinformation and anti-censorship battle that erupted online as anti-zero-COVID protests started to spread across China, with Chinese users overwhelming Beijing's censors as they try to pierce the Great Firewall and get information to others inside and outside the country.

### Worsening Situation in Afghanistan

In December 2022, Afghanistan's de facto Taliban rulers banned [VOA'S AFGHAN SERVICE](#) and [RFE/RL'S RADIO AZADI](#) from the country's domestic



(Rebel Pepper/RFA)



airwaves, forcing both services to transition to cross-border medium-wave (AM) transmissions in January 2023 in order to remain engaged with their respective audiences. Radio Azadi continues to provide unparalleled service 24/7, reaching audiences via both mediumwave and shortwave frequencies.

Despite significant pressure from the Taliban, [RFE/RL](#) offered ongoing coverage of the human consequences

of the resumption of Taliban rule in Afghanistan. [RFE/RL'S RADIO AZADI](#) provided a platform for the most vulnerable — [women](#) and [girls](#), [victims](#) of violent extremism, the [LGBTQ+ community](#), and [youth](#) — to share their experiences. Azadi also provided lessons in history, geography, and other topics for school-age girls denied the right to education by the Taliban; informed Afghans about public health threats;

exposed corruption; and helped the powerless find community and hope.

[VOA'S AFGHAN SERVICE](#) featured comprehensive coverage of the first anniversary of the fall of Kabul. The Service covered the most pressing issues the people of Afghanistan were facing under the Taliban, including repression of women, erosion of press freedoms and journalistic activity, and the gutting of civil society activities.

[VOA](#) also followed the plights and resilience of Afghans who have fled the extremism of Taliban rule, including more than 250,000 Afghans who crossed into Pakistan following the Taliban takeover. [VOA'S DEEWA SERVICE](#) filed original video reports on their lives and daily struggles to survive. Without proof of residency in Pakistan, Afghan refugees are left without access to education and health facilities.

### Floods in Pakistan

[RFE/RL'S RADIO MASHAAL](#) provided comprehensive coverage of the devastating flooding that engulfed three Pakistani provinces. The devastating crisis in Pakistan was covered by both [VOA'S DEEWA SERVICE](#) and [URDU SERVICE](#) correspondents. Original video from flooded areas attracted audiences and affiliates, and served as a lifeline for individuals desperate for information.



(VOA)

[VOA'S DEEWA SERVICE](#) traced the cultural impact of the Taliban's extremism in “Displaced Rabab,” a documentary which follows some 160 Afghan musicians who fled the country and left a hole in Pashto music. “It broke my heart when the Taliban came,” the singer Ustad Sanam Gul said. “I felt like our music died, like it was the end for the rabab [a classical Pashto stringed instrument]. For a month and a half, I forgot everything. The rabab. Everything. My mind became blank to any tune, any song.”

## Original Investigative Reporting

During the Belarus–EU border crisis, [VOA'S KURDISH SERVICE](#) investigated a disinformation campaign on Facebook targeting Kurdish migrants. The campaign falsely claimed that Europe had decided to open the Polish border with Belarus to grant entry to stranded migrants — a claim officially rejected by the EU. This messaging was propagated by a parliament member in Iraqi Kurdistan and a journalist based in Athens. VOA reporting included interviews with affected migrants and migrant representatives, who explained how the misinformation pushed thousands of men, women, and children into harm's way in Belarusian forests. After VOA's questions, a Meta spokesperson said the company removed the

two popular pages for violating Facebook rules prohibiting the spread of false information.

In June 2022, an [exclusive investigation](#) by [RFE/RL'S UKRAINIAN SERVICE](#)'s “Schemes” investigative team revealed that many of the Russian soldiers fighting in Ukraine were receiving their military pay and combat bonuses through a Gazprom-affiliated bank that has evaded western sanctions. The piece drew strong public reactions from the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry and U.S. lawmakers who called on Washington and Brussels to close loopholes in the sanctions. Such investigative reporting across RFE/RL's language services reinforces democratic principles by exposing corruption, malfeasance, and misconduct.

[ALHURRA TELEVISION](#)'s award-winning series “Alhurra Investigates” unearths stories of corruption, human rights abuses, and disinformation. Each week, the series sheds light on issues not reported by other media outlets. In FY 2022, much of the investigative reporting examined the influence of Russia, China, and Iran on the region. Media outlets have historically ignored these stories due to their regional geopolitical influence. One such episode reported how Chinese loans collapsed the Sri Lankan economy and what would happen to Egypt and Iraq when China calls in their loans. Other episodes exposed Russian war crimes in Ukraine and Iran's use of hostages as political capital.

Despite being barred from any official reporting presence on the ground in Iran, [RFE/RL'S RADIO FARDA](#) is one of the few news organizations that effectively provides Iranians with hard-hitting video footage of the realities of life inside their own country. In February 2022, Radio Farda published an [exclusive exposé](#) featuring a leaked audio recording from 2019 that revealed massive organized corruption at the highest levels of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The report went viral on Instagram with the posted audio files quickly exceeding three million views. Fars News Agency, which is close to the Revolutionary Guards, was forced to confirm the authenticity of Farda's audio file, and Iranian officials were forced to react to the revelations.





# Providing A Voice To the Underrepresented

In 2022, USAGM stayed committed to programming for traditionally underserved audiences, including women, youth, refugees, religious and ethnic minorities, diaspora communities, people with disabilities, and sexual minorities.

“Love in a Time of Plague and War” from [VOA’S THAI SERVICE](#), told the story of a Thai-Ukrainian couple navigating COVID-19 restrictions,

the war in Ukraine, and prejudice against transgendered individuals. After being denied entry to Thailand, the couple relocated

temporarily to Switzerland where they can “live without fear.”

[MBN](#) frequently addresses domestic violence and how it has worsened



People wear masks to curb the spread of COVID-19, as they wait their turn to shop at a state store in Havana, Cuba, Feb. 16, 2022. (AP Photo/Ramon Espinosa)

[OCB’S RADIO MARTÍ](#) produces daily and weekly radio programming intended for underrepresented audiences inside Cuba. “Abriendo Espacios” explores contemporary women’s issues as they exist in Cuba. Similarly, “Arcoiris” focuses on the needs, interests, and challenges of the LGBTQ+ community.

under COVID-19 restrictions. [Irfaasawtak.com](#) ([RAISE YOUR VOICE](#)) drew attention to hate crimes against the LGBTQ+ community after an Iraqi transgender woman was killed by her brother.

[MaghrebVoices.com](#) reported on the increased number of human trafficking cases in Tunisia while [ALHURRA](#)’s “Al Yawm” (“Today”) highlighted the growing cases of domestic violence. These topics often go unreported in the media due to Tunisia’s claim of more progressive constitutional rights for women, compared to other Arab countries.

Human rights topics are frequently covered throughout MBN’s platforms and programs. As the economic crisis in Lebanon escalated, [MBN](#) produced in-depth reports on the smugglers who prey on vulnerable refugees hoping to make it to Europe and charge exorbitant prices to secure passage on risky “death boats.”

[RFA’S LAO SERVICE](#) produced in-depth reporting in the Chinese-run Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone (SEZ) and received praise for



Record drought and hunger in Somalia are driving thousands to flee to neighboring Kenya for help. Relief groups say the influx of refugees at Kenya’s Dadaab camp is stretching the already overcrowded camp’s resources. VOA’s Juma Majanga reported from the refugee camp in Dadaab, Kenya in November 2022. (VOA)

its timely coverage of the secretive region. Shortly after RFA’s series of stories in January on women who were lured to the Golden Triangle SEZ to work as “chat girls,” the Lao government issued a new regulation in February to curb human trafficking in the Golden Triangle SEZ.

Refugees and internally displaced persons are chronically under-served and under-represented in the media. In Kenya, the [VOA’S SOMALI SERVICE](#) program “Good Evening, Dadaab” features the residents and unique issues of one of the world’s largest

refugee settlements. This program airs on VOA’s FM station that serves the camp as well as on VOA’s radio network in Somalia and Djibouti.

[RFE/RL’S TATAR-BASHKIR SERVICE](#) tracked the impact of a November 2017 ruling by Russia’s General Prosecutor to [end the teaching of the Tatar language](#) in local schools in Tatarstan. The ruling touched off a full-scale struggle by all other non-Russian republics and non-Russian peoples of the Russian Federation to preserve their languages and cultures from assimilation.



# Optimizing Delivery and Providing Safe, Secure Access

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In the face of increasing authoritarian attempts to close information flows, ensuring access to our content is critical. This requires staying ahead of evolving censorship efforts as well as optimizing program delivery and affiliate relationships.

*A young woman looks at her smart phone on a public square in the Petare neighborhood of Caracas, Venezuela, September 10, 2022. (AP Photo/Matias Delacroix)*



# Developing Technologies and Activities to Stay Ahead of Internet Censorship

Authoritarian governments took extraordinary measures to expand the surveillance of citizens and censorship of websites in 2022. As a countermeasure, **OTF** invested in a range of trusted, intuitive anti-censorship tools and technologies to keep pace with the most sophisticated global censorship tactics. OTF has supported projects to research, develop, implement, and maintain technologies and tools that advance internet freedom. Currently, OTF-supported technologies are used by more than 2 billion people worldwide.

**OTF** supports VPN-style circumvention tools which provide direct circumvention lifelines to tens of millions of users in censored countries and invested in technologies that leverage AI to automate the discovery of censorship evasion strategies.

**OTF**-supported technologies have helped respond to internet shutdowns, preserving content

sharing through peer-to-peer distribution networks that serve cached content to users cut off from global networks. OTF has also extended some of the functionality and security guarantees of secure messengers to SMS-based

OTF-supported proxy tools logged more than

**13** MILLION

weekly visits to USAGM network websites in FY 2022, indicating the critical need for ongoing support of freedom of news access.

communications for use during specific shutdown situations. Additionally, OTF provided emergency digital assistance to more than 30 individuals, organizations, and journalists through its Rapid Response Fund in 2022.

## Circumvention and Digital Security Technologies in Action

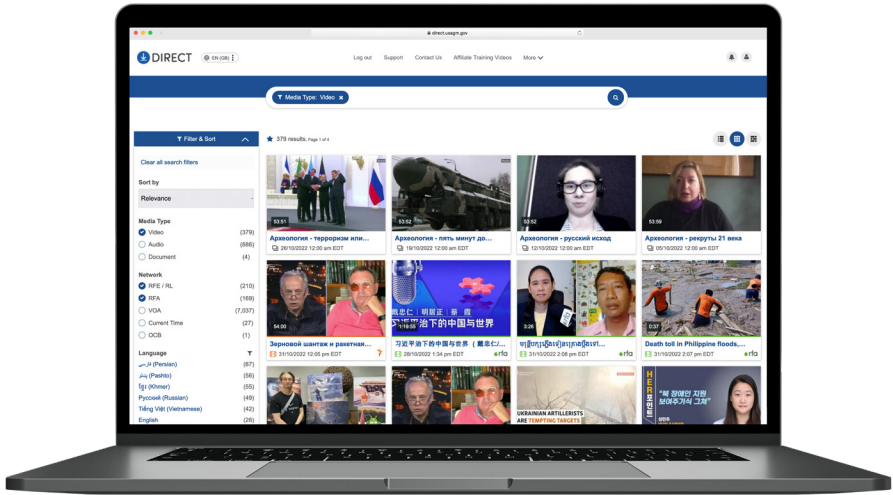
Experts predicted that the Russian government would attempt to immediately surveil or shut down internet connectivity in Ukraine after its February 2022 invasion. Since then, Signal, an **OTF**-supported secure communication platform, has become the most downloaded and most used messaging application in Ukraine, and adoption of OTF-supported circumvention tools has increased significantly. OTF has worked to leverage technologies and deploy infrastructure to allow Ukrainians to access the internet from regional points of connectivity.

During the 2022 protests in Iran, usage of **OTF**'s circumvention tools jumped from 6 million daily users to nearly 30 million daily users, meaning 1-in-4 Iranian citizens rely on OTF-supported circumvention tools to access the uncensored internet.

# Optimize Program Delivery and Affiliate Relationships

In 2022, USAGM introduced a game-changing relaunch of its **DIRECT** platform which allows affiliate stations around the world to download high-definition audio and video files for rebroadcast. The platform has an improved search function and provides news and evergreen content. Direct offers accelerated file delivery and the ability to integrate into other platforms. Thousands of broadcast stations and digital platforms responded positively. By the end of FY 2022, more than 4,200 affiliates worldwide were downloading content from the new Direct.

After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, demand soared for **CURRENT TIME**, the 24/7 television and digital network for Russian speakers led by **RFE/RL** in cooperation with **VOA**. By October, USAGM had signed 50 affiliates and 280 distributors in 20 countries, as regional media operators dropped Moscow's Russia Today (RT) channel. The Ukrainian state broadcaster requested permission to air the Current Time feed as a backup feed.



Direct content delivery platform (USAGM)

In 2022, **USAGM'S INTERNATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM** provided local affiliates with a record number of 60 trainings for 1,200 journalists. From Albania to Zimbabwe, the trainings addressed subjects ranging from digital journalism to covering elections and investigating nature crimes. Additionally, the USAGM Training Network, a private Facebook group, offers media workers access to online training, best practices, and connections with journalists across the globe. More than 900 alumni of USAGM media training programs have joined the group.

## Successful Deployment of the U.S. Bureau Model

As foreign-based news outlets experience the competing demands of diminished budgets and high audience interest in the United States, they have increasingly turned to **VOA** to serve as their de-facto bureau to deliver content explaining both U.S. policy as well as American society and culture. Recent research indicates that a majority of VOA's global audience agreed with the statement that the network improved their understanding of U.S. policy and society, which





VOA’s Ukrainian Service’s Iuliia Iarmolenko provided original live reporting to ICTV in Ukraine in February 2022.

indicates a synergy between VOA’s mission of telling America’s story and affiliates’ needs for U.S.-centered content.

Audiences across Eurasia have shown significant interest in

news and information from the United States, and affiliates there have recognized VOA as a valuable resource. **VOA’S EURASIA** journalists provided regular original live reporting to more than 50 TV stations in Albania,

Armenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Ukraine. VOA’s spin-free reporting focused primarily on U.S. policy perspectives and actions regarding Russia’s war against Ukraine, as well as official

U.S. positions on developments in the regions. VOA coverage, especially Ukraine-focused interviews with U.S. officials, lawmakers and visiting newsmakers from the region, often dominated the news agenda in the target countries. Apart from U.S. policy regarding America’s leadership and its role in rallying allies against Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, VOA provided exceptional, cross-platform reporting on the congressional investigation of the January 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol, the U.S. midterm elections, mass shootings and the ensuing debate on gun laws, and the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision on abortion.

Throughout 2022, VOA served as a trusted resource to explain major U.S. stories pertaining to society and culture such as the school shooting in Uvalde, Texas. **VOA’S SPANISH SERVICE** team sent to cover the aftermath provided 300 live and taped reports, and 21 TV channels aired the live content resulting in



Celia Mendoza reporting from Uvalde, TX, in May 2022. (VOA)

more than 527,000 views on social media platforms. Media partners in Latin America have continued to praise the critical role VOA plays in providing comprehensive reporting about the U.S. According

to the Venezuelan affiliate network Televen: “VOA produces excellent reports about the United States; the coverage is contextual and unique.”



# Efforts to Silence USAGM Networks

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USAGM's networks operate in some of the most media-repressed areas in the world. Our journalists work in war zones and regions hostile to reporters. They often face harassment, threats, imprisonment, or worse. The following are just a sample of the lengths to which some governments will go to control the information space.

*Journalists from RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service, known locally as Radio Azattyk, report from outside the parliament building in Bishkek. (Azis Samarbekov/RFE/RL)*





**In Memoriam**

Vira Hyrych, an RFE/RL Ukrainian Service journalist and producer, died when a Russian air strike hit her Kyiv apartment building April 28, 2022. Hyrych was influential in the frontline reporting on the war in Ukraine and coordinated assignments during the conflict.

the Turkish government blocked online news from international broadcasters, including VOA.

**VOA Freelance Journalist Detained, Released on Bail for Covering Protest**

In August, [VOA](#) freelance journalist Diing Magot, who worked for the “South Sudan in Focus” program, was detained while on assignment covering a protest in Juba. She was held for one week, then released on bail.

**VOA and RFE/RL Targeted by Iranian Leadership**

In October, Iran’s supreme leader Ali Khamenei took to Instagram to warn his 4.9 million followers that [VOA](#) and [RFE/RL](#) are threats to the Islamic Republic. In December, the government also added [RFE/RL’S RADIO FARDA](#) to a list of individuals and organizations [sanctioned](#) for supporting international terrorism or inciting violence.

Iranian intelligence agents seized the repatriated remains of [RFE/RL’S RADIO FARDA](#) journalist Reza Haghighatnejad, who died of natural causes in Berlin in October. His family was told later that he was secretly buried at a location outside of the city of Shiraz. U.S.

State Department spokesman Ned Price on October 28 [said](#) the episode “underscores just how much Iran’s leadership fears journalists.”

The brother of a [VOA’S PERSIAN SERVICE](#) reporter was arrested in Iran and threatened with torture and execution unless the reporter stopped working for VOA. During recent pro-government rallies, VOA contributor Masih Alinejad was burned in effigy.

**RFE/RL Faces Censorship, Journalist-Targeting in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan**

The Kyrgyz Culture and Information Ministry in January 2023 asked a court to [shut down the media operations](#) of [RFE/RL’S KYRGYZ SERVICE](#), after the service’s [websites were blocked](#) and [bank accounts frozen](#) in October 2022. Kyrgyz authorities moved against the Kyrgyz Service after RFE/RL [refused](#) to remove a video about clashes

at the border with Tajikistan. “We will not succumb to pressure to remove balanced reporting from our sites, be it from the Kremlin or the Kyrgyz government,” said RFE/RL President and CEO Jamie Fly. RFE/RL also faced challenges in Kazakhstan when they were targeted for covering fuel price protests. Access to the website of [RFE/RL’S KAZAKH SERVICE](#) was then [blocked](#),

along with those of several other independent media outlets.

**Taliban Removed USAGM Radio Broadcasts**

In December, Taliban officials ordered the halt of all USAGM-funded broadcasting on FM and AM transmitters within Afghanistan. This included prominent and award-winning programming in Dari and

**Targeted, Censored by Russian Government**

USAGM networks broadcasting in Russia, their local projects, as well as individual reporters and contributors, continue to be targeted by the Russian government. In March, [RFE/RL suspended](#) its in-country operations after \$17 million in fines were levied against it for failure to comply with “foreign agent” labelling requirements; [VOA](#) suspended its operations in Russia the same month.

To date, 14 [RFE/RL](#) Russian-language sites have been blocked, and 31 RFE/RL journalists and 10 RFE/RL reporting projects have been

designated as “foreign agents,” along with [VOA’S RUSSIAN SERVICE](#).

**Turkish Government Demands “Internet Broadcasting License” for VOA, Blocks VOA Broadcast**

In February, the Turkish media regulator RTÜK threatened to block the [VOA’S TURKISH SERVICE](#) website if VOA did not apply for an “internet broadcasting license.” VOA Acting Director Yolanda López rejected the ultimatum, saying “Voice of America’s independent journalism cannot be subject to this or any government’s control which results either in censorship or even the perception of it.” Six months later,



Mullorajab Yusofi and Anushervon Aripov, two of the RFE/RL reporters beaten in May in Tajikistan. (Radio Ozodi/RFE/RL)

**Four RFE/RL Journalists Beaten, Threatened in Tajikistan**

In May, four [RFE/RL](#) journalists conducting an interview [had their equipment seized](#) and were beaten and threatened by persons allegedly linked to Tajik security services. The attack marked an escalation in an online smear campaign against [RFE/RL’S TAJIK SERVICE](#) and its journalists.



In solidarity with RFE/RL, independent Kyrgyz media outlets posted a black screen on their web pages with the caption: “No News Today. Media Under Pressure In Kyrgyzstan.” (Courtesy photo)



Pashto languages by [VOA](#) and [RFE/RL](#). CEO Amanda Bennett vowed to overcome the censorship, saying, “This action by the Taliban will be seen for what it truly is — an effort to restrict Afghan citizens’ access to uncensored information. The people of Afghanistan have the right to know all of the facts, including the information the Taliban is hoping to censor in this flagrant attack on press freedom.”

### China Targets VOA Reporters and Sources

Guests on [VOA](#)’s popular talk show “Issues and Opinions” had their families in China subjected to threats by authorities. Almost immediately after appearing on the show, guests reported that their relatives were harassed and used as leverage, warning the guests not to reappear on VOA.

### Nicaragua – Pressure on VOA Affiliates

In Nicaragua, the government has [cracked down on free press](#) with the expulsion of outlets, revocation of media licenses, and lack of protection for journalists. Two prominent journalists, [Juan Lorenzo Holmann](#) and Samantha Jirón, were arrested, with their ties to [VOA](#) cited as “evidence” against them.



VOA Mandarin’s “Issues and Opinions.” (VOA)

### USAGM Network Journalists Behind Bars

**The following contributors to USAGM networks were sentenced in 2022:**

[ANDREY KUZNECHYK](#), a journalist for [RFE/RL’S BELARUS SERVICE](#), was [sentenced](#) to six years in maximum security prison for “creating or participating in an extremist organization.” While he was arrested in November of 2021, charges against him were not known until May 2022. He received his sentence a month later and was sent to a colony for hard labor.

[SITHU AUNG MYINT](#) was sentenced to three years in prison with hard labor in Burma on October 6,

2022. Authorities accused him of incitement and defamation after he posted articles on social media that were critical of the junta. Myint, who had been a contributor to [VOA](#) since 2014, was well-known for reporting on politics, business, and social issues.

**The journalists below continue to serve time behind bars despite international calls for their release:**

[IHAR LOSIK](#), an [RFE/RL](#) journalist, remains imprisoned after being sentenced to 15 years in 2021 for using his Telegram channel to “prepare to disrupt public order” ahead of the Belarus Presidential Election. In June 2022, he was added to a [terrorist watchlist](#); in October

2022, Losik’s wife Darya was detained and later sentenced to two years in prison for “facilitating extremism;” and in November 2022, Losik was added to a list of [extremists](#), making him ineligible for parole.

[VOA’S VIETNAMESE SERVICE](#) [BLOGGER, PHAM CHI DUNG](#), was sentenced to 15 years in prison in January 2021, for “dangerous actions” against the Hanoi government.

[NGUYEN TUONG THUY](#), contributor to [RFA’S VIETNAMESE SERVICE](#), is serving an 11-year prison sentence for “making, storing, and disseminating documents and materials for anti-state purposes.”

[RFA’S VIETNAMESE SERVICE](#) contributor and blogger [TRUONG DUY NHAT](#), is serving a 10-year sentence in Hanoi on a questionable, decades-old land fraud case.

[VOA’S VIETNAMESE SERVICE](#) contributor [LEANH HUNG](#) continues to await trial after being arrested in 2018 on charges of “abusing democratic freedoms to infringe upon the interests of the State.” If convicted, he could face up to seven years in prison.

[NGUYỄN VĂN HOÁ](#), [RFA’S VIETNAMESE SERVICE](#) contributor, is serving seven years in prison followed by three years of house arrest on a charge of “disseminating propaganda against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam” under article 88 of country’s penal code.

[ALEH HRUZDZILOVICH](#), an [RFE/RL](#) journalist, was [released](#) from prison and left Belarus in September 2022 after serving nine months for “taking part” in mass protests after Alexander Lukashenko’s fraudulent re-election. He had been covering the protests as an RFE/RL correspondent with Foreign Ministry accreditation. In November 2022, Hruzdilovich was added to a list of [extremists](#), banning him from entering the country.



Vladyslav Yesypenko in court. (Screen grab)

Freelance reporter VLADYSLAV YESYPENKO was [sentenced](#) to six years by a Russian-controlled court in Crimea in February 2022. He received the 2022 [PEN/Barbey Freedom to Write Award](#) for “his courage in continuing to tell the stories of Ukrainians who have faced years of Russian occupation.”





# Entity Highlights

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*On November 8, 2022, VOA's Albanian Service managing editor Keida Kostreci reported on the U.S. midterm elections from the Virginia Central Library in Arlington, Virginia. (J. Michael Whalen/VOA)*



# Voice of America

In 2022, VOA reached 326 million readers, viewers, and listeners weekly, further cementing its rare position as a globally trusted brand across fragmented media markets. In a year when authoritarian regimes acted with aggression and impunity, VOA provided essential coverage to audiences in urgent need of objective news.

### Telling America’s Story

VOA maintained its 80-year tradition of telling America’s story and remained the broadcaster best equipped to explain U.S. foreign policy to the world, providing essential coverage of Congress, the White House, the State Department, and the Pentagon.

Audiences worldwide tuned in for VOA’s coverage of significant political events like the State of the Union. VOA carried live simultaneous translation of both President Biden’s speech as well

as the Republican response by Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds, broadcasting in Spanish, Creole, Burmese, Mandarin, Korean, Farsi, Russian, and Ukrainian. Other VOA language services livestreamed coverage of the event across digital platforms, from Azerbaijan to Zimbabwe. VOA channels provided tailored context and analysis, attracting millions of views across broadcast and digital platforms.

In 2022, VOA’s diaspora stories ranged from protests to parades – from Creole coverage of New

York’s Labor Day Caribbean Carnival to Khmer coverage of Cambodian Americans protesting in Massachusetts for the release of political prisoners. Across broadcast and digital platforms, these stories routinely attracted hundreds of thousands of views.

VOA also told the stories of refugees who had fled authoritarian regimes and found a new home in America. VOA Afghan launched “[Afghan Families Begin a New Chapter](#),” a webpage featuring the stories of Afghan evacuees who have relocated to America. VOA Korean produced the documentary “[Three Days in a Lifetime](#),” showing the anguish and determination of Korean-American families fighting to reunite with loved ones who remain in North Korea. The story tracks grassroots activism that led to the introduction of bipartisan legislation in Congress, exposing Korean audiences to the functioning of the American political process.

“Voice of America does more than quickly and exclusively inform viewers about extremely important messages from American authorities. You instill hope in the Ukrainian people that victory is possible over the invader that is terrorizing half the world. And like the death of ‘Putinism,’ this victory is inevitable.”

—Volodymyr Mzhelsky, General Manager of Ukraine’s Channel 5, July 13, 2022

### Awards

Over the course of 2022, Voice of America journalists earned more than a dozen prestigious national awards across diverse languages and formats. The [HORN OF AFRICA SERVICE](#) received a Gracie Award for its television piece, “Breast Cancer Awareness: The Story of Mahlet Girma.” [VOA DOCUMENTARIES](#) won six awards at the New York Festivals for TV and Film: silver award winners

included “Shelter on the Line,” “Terror in Tigray,” and “VOA Unpacked: Life as a Refugee.” [VOA JOURNALISTS](#) won in two National Headliner Awards categories, including a second-place award for the press freedom project “The Mechanism,” and third place for continuing coverage of a major news event for “Mission’s End: War and Withdrawal in Afghanistan.” The [SPANISH SERVICE](#) won a first

place CMA Gabriel Award for its special feature “Climate Change: Impact on Regional Survival,” and VOA took the top spot in three categories at this year’s Clarion Awards for “Can Afghanistan’s Free Press Survive,” “Floating Swarm,” and for a student entry for an intern’s contribution to VOA’s [PRESS FREEDOM DESK](#).



VOA Afghanistan documentary “Symphony of Courage.” (VOA)

### Strategic Crisis Coverage

Effective coverage of crises requires deep knowledge of local conditions *before* a disaster begins to unfold, regardless of whether the disaster is a hurricane, assassination, invasion, or coup. VOA’s in-house knowledge of the world and the network’s flexibility are nearly unrivaled. In

2022, VOA leveraged those strengths to trace the rippling impacts of major events around the world.

In Ukraine, [VOA](#) immediately increased its programming following the Russian invasion, leveraging a new 24/7 satellite channel with targeted programming from VOA and [RFE/RL](#). VOA’s coverage has

included evidence of Russian atrocities, first-hand accounts of abuses, and analysis of the broader picture of Russia’s invasion and occupation of Ukrainian territory.

VOA’s swift response to Russia’s invasion was enabled by establishing an Eastern Europe bureau in early 2022 headed

### Fast Facts

- LANGUAGES: 48
- AUDIENCE: 326 million
- EMPLOYEES: 935
- BUDGET: \$258.2 million





VOA Eastern Europe Bureau Chief Myroslava Gongadze reports from the Ukrainian-Belarusian border. (VOA)

by veteran journalist Myroslava Gongadze. In addition to high-level interviews and on-the-ground reporting, the bureau produces a daily English-language podcast, “Flashpoint Ukraine.” VOA’s fact-checking [Polygraph](#) website pivoted to focus on debunking Moscow’s disinformation campaign. The [NEWS CENTER](#) established new cloud-based workflows to deliver breaking content in real time to VOA language services and to feed a digital blog, updated 24/7 with news related to the Russian invasion.

In Ukraine, VOA established itself as a de facto “U.S. Bureau” for the entire national television market. VOA also provided a unique lens showing how American stories tie to experiences among Ukrainians

and Russians. The resonance of these stories is borne out by audience metrics. For example, a [VOA UKRAINIAN](#) story about police officers in Philadelphia who collected bulletproof vests for Ukrainian soldiers got 175,000 video views and 12,000 interactions on Facebook alone. A [VOA RUSSIAN](#) report on how a store in New York changed its name from “Taste of Russia” in protest of Russia’s war garnered more than three million views on Facebook.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban ratcheted up its social and political control, including the suspension of VOA’s terrestrial radio broadcasts. VOA’s investment in programming for a 24/7 satellite stream paid dividends, maintaining a direct line

to audiences even as the Taliban sought to disrupt access to VOA’s digital content. In March 2022, the Taliban barred VOA’s local affiliates, ToloNEWS and Shamshad TV, from airing its TV shows. In response, VOA ramped up to eight hours of original content daily for distribution on alternate platforms, and also increased digital content.

In 2022, [VOA AFGHANISTAN](#) covered the issues most important to those living under the Taliban’s rule, including women’s rights, education, freedom of expression, and more. It conducted dozens of exclusive interviews in English, Dari, and Pashto with U.S. policymakers, former Afghan government officials, and Taliban representatives. VOA also covered the wave of new Afghan immigrants and refugees across the United States and around the world. The acclaimed documentary “Symphony of Courage” recounts the flight of two young female musicians escaping Taliban rule.

As protests spread across Iran in September 2022, VOA shifted resources to provide round-the-clock coverage of the political unrest engulfing the country. By increasing live coverage, expanding special programming, and staffing a 24/7 digital presence, the service

accrued 380.5 million social video views (a 282% increase) between September 2022 and January 2023, and website traffic saw a 148% increase, reaching 59 million visits. VOA’s profound impact has been recognized by both audience members and the ruling regime. The office of Iran’s supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, released a poster including the claim that “security is the foundation of all aspects of the life of a society,” depicting VOA as a blade penetrating the circle of the Islamic Republic’s message.

### Contextualized Reporting Around the World

VOA’s competitive advantage in crowded media markets is its ability to draw from multiple language services to provide a comprehensive view of trends from multiple perspectives.

In 2022, VOA’s coverage of China provided a global lens on the country’s expanding role in the world, shedding light on disinformation and soft power campaigns, exploitative investments, and degradation of natural environments. Reporting and analysis ranged from the infrastructure development agreements of China’s Belt & Road Initiative to the cultural influence

programs conducted through Confucius Institutes, to the exercise of raw power in China’s persecution of Uyghurs around the world.

The [VOA NEWS CENTER](#) continued its “China Abroad” initiative, illuminating the PRC’s aggressive social and economic activities around the world, producing more than 240 web articles, television packages, and radio pieces from five continents.

To confront the PRC’s propaganda machine, [VOA MANDARIN SERVICE](#)’s [Jiehuang Pingdao](#) (“Polygraph”), provided direct rebuttals to Chinese disinformation by tracking Chinese officials’ lies and false claims and exposing the rampant distortion of facts in Chinese state media.

Polygraph has refuted false Chinese claims related to the Ukraine war, U.S.-China relations, Western and Chinese vaccines’ efficacy, Covid’s origins, the human rights situations in Xinjiang, Hong Kong, and Tibet, China’s behavior in the South China Sea, and more.

[VOA MANDARIN](#) also provided comprehensive coverage of then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s August visit to Taiwan. VOA’s 24-hour [live blog](#) had 67 entries and 354,000 page views. VOA [live streaming](#) and [special programming](#) covering her trip garnered 1.25 million views. In a single week, VOA Mandarin published more than 60 articles on Pelosi’s trip, attracting 4.3 million page views of the website alone.



Kurdish women in northeast Syria protest Mahsa Amini’s death in September 2022. (VOA)



# Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty

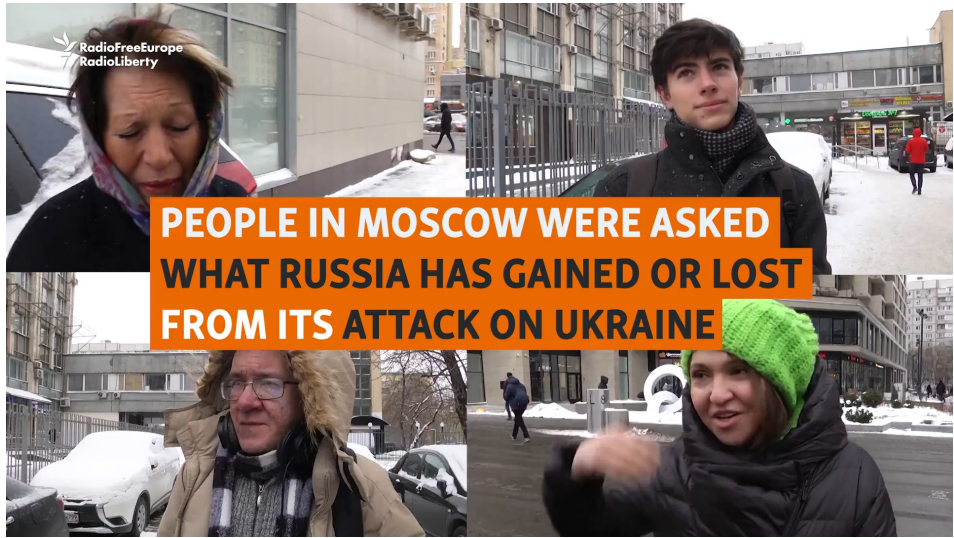
For 70 years, RFE/RL has brought independent media to audiences hungry for the truth. More critical than ever, RFE/RL is reaching growing audiences, countering disinformation, and reporting from the frontlines of global events from Russia and Ukraine to Iran and Afghanistan. In FY 2022, 40.6 million adults consumed RFE/RL programming weekly via digital, TV, and radio platforms, according to USAGM research.

### Overcoming Threats and Censorship to Expose Repression and Disinformation

In FY2022, [RFE/RL](#) and its journalists faced significant — and historic — threats to its operations across multiple markets. Beyond its comprehensive coverage of Russia’s unprovoked invasion of Ukraine and the consequences of the conflict in Russia, Belarus, and other neighboring states, RFE/RL also continued to provide an alternative to Russian and Chinese state-sponsored disinformation across its entire 23-country coverage area.

### An Alternative to Russian and Chinese Disinformation:

RFE/RL takes a multi-pronged approach to countering Russian disinformation across its coverage area. Its [RUSSIAN SERVICE](#) ([RADIO SVOBODA](#)) and [CURRENT](#)



Despite an intense pressure campaign by Russian authorities that forced RFE/RL to suspend operations in Russia in March 2022, [Current Time](#) and the Russian Service continued to bring audiences on-the-ground reporting on public views about and opposition to the war. (RFE/RL)

[TIME](#), RFE/RL’s 24/7 Russian-language television and digital network are critical for countering disinformation across the Russian language market. Additionally, [RFE/RL’S TATAR-BASHKIR SERVICE](#) and [NORTH CAUCASUS SERVICE](#)

provide local news for areas within the Russian Federation with vulnerable ethnic minority populations — the Volga-Ural region and the North Caucasus — in the local languages of Tatar, Bashkir, and Chechen.

Understanding that the real Russian story is unfolding far from monolithic Moscow, RFE/RL is the only professional media outlet to operate Russian-language community websites oriented toward local audiences in Siberia ([SIBERIA.REALITIES](#)), the Northwest ([NORTH.REALITIES](#)), North Caucasus ([CAUCASUS.REALITIES](#)), and the Volga-Ural region ([IDEL.REALITIES](#)). These services counter Russian disinformation, expose attempts by Russian authorities to suppress minority ethnic groups, and highlight social issues — including health care, waste disposal, the environment, and Chinese investment — that are often ignored by Kremlin-controlled state media. The impact of Russian military casualties in Ukraine and the full force of economic sanctions will likewise be most fully felt in the Russian regions and have gone completely unreported by state media.

Despite an intense pressure campaign by Russian authorities that forced RFE/RL to suspend operations in Russia in March 2022, [CURRENT TIME](#) and [RFE/RL’S RUSSIAN SERVICE](#) continued to bring audiences on-the-ground

### Fast Facts

LANGUAGES: 27	EMPLOYEES: 713
AUDIENCE: 40.6 million	BUDGET: \$145.7 million

### Awards

RFE/RL won a 2022 [Online Journalism Award](#) in the category of “Breaking News, Large Newsroom” for coverage of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Radio Farda’s Fahimeh Khezr Heidari won a Silver Award in the “Documentary | Human Rights” category at the [2022 New York Festivals Radio Awards](#), for her audio documentary “[The Censored Life of Shabnam](#).”

RFE/RL’s Ukrainian Service contributor Viktoriya Roshchyna was awarded a 2022 [Courage in Journalism Award](#) by the International Women’s Media Foundation, and Ukrainian Service journalists [Maryan Kushnir](#) and [Valeriya Yegoshina](#) were presented [Ukraine’s top journalism award](#), “Honor of the Profession” (“[Chest Profesii](#)”).



Ukrainian Service journalists Valeriya Yegoshina (left) and Maryan Kushnir were presented Ukraine’s top journalism award, “Honor of the Profession.” (RadioSvoboda.org/RFE/RL)



reporting on [public views](#) about, and [opposition](#) to, the war in Ukraine as well as groundbreaking investigations on the corruption schemes that aided Vladimir Putin’s rise to power in the early 2000s. **RFE/RL’S TATAR-BASHKIR SERVICE** has offered unique reporting on the impoverished minority communities who supply the bulk of contract soldiers in the Ukrainian campaign while **RFE/RL’S NORTH CAUCASUS SERVICE** has exposed atrocities against the LGBTQ+ community in Chechnya —reporting available nowhere else in the Russian market.

“People are hungry for the unbiased information that RFE/RL provides, and we are committed to supporting it, despite the Kremlin’s efforts to suppress media freedom.”  
—Rep. Mike McCaul (R-TX)



Manas Kaiyrtayev presented a half hour special report documenting the full scope of the violence during the January unrest in Kazakhstan. (RFE/RL)

Chinese influence and disinformation across RFE/RL’s coverage area is increasing rapidly. RFE/RL provides [expanded coverage](#) of China’s attempts to grow its footprint in the region — tracking China’s expanding economic influence in Russia, [Montenegro](#), and [Iran](#), exposing the [spread of Chinese surveillance technology](#) in [Serbia](#), spotlighting Chinese mistreatment of ethnic [Kazakh](#) and [Kyrgyz](#) in Xinjiang, and

documenting China’s growing [strategic relationship](#) with the countries of [Central Asia](#).  
**On-the-Ground Advantage**  
With local on-the-ground reporters across the coverage region, RFE/RL is able to provide audiences unique local coverage of major events. During the January 2022 unrest in Kazakhstan, RFE/RL’s bureaus in Almaty and Nur-Sultan

documented the [full scope of the violence](#) and [civilian death count](#). RFE/RL’s regional reporting strength also showed its value in covering complex conflicts in remote areas, such as the 2022 crackdowns in Tajikistan’s [Badakhshan](#) region and Uzbekistan’s [Karakalpakstan](#) republic. The same is true in cross-border conflicts, such as the September 2022 clashes along the [Kyrgyz-Tajik border](#) and the ongoing violence between [Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh](#),

where few media organizations can match RFE/RL’s capacity for contextual reporting.  
**Bolstering Digital Excellence:**  
RFE/RL is a digital-first media organization, engaging audiences with bespoke digital content distributed across all major locally used platforms. In FY 2022, RFE/RL launched a **DIGITAL STRATEGY UNIT** that focuses on ensuring that all language services are engaging audiences with news experiences

tailored to digital platform best practices. The result is an ability to engage, inform, and connect local communities, evidenced by strong impact indicators. RFE/RL recorded 12.1 billion combined views across Facebook, YouTube and Instagram in FY 2022, an increase of 74% over the previous fiscal year — at a time when many individual language services faced difficult circumstances, and as websites and social media platforms were blocked in many of the company’s target countries.



Aibek Bitybosunov of RFE/RL Kyrgyz Service (left) and Farzon Muhammadi of RFE/RL Tajik Service report on the deadly Tajik-Kyrgyz border clashes. (RFE/RL)

“We need you now more than ever before. You are a critical voice, a credible voice, to counter the propaganda and disinformation of Russia.”  
—Sen. Ben Cardin (D-MD)



# Office of Cuba Broadcasting

The Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB) oversees Radio and Television Martí, a multimedia hub of news, information, and analysis that provide the people of Cuba with interactive programs seven days a week. Combined with the online platform martinoticias.com, the Martí’s are a one-of-a-kind service that brings unbiased, objective news and information to all Cubans.

Operating in the most repressive media environment in Latin America, OCB oversees RADIO AND TELEVISION MARTÍ and MARTINOCIAS.COM, which focus on topics that are censored or controlled by the Cuban government.

One topic of particular interest is the war in Ukraine. After the Russian invasion in February 2022, and to counter Russian disinformation and propaganda in Cuba, OCB started a series of podcasts entitled “Witnesses of the war in Ukraine” with voices of Ukrainians from several different cities across the country. The Martí’s also provided a live broadcast of Ukrainian President Zelenskyy’s speech before the U.S. Congress on December 22.

In the year following historic protests in Cuba, the Martí’s provided audiences with unfiltered, reliable content about the demonstrations and the subsequent government crackdown. “Puestos y Conectados,” a three-part web

series, gave audiences an unfiltered view of what led to the protests across the country. It reported on the increasing economic distress on the island, the government’s tepid response to COVID-19, and the suppression of artists critical of the government. “Puestos y

Conectados” also used cell phone videos to provide a complete look at the protests, giving audiences access to never-before-seen footage.

“Madres del #11J,” another video series, spoke to the families of Cubans jailed for their participation in the protests to bring awareness

### Awards

OCB Recognized at Suncoast Emmy Awards  
Nominated in the Human Interest category: “[Pianista Evan](#)” by Tatiana Riquelme and Jesus Acosta.

(OCB)



From episode one of “Puestos y Conectados.” (OCB)

to those impacted most. Along with producing podcasts and other special programming, Radio and Television Martí also created an interactive map to show reports and media from demonstrations in over 50 cities across Cuba. The Martí’s marked the anniversary of the protests with reports from independent journalists, expert analysis, and responses from U.S. government representatives. This coverage was vital as Cubans had limited options for viewing information on the protests, leaving them with unverified reports and rumors.

OCB also produced content for underrepresented audiences. The weekly program, “Abriendo

Espacios,” explores contemporary women’s issues, providing a place for Cuban women to hear each other’s experiences. It also serves as a way to bring attention to topics not often discussed, such as gender-based violence issues. Another program, “Arcoiris,” focuses on the needs, interests, and challenges of the LGBTQ+ community.

One weekly program, “Arte Express,” reflects on Cuban politics and society, featuring artists who exhibit their work in exile or from inside Cuba. The critically acclaimed web series “Subteraneo” also focuses on art, with the second episode about the song that became a rallying cry for protestors during the

“Since its foundation, Radio Martí has been a space of hope and freedom that has broken the information blockade and the intellectual indoctrination of the Cuban population”

—Oscar Elias Biscet,  
2022 David Burke Award,  
December 22, 2022

2021 demonstrations. The series included a jail-house interview with rapper Maykel Osorbo, who has been held in maximum security since his arrest. The song, Patria y Vida, included lyrics such as “my people call for freedom” and “no more doctrines,” which resulted in government authorities attempting to silence it.

### Fast Facts

LANGUAGE: 1  
AUDIENCE: N/A  
EMPLOYEES: 88  
BUDGET: \$13.3 million



# Radio Free Asia

During a year of historic growth, Radio Free Asia produced some of the organization’s most compelling journalism to date, most notably covering the COVID protests in China, unrest in Burma, and North Korea’s violation of sanctions, among other stories.

### Fast Facts

LANGUAGES: 9

AUDIENCE: 58.3 million

EMPLOYEES: 304

BUDGET: \$62.3 million

After an apartment fire in the city of Urumqi in Xinjiang sparked countrywide protests over COVID-19 lockdown measures in China, **RFA’S UYGHUR SERVICE** was the first media to confirm that the victims

of the blaze [were all Uyghur](#). As demonstrations erupted across China and its autonomous regions, **RFA’S MANDARIN SERVICE** and **RFA’S CANTONESE SERVICE** produced full-scale and timely coverage. During this historic period, RFA saw record-high engagement on social media. RFA Mandarin’s Twitter following increased threefold, adding more than 74K followers between November 24 and December 1. It gained 17K followers on November 27 alone — the largest single-day increase for the account — only to

be bested one day later with 24.1K new followers. Additionally, web visits for RFA Mandarin doubled, while traffic from mobile Google searches increased by 233%. Meanwhile in Hong Kong, RFA Cantonese also experienced huge spikes, as Facebook video views grew by 10 times from the previous week. RFA’s record-breaking coverage was subsequently [lauded](#) by The Washington Post editorial board. In October, similar frustrations over China’s “zero-COVID” policy boiled over in Lhasa, where **RFA’S**

### Awards

**RFA KOREAN** won a Gracie Award for its story on [North Korean women defectors](#).

**RFA’s 歪脑 | WHYNOT** won four Telly awards for its reports on the [ordinary people impacted by the U.S.-China big-power rivalry](#) and the [lost Chinese feminist movement](#). The latter story also won an Award of Excellence at the Society of News Design Awards.

**RFA’s 歪脑 | WHYNOT** won three Society of News Design awards for its [report on HIV in China](#).

*An image from WHYNOT’s report on HIV in China. (RFA)*



RFA has also probed Chinese social media for falsehoods and misleading narratives about Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, as China seeks to rally support behind Putin’s brutal invasion. Additionally, in late December, RFA began an [ongoing series with Taiwanese investigative news outlet The Reporter](#) to produce a series of reports that provide Chinese audiences greater clarity about the conflict.

*A photo of Ukrainian volunteer Olena Taranova, from RFA’s series of reports for Chinese audiences on the war in Ukraine. (Yang Zilei/RFA)*

**TIBETAN SERVICE** broke the news of the [first major demonstrations](#) since the 2008 Tibetan Uprising. RFA’s coverage was picked up by major international news outlets including [BBC](#) and [Kyodo News](#).

In one of the most isolated societies in the world, **RFA’S KOREAN SERVICE** continued to play a leading role in investigating Pyongyang’s violations of international sanctions. Most notably, RFA revealed that sewing factories in North Korea were [producing winter uniforms for Russian soldiers](#) amid U.N. regulations prohibiting North Korea from exporting textile products. In response to RFA’s report, the U.N. Security Council thanked RFA for bringing the issue to light and requested further details to aid its investigation into the matter.

In Southeast Asia, **RFA’S BURMESE SERVICE** continued to produce timely coverage of the ongoing civil war wracking the country. In June, RFA Burmese produced a three-part [in-depth investigation](#) into

“... Essential. Critical. Like oxygen...”

—Sophie Richardson, Human Rights Watch, on RFA’s crucial role bringing on-the-ground news to audiences living in closed societies

the contents of a soldier’s lost cell phone, which contained gruesome images and videos depicting the military’s crimes against civilians in the Sagaing region. RFA verified the media and weighed risks before publishing its report, which served

as the first piece of hard evidence of the Burma junta’s brutality and war crimes. **RFA’S LAO SERVICE** was instrumental in reporting on the goings-on in the Chinese-run Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone, where their coverage was lauded by The Diplomat, for being “possibly the best source of information about happenings within the secretive zone.” In collaboration with investigative reporter Jack Davies, **RFA’S KHMER SERVICE** uncovered how a former Chinese detainee turned Cambodian diplomat concealed his [substantial stake in a major English soccer team](#). After the publication of RFA’s explosive report — which the Athletic praised for its “superb reporting” — the English Football League said it would be [making inquiries](#) with the football club.



# Middle East Broadcasting Networks

**MBN is critical in providing accurate news and information to more than 27 million Arabic speakers across the Middle East and North Africa by tackling sensitive topics such as human rights, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion.**

**MBN** challenges stereotypes and focuses on marginalized groups in the region through its television, radio, and digital platforms. In 2022, MBN’s television network **ALHURRA** debuted a new documentary-style program highlighting women who succeeded in male-dominated fields. “Together” brought the stories of these pioneering women to life, including those who helped them along the way.

MBN expanded its coverage of Sudan as it negotiated political and economic instability. The network launched a new **RADIO SAWA** stream targeting Sudan with programs dedicated to the Sudanese people and their challenges. **ALHURRA**’s new weekly program, “Between Two Niles,” brought together political, economic, and social experts to address and provide context to the nation’s most pressing concerns.

When Russia invaded Ukraine, MBN was on the front lines with correspondents in Kyiv and the Polish border to show viewers firsthand the death and destruction caused by the war. This was especially important as other Arab networks avoided criticism of Russia due to its geopolitical influence in the region. While other Arab channels gave Russian leaders an open microphone, **ALHURRA** examined Russia’s human rights violations. In the first weeks of the war, Alhurra hosted more than 19 hours of live coverage, including analysis from Ukrainian, American, and Russian experts to discuss the war. Alhurra’s investigative series, “Alhurra Investigates,” also delved into Russian war crimes in Ukraine, reported how Gulf countries were assisting Russian oligarchs to circumvent sanctions imposed by the West, and the role of the mercenary Wagner Group which has infiltrated Ukraine as well as Arab countries such as Sudan and Syria.



Alhurra’s coverage of the midterm elections provided insights and a historical look at the role of the midterms and the possible implications of the next two years of legislation in the U.S. Congress. (MBN)

“The channel is unique in its topics, ideas, and presentation. That is the secret of its success... It is the people’s channel.”

—18-year-old Egyptian participant in 2021 in-depth interviews

### Fast Facts

- LANGUAGE: 1
- AUDIENCE: 27.4 million
- EMPLOYEES: 826
- BUDGET: \$107.6 million

In addition to news from the region and the world, MBN provides an undistorted line of communication between the U.S. and the Middle East. MBN has the most extensive coverage of U.S. foreign policy and the American people of any Arabic-language media outlet. **ALHURRA**, **RADIO SAWA** and **ALHURRA.COM** have programs and sections dedicated to the U.S. Shows including “From the Capital,” “Huna

### Awards

- MBN won seven medals at the New York Festivals TV and Film Awards, honoring the best content from over 50 countries.
- MBN won 25 trophies at the Telly Awards: 1 Gold, 5 Silver, and 19 Bronze. The Telly Awards recognize the best work created for television and video.
- MBN won the Silver Medal at the Cannes Corporate Media and TV awards for its augmented reality production depicting the impending environmental disaster of the Safer oil tanker.
- MBN’s newest podcast, “American Highlights,” won the bronze medal at the Signal Awards for its report exploring Jewish communities in the U.S.

America,” “Decision Capital,” and “Inside Washington” address U.S. news and foreign policy. Through interviews and analysis, MBN shows the plurality of the U.S., providing a variety of perspectives regarding outreach to the region. This was never more prominent in 2022, than with the coverage of the midterm elections. Alhurra provided insights and a historical look at the role of the midterms and the possible

implications of the next two years of legislation in the U.S. Congress.

In 2022, MBN started its migration to a digital-first news organization. **RADIO SAWA LEVANT** moved from FM to the digital sphere on RadioSawa.com with enhanced interactive and engaging features. MBN also launched two new podcasts, “Chapters” and “American Highlights,” engaging young adults in the Arab world.



# Open Technology Fund

OTF works to advance internet freedom in repressive environments by supporting the research, development, implementation, and maintenance of technologies that increase free expression, circumvent censorship, and provide secure access to USAGM content and the broader internet to empower citizens worldwide to exercise their fundamental human rights online.

With the ongoing support of USAGM and Congress, [OTF](#) continues to lead global efforts to advance a free and open internet. OTF has supported pioneering internet freedom technologies that counter attempts by authoritarian governments to restrict freedom online. Today, more than two billion people globally use OTF-supported technology daily, and more than two-thirds of all mobile phone users have OTF-incubated technology on their devices.

As threats to Internet freedom intensify from authoritarian regimes closing information flows and using increasingly sophisticated censorship and surveillance tactics, OTF plays a critical role in protecting and advancing Internet freedom. Over the last year, OTF progressively supported a wide range of technically advanced and intuitive tools that have kept pace with the most sophisticated information controls, allowing millions of people to more easily bypass censorship

technology. These tools have proven particularly effective at responding to acute censorship surges, including in Iran, Russia, Burma, Brazil, and Afghanistan, among others. For example, following the Iranian regime’s severe blocking of the Internet following protests over the murder of Masha Amini, the number of monthly active users of OTF-supported circumvention tools grew to more than 30 million people. These tools have proven to be a vital resource for the Iranian people to share information and communicate, despite sophisticated attempts by government censors to block communications. They have also ensured that the Iranian people have continued access to USAGM journalism, with over 90% of USAGM’s online audience in Iran originating from OTF-supported circumvention tools.

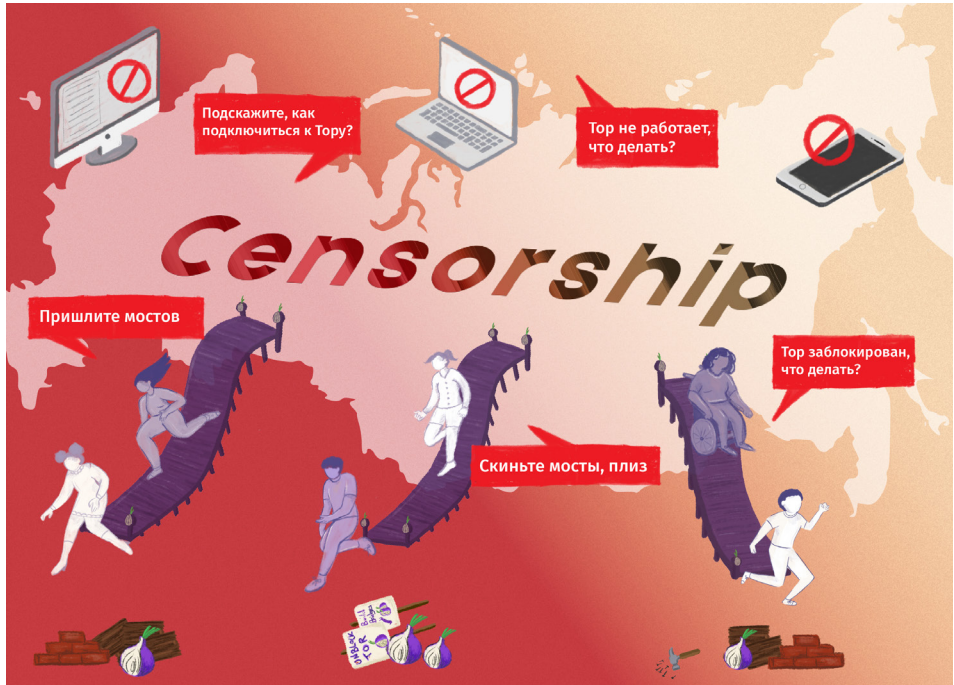
In Russia, these tools have also proved essential to helping the Russian people evade their government’s imposition of

technical censorship following the invasion of Ukraine. All OTF-supported circumvention tools experienced huge surges in use in Russia, from extremely low levels of usage to more than 8 million monthly active users collectively. OTF has also coordinated with USAGM on circumvention techniques that do not require users to download unblocked links. These mirrors helped [RFE/RL](#)’s websites in Russia realize an over 150% sustained increase in visitors compared to pre-invasion traffic. OTF also successfully responded to numerous acute digital threats through the rapid response fund with projects in China, Ukraine, The Philippines, and Egypt, among others.

In addition to responding to real-time emergencies, OTF also helps prepare for internet shutdown events. Repressive regimes now regularly make use of a full spectrum of internet shutdown

tactics, from blocking specific communication tools, to throttling connection speeds, to complete suspensions of internet and telecommunication networks. To date, OTF has invested in the development of unique peer-to-peer technologies that enable content sharing and communication without an internet or cellular connection, including peer-to-peer communication tools, peer-to-peer content-sharing platforms, and a shutdown-resistant app store to enable users to safely share applications and software without an internet connection. OTF continues to address the rapid increase in internet shutdowns globally by accelerating the development and deployment of these technologies and partnering with USAGM’s entities to incorporate them into their applications, ensuring that USAGM products are resistant to internet shutdowns.

OTF continues to lead the field in innovation of internet freedom technologies. OTF-supported projects have played a critical role in uncovering new censorship and surveillance techniques and developing novel evasion strategies, including designing tactics to evade censorship of the transport-layer protocol QUIC, developing platforms



(OTF)

to analyze active mobile and digital surveillance threats, and creating an automated tool to extract and classify application privacy and transport-layer security violations. OTF has also invested in the next generation of secure messaging tools that respond to the most advanced modern surveillance practices.

OTF also supported its [eighth](#) class of the Information Controls Fellowship Program (ICFP). ICFP fellows have conducted research on a variety of topics related to internet censorship, including techniques to identify and monitor censorship technologies, investigations into

the underlying mechanisms used to identify and block censorship circumvention protocols, and understanding and centralizing internet shutdown data.

### Fast Facts

NUMBER OF PROJECTS SUPPORTED:  
450+

USERS OF OTF-SUPPORTED  
TECHNOLOGY WORLDWIDE:  
2 billion + daily

EMPLOYEES: 23

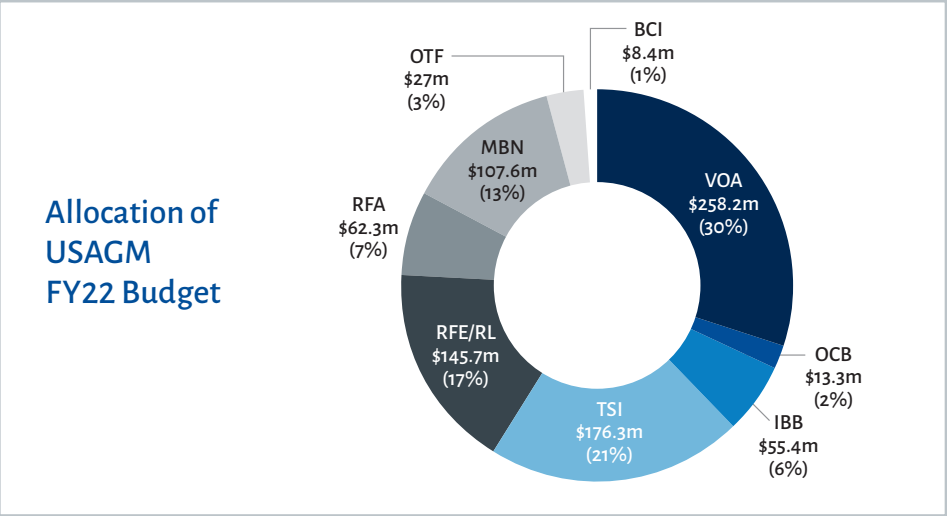
BUDGET: \$27 million



# Financial Highlights

The independent accounting firm, Kearney & Company, conducted our FY 2021 financial statement audit and issued an unmodified opinion on our Financial Statements. Preparing these statements allows USAGM to improve financial management and provide accurate and reliable information to Congress, the President, and the taxpayer. USAGM management is responsible for the integrity and objectivity of the financial information presented in the statements. The financial statements and financial data presented in this report have been prepared from the accounting records of USAGM in conformity with accounting principles in the United States of America and incorporate the application of the standards as prescribed by the Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board.

(in thousands)	FY 2022	FY 2021
AT THE END OF THE YEAR:		
<b>Condensed Balance Sheet Data:</b>		
Fund Balance with Treasury	\$ 286,463	\$ 253,758
Cash and Other Monetary Assets	3	3
Accounts Receivable	62	241
Property, Plant and Equipment	37,280	46,651
Advances to Surrogate Broadcasters and Internet Freedom	105,000	95,000
Other	1,361	569
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$ 430,169</b>	<b>\$ 396,222</b>
Accounts Payable and Other	\$ 30,679	\$ 35,198
Retirement and Payroll	41,009	50,586
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$ 71,688</b>	<b>\$ 85,784</b>
Unexpended Appropriations	\$ 344,870	\$ 292,620
Cumulative Results of Operations	13,611	17,818
<b>Total Net Position</b>	<b>358,481</b>	<b>310,438</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Position</b>	<b>\$ 430,169</b>	<b>\$ 396,222</b>
FOR THE YEAR:		
<b>Condensed Statement of Net Cost Data:</b>		
Total Cost	\$ 851,027	\$ 823,883
Total Earned Revenue	(4,565)	(4,416)
<b>Total Net Cost of Operations</b>	<b>\$ 846,462</b>	<b>\$ 819,467</b>







U.S. AGENCY FOR  
GLOBAL MEDIA

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