

Statement of Amanda Bennett
Chief Executive Officer, U.S. Agency for Global Media
Before the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on
State Department and USAID Management, International Operations, and
Bilateral International Development
“The Global Information Wars: Is the U.S. Winning or Losing?”
May 3, 2023

Introduction

Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Hagerty, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee: I am grateful for the opportunity to discuss U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM)’s work on the frontlines of the global information war as authoritarian regimes like the People’s Republic of China (PRC), Russia, and Iran deepen their efforts to block the free flow of information and spread malign influence.

Our agency provides accurate, objective, and professional news and information to parts of the world that do not have a free and open press. As a journalist by training, I often explain our mission by saying we export the First Amendment.

The history of U.S. international media spans more than 80 years, starting with the creation of Voice of America’s first radio show during World War II. Since then, U.S. international media has evolved from its origins in radio to include a full spectrum of modern delivery methods. Whether on radio, television, or online – from satellite streams to Telegram accounts – we meet our audiences where they are. In fact, 410 million people in over 100 countries turn to us every week for news and information in 63 languages.

We meet our mission through the work of six entities: Voice of America (VOA), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB), Radio Free Asia (RFA), the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN), and the Open Technology Fund (OTF). Each USAGM network contributes to our mission by fulfilling a unique role in their respective markets. VOA provides comprehensive regional and world news to 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 in their markets. MBN serves as a hybrid of the two models, providing

accurate and comprehensive news about the region and the United States. OTF, our newest grantee, works to advance internet freedom worldwide, enabling audiences to access and share independent news, and empowering our journalists to do their jobs in the face of repressive censorship and surveillance.

A Critical Moment in the Global Information War

We are at an inflection point. Authoritarian regimes are using malign influence, disinformation, propaganda, and information manipulation to close the flow of information and undermine those seeking fact-based information about the world around them. The governments of the PRC, Iran, and Russia often work together to amplify their malign influence, obscure the facts, and cause confusion on a global scale.

If we miss this opportunity to target investments to counter inroads Russia, the PRC, and Iran are making, we run the risk of losing the global information war. Right now, we have a head start in many markets due to the credible and unbiased information we provide, but these next two years will be absolutely critical. We should be alarmed, but optimistic – alarmed because we are being vastly outspent, but optimistic because the quality and impact of our investments is great and we still have a chance to secure our competitive advantage if we act now.

This is a moment that USAGM was built for, as it was during World War II and the Cold War, to combat malign foreign influence. While the governments of China, Russia, and Iran expand state-sponsored propaganda not only in their own countries but also into regions including Latin America, South and Central Asia, and Africa – USAGM, with over four thousand media partners around the world, is well-positioned to counter this authoritarian influence offensive. We have measurable data showing we are outperforming PRC and Russian state-controlled media in many key markets. And USAGM’s credibility and trust with our audiences are high because we tell the truth. It is not too late for us to secure our competitive advantage.

To stay competitive in the 21st century, USAGM will continue to find new ways to reach audiences, improve our infrastructure from digital security to physical safety, lead new forms of engaging content and build on what is already working, and leverage the reach of each individual network for greater global impact. By leveraging our global media partnerships, we can continue to expand the delivery

of fact-based journalism to larger audiences around the world for just pennies per person. USAGM represents a powerful investment that continues to show an outsized and scalable impact across the globe. By maximizing the best use of available resources and the talent of our journalists and staff, USAGM remains committed to meeting our mission at a time when it is more important than ever.

Countering Malign Foreign Influence from the PRC

Under the PRC's rule, mainland China's media environment is one of the most restricted in the world and the PRC government has been working hard to export this model to other countries. Within mainland China, the government exercises near-total control over both mass media and the internet, through a sophisticated system of content blocking, filtering, and surveillance.

Outside its borders, the PRC is deliberately and effectively extending its reach far beyond the Indo-Pacific, and rapidly moving into Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe. In Latin America for example, the PRC government is conducting extensive marketing campaigns and offering media executives lavish trips to China to promote placement of PRC-controlled media content. In Africa, the PRC is installing low-cost satellite dishes to provide poor and rural citizens with limited, government-controlled programming. The energy with which the PRC government drove its Belt and Road expansion a decade ago is now being replicated in the information space to spread malign influence broadly and deeply.

Despite operating with only a fraction of the budget of the PRC's state-controlled media, USAGM's networks have made significant gains in getting information to audiences in China and diaspora communities outside of the country, and bolstering media partners in regions targeted by the PRC. VOA and RFA broadcast in Mandarin, Cantonese, Uyghur, and Tibetan, providing a variety of news, political and cultural programming as well as English-language instruction. VOA's English-language fact-checking project, Polygraph, includes a website dedicated to producing videos and articles in Mandarin to confront PRC disinformation efforts and present evidence to debunk falsehoods. Similarly, in 2022, RFA launched the Asia Fact Check Lab, a project in both English and Mandarin that monitors and fact-checks the PRC's false narratives and misinformation campaigns.

VOA and RFA represent some of the only sources of credible information for people living in China, while OTF increases their access to information – and their combined impact is powerful. Audiences in China yearn for a comprehensive, uncensored view of China, the U.S., and the world. Chinese citizens often express gratitude when VOA and RFA cover events the PRC government would prefer to hide or distort, including the 2022 protests against the PRC government’s zero-COVID policy. Last year, RFA’s timely coverage of these protests broke records for web traffic and social media engagement. RFA experienced historic surges on social media, as RFA Mandarin gained 75,000 new followers on Twitter between November 24 and December 1, 2022 and saw a 233% increase in traffic from mobile Google searches. RFA Cantonese’s Facebook video views increased by 10 times in one week alone. One RFA Mandarin Service video showing these protests was viewed over 4 million times on Twitter.

The PRC’s state-controlled media presence is expanding across Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia, and RFE/RL’s journalists increasingly witness and report on growing connectivity between disinformation from the PRC and Russia. From Serbia and Hungary, to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and inside Russia itself, they cover Beijing’s growing military, technological, and investment footprint across the region. RFE/RL is also working with RFA to uncover the PRC’s newest online censorship methodologies and find ways to counter them before they are widely adopted.

Audiences in China are also intensely interested in coverage of U.S.-China relations. When former Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi traveled to Taiwan last year, VOA Mandarin received over four million pageviews on their website in one week as the network live-streamed the speech, interviewed former House Speaker Newt Gingrich and several Senators from both sides of the aisle, and published articles with in-depth analysis. This type of coverage is a window into the U.S. and the world for many: one loyal audience member described how she started listening to VOA’s Mandarin Service on a shortwave radio in 2001 and continues to listen to this day through the network’s digital platforms.

Our audiences in China show that they not only prefer USAGM network content, but also that they are willing to go to great lengths to overcome the “Great Firewall” to reach that content. For example, last year VOA’s Mandarin Service content on YouTube earned nearly double the video views as the PRC’s CCTV. When thinking about our impact, we must consider that the PRC has the most sophisticated internet censorship in the world. OTF supports leading VPNs in

China, which help over 4 million monthly active users protect their privacy while they access the internet.

Countering Malign Foreign Influence from Russia

Russian President Vladimir Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine sparked the largest armed conflict in Europe since World War II. The war's consequences reverberated around the world, bringing the global information war into sharp focus. For many in our audience, the full-scale invasion forced them to question their entire worldview. As the Kremlin consolidated power, eliminated opposition, and silenced dissenting voices inside of Russia, it also launched wide-ranging malign influence operations abroad, with a specific focus on Russian speakers in its immediate region. It is in this context that USAGM's role in providing fact-based, independent, and reliable reporting to the Russian public, to Ukrainians, and to people across the globe became even more important. Through coordination and collaboration to share and translate war coverage in real time, USAGM continues to leverage the combined reach of each network, equipped with OTF-supported circumvention tools, to ensure billions of people across the globe have access to the facts.

Since the invasion of Ukraine, which began in 2014 with the occupation and illegal annexation of Crimea, RFE/RL and VOA have been on the literal front lines of this war, reporting from the fields and trenches of heavily bombed towns of Ukraine, highlighting the horrible reality of Russia's invasion for audiences across the globe. When the full-scale invasion began, USAGM networks were uniquely positioned on-the-ground to deliver exceptional multi-platform breaking news coverage to millions of people in Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Moldova, and around the world. This crucial reporting did not come without grave risks. Vira Hyrych, a talented journalist and producer for RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service, paid the ultimate price for her commitment to sharing the truth about Russia's aggression against Ukraine. On April 29, 2022, Vira was killed in Kyiv after a Russian missile strike hit the residential building where she lived. With great bravery, correspondents continue to report from the frontlines, drawing on their deep local knowledge to bring nuance and context to a fast-evolving historic moment.

As the brutal war grinds on, RFE/RL's fact-based news reaches larger and larger audiences every day. Ukrainian and Russian audiences are seeking out RFE/RL coverage of recent events in the war in unprecedented numbers despite extensive Kremlin attempts to block RFE/RL's websites and most social media platforms.

Between February 24, 2022, and February 23, 2023, RFE/RL web and social media videos in Russian and Ukrainian were viewed billions of times. For example, RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service video views on Facebook alone were viewed 1.1 billion times, an increase of 119% compared to the same period the year before.

USAGM's networks are maximizing resources to reach an even larger audience in the Russian language. Despite the Russian government's unprecedented censorship of independent media inside its borders, which forced RFE/RL to make the difficult decision to shutter its Moscow bureau and relocate to Riga, Latvia, there has been a surge in demand for VOA and RFE/RL Russian-language content. RFE/RL and VOA video content in Russian and Ukrainian was viewed 8 billion times in the year since the full-scale invasion — 2.5 times the numbers from the year before. To put that number into context, just under 300 million people speak either Russian or Ukrainian. The RFE/RL Current Time project 'Footage vs. Footage' exposes Russian disinformation campaigns to debunk the lies behind propaganda and examines how falsehoods get constructed by Russian state-controlled media. "Systema," an RFE/RL Russian-language Investigative Unit conducts deep investigative journalism modeled after the Ukrainian Service's successful project "Schemes," which has uncovered Russian atrocities in Ukraine, filling a void left by Russian state-controlled media.

Launched in April 2023 and developed with USAGM's Office of Technology, Services, and Innovation, Votvot is RFE/RL's new on-demand Russian-language streaming platform for voices targeted and silenced by the Putin regime. As part of RFE/RL's comprehensive strategy to counter Kremlin disinformation, Votvot features cultural content inaccessible inside Russia from creators who are often banned because of their criticism of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Votvot is a platform for uncensored, free expression for Russian-speaking audiences, including younger demographics, interested in alternatives to traditional news programming. Through documentaries, theater performances, concerts, satire, children's educational programming, and more, Votvot will make censored cultural content available once again to a wide audience. Votvot offers stories that unite and content that makes audiences think, such as exclusive access to the sold-out performance of FACE, an internationally-renowned 25-year-old Russian rap artist who can no longer return to Russia because of his denunciation of the Kremlin's full-scale war on Ukraine.

In the months following Russia's invasion, Current Time, the 24/7 Russian-language television and digital network led by RFE/RL in cooperation with VOA,

signed over 50 new media partners in countries like Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Moldova — just as media outlets in those countries were dropping Russia’s state-controlled channels. Despite significant censorship, between February 2022 and February 2023, Current Time Facebook videos were viewed 2 billion times, an increase of 163% compared to the year before. Current Time videos routinely trend number one on Russian YouTube, a sign that Russian-language audiences want access to trusted news. In a powerful on-the-ground example, we received evidence that activists inside Russia took it upon themselves to begin posting flyers with QR codes disguised as furniture ads; but when scanned, the QR codes direct Russians to Current Time’s YouTube channel. Together, RFE/RL and VOA reach 11.7 million Russian adults each week. Our research shows that our networks have a measured weekly audience of over 10% of adults inside Russia, an objectively high audience for a closed media environment dominated by state propaganda. For context, this is about half the audience that the most popular U.S.-based news outlets reach domestically, in a completely free media environment.

USAGM is providing a trusted alternative to Russia’s malign influence in nearby countries by flooding the zone with fact-based news in many different local languages and in English. USAGM networks serve audiences in languages including Ukrainian, Belarusian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Serbian, Uzbek, Kazakh, Azerbaijani, and Georgian, among others. Through projects like Polygraph, VOA’s English-language fact-checking website, we are confronting Russia’s disinformation efforts in English for a global audience. VOA launched an Eastern Europe bureau to deepen coverage across a region vulnerable to Russian malign influence and military aggression. RFE/RL’s 23 broadcast services are focused on bringing the truth of the war to their audiences, who are buffeted by Russian disinformation about the full-scale invasion and its costs. RFE/RL’s Ukrainian Service is producing a special program stream with content designed for refugees and exposing alleged war crimes by Russian forces, while services reaching audiences across the Caucasus nations and Central Asia are investigating the plight of local residents sent by Russia to fight—and die—in Ukraine.

For Ukrainian and Russian-speaking audiences, VOA created new initiatives and a surge in programming, primarily focusing on breaking news complemented by official and expert perspectives from the U.S. including simultaneously translated official statements, major addresses, policy pronouncements, press conferences, congressional hearings, and U.N. Security Council sessions. To increase

programming in Ukraine, VOA leveraged a new 24/7 satellite channel with targeted programming from VOA and RFE/RL.

In addition to its reporting for Ukrainian and Russian-speakers, VOA covered this story for the world. VOA showed the rippling effects the war had across the globe – the refugee crisis, interrupted energy supplies, threats to food security, and far-reaching geopolitical and economic fallout in many nations. Leading up to the full-scale invasion and to this day, Russia continues to deploy a variety of false narratives in Russia and around the world to justify an unjustifiable war. Much of this disinformation involves the U.S. - including the false claim that NATO and the West were the aggressors threatening Russia's security and escalating the war. This is where VOA comes in. Interest in VOA's trusted, holistic coverage of the war and the U.S. response was extremely high worldwide and in many target regions: places like China, Vietnam, Iran, Latin America, Indonesia, Georgia, Albania, and Burma. In the year since Russia invaded Ukraine, VOA's coverage of the war attracted more than 2.4 billion video views on social media and 144.4 million engagement actions across social media platforms, as well as over 83 million visits to VOA websites. With its measured weekly audience of 326 million people and thousands of media partners worldwide, VOA tells America's story in all its complexity, so that authoritarian propaganda and malign influence cannot win by default.

OTF-supported circumvention tools have played a critical role in enabling people in closed societies around the world to access the uncensored internet and USAGM networks' coverage of the war. This became especially evident as Russia imposed unprecedented levels of censorship on its citizens. Use of OTF-supported circumvention tools surged in Russia from only 250,000 monthly active users prior to the full-scale invasion in Ukraine to over 8 million today. In addition, OTF-supported mirror sites have received over 200 million visits per month. With the help of OTF, both RFE/RL's and VOA's digital audience in Russia has grown significantly despite ongoing censorship of their digital platforms.

Supporting the Free Flow of Information into Iran

The Iranian government continues to aggressively surveil and censor Iranian citizens in an effort to limit their access to the free flow of information and intimidate those who seek the truth. One key tool the Iranian government uses to extend malign influence is the state-controlled media corporation, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), and its brands, including Al-Alam in the Arabic language, Press TV in English and French, HispanTV in Spanish, and Jam-

e-Jam in the Persian language for diaspora audiences, among others. Despite the Iranian regime's escalating crackdown on independent media and the open exchange of ideas, USAGM networks continue to provide audiences in Iran and across the globe with independent, fact-based journalism as an alternative to IRIB's state-controlled content, while OTF-supported technology enables the people of Iran to access this journalism and the internet in the face of repressive censorship and surveillance.

MBN's Alhurra Television regularly reports on the fight against Iran's malign influence in the MENA region through its newscasts and programs focused on Lebanon and Syria, and it has a large audience for this type of reporting in the Palestinian Territories. MBN's fact-checking program and investigative reporting unit counter misinformation and uncover stories that are omitted in the local press related to malign influence from Russia, Iran, and the PRC in the region. The network regularly interviews human rights and international relations experts to counter Iran's narratives. Recent coverage includes the U.S. sanctions against the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), human rights concerns after the number of executions in Iran rose 75% in 2022, and reports that Iranian police have installed cameras in public places to monitor and punish women who are not wearing the hijab.

VOA's Persian Service and RFE/RL's Radio Farda covered the historic protests that followed 22-year-old Mahsa Amini's death, documenting the number of demonstrators killed by security services and telling their stories. When Amini was arrested, RFE/RL's Radio Farda broadcast the first interview with her mother. After 16-year-old protestor Nika Shakarami was beaten to death by security forces, VOA's Persian Service provided an exclusive interview with her mother that garnered more than 1 million views on Instagram alone. RFE/RL journalists documented the truth about the regime's victims — including confirming the identities of 353 casualties — despite the Iranian government's ongoing campaign to deceive the public and intimidate minority communities.

Coverage by RFE/RL's Radio Farda garnered more than 2.0 billion total video views between September 2022 and January 2023 on Instagram alone. VOA provided global coverage that attracted millions of viewers as raging protests in Iran sparked solidarity movements abroad in places like Istanbul, D.C., New York, and Sulaymaniyah. By increasing live coverage, expanding special programming, and staffing a 24/7 digital presence, VOA's Persian Service accrued 380.5 million social video views, a 282% increase, between September 2022 and January 2023.

Because of their commitment to exposing realities the Iranian government would prefer to hide, both VOA and RFE/RL have been targeted by Iranian leadership on multiple occasions. In October 2022, 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 2023, the government added RFE/RL President and CEO Jamie Fly to its sanctions list, which has included RFE/RL's Radio Farda since December 2022.

After the Iranian regime severely blocked the internet to prevent its citizens and the world from watching its violent crackdown on demonstrators, the number of monthly active users of OTF-supported censorship circumvention tools grew dramatically – one-in-four Iranians used these tools to access the internet. Over 90% of USAGM's Iranian audience uses OTF-supported Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) to access USAGM network content. Backed by OTF to reach users in Iran, RFE/RL's Farda and VOA's Persian Service partnered with Toosheh, a U.S.-funded satellite file-casting app that does not need internet access. This one-way file distribution system can download content packages via satellite datacasting that can then be shared on messaging apps. This helped the networks maintain accessibility for audiences at key moments during protests. While these tools have a very economical monthly cost of only 7 cents per user, OTF's budget has been strained by the enormous demand for their tools in Iran, Russia, China, and other countries where it is increasingly dangerous to access the internet and seek out truthful information.

Stronger Together: Leveraging the USAGM Network for Greater Global Impact against Malign Influence

Our true power lies in our ability to harness the reach of the entire USAGM network for greater impact. Through translation of war coverage into dozens of languages, USAGM takes the work of RFE/RL's brave journalists on the ground in Ukraine and shows the impact of Russia's invasion not only to nearby countries like Belarus, Moldova, and Kazakhstan but also brings this global story to audiences in places like Cuba, Iraq, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Nicaragua. USAGM takes VOA's footage of the protests in Iran, or RFA's exclusive reporting on Uyghur detention camps in China and brings this news to audiences all over the world who rely on us.

But even the very best journalism is of no use if people cannot see or hear it. As authoritarian regimes become increasingly sophisticated in blocking information, OTF is ensuring we become even more sophisticated in breaching those

barriers. Over the last three years, use of OTF-supported circumvention tools has quadrupled globally, increasing from about 9 million monthly users to over 40 million monthly users.

Our research from 2022 shows that audiences are choosing USAGM networks' content over that of Russia and the PRC in a number of key target markets across Eurasia, Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

Through its extensive network of media partnerships, VOA is successfully reaching audiences in regions that are major targets of malign influence from the PRC and Russia, including Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia. In Nigeria, for example, VOA reaches a third of all adults while Russia's state-controlled network, RT, reaches just 1%, and China Radio International, less than 3%. Last year VOA Spanish reached a measured weekly audience of more than 66 million adults in Latin America – for a price of just 8 cents per audience member reached for an entire year. Neither Russia nor the PRC's Spanish-language brands in Latin America comes close to the reach of VOA. For example, VOA reaches 47% of adults weekly in Bolivia, 24% in Colombia, 51% in the Dominican Republic, and 39% in Ecuador, all while Russia's RT Spanish reaches 5% or less in each market and the PRC's CGTN reaches 6% or less. In Cambodia, despite a government crackdown on the free press, RFA and VOA together reach 16% of adults, compared with the PRC's state-controlled network, CGTN, at less than 2%.

MBN is consistently competitive with and, in some cases, outperforming Russia's widely available RT Arabic channel. For example, MBN's Alhurra reaches more than twice as many adults weekly as RT Arabic in Saudi Arabia and Lebanon. MBN's weekly digital series 'Did It Really Happen?' fact-checks prominent dis- and misinformation on social media in Arabic, including that being disseminated by Russia, Iran, and the PRC, while the television program 'Alhurra Investigates' focuses much of its investigative reporting on Russia, Iran, and China by fact-checking false narratives and shedding light on stories omitted by the local press.

Despite facing challenging circumstances, OCB remains committed to fulfilling its mission for the people of Cuba and staying competitive in the 21st century, especially as the governments of Cuba, Russia, and the PRC work together in an attempt to promote rampant disinformation on the island. The PRC and Russia's propaganda machines have been highly active in Cuba in recent years, and the PRC has grown its presence within the island's digital infrastructure. Since 2020, Russia's RT continues to broadcast around the clock, in high-definition, and on

digital platforms to the Cuban public in the Spanish language. In May 2022, Russia's RT met with Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel, and held a workshop in Havana with his communications team. Six months later, President Putin welcomed Díaz-Canel himself in Moscow for a visit to RT headquarters. As an alternative to Russia's malign influence, OCB started a series of podcasts entitled "Witnesses of the War in Ukraine," which featured the voices of Ukrainians from several cities across the country. OCB was the only outlet that broadcast Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's speech before Congress in December 2022 live, with simultaneous Spanish translations, to audiences in Cuba. That coverage achieved historic reach across Latin America – with 20 different media organizations across eight countries also broadcasting the signal of OCB's Radio and Television Martí. This year, OCB's Martí and the Ukrainian fact-checking outlet, StopFake.org, launched a joint project to counter Russia's propaganda circulating in the Spanish language in Cuba.

Our levels of credibility across all the broadcasters are objectively high— over 70% of our weekly audience considers our reporting to be trustworthy. Both our mission and the editorial firewall, which prohibits U.S. government interference in the editorial autonomy of the broadcasting networks, underpin the worldwide credibility that USAGM's broadcasters enjoy. The legislated firewall is essential to that credibility, ensuring editorial independence and protecting USAGM and its journalists from government interference. This firewall is what sets us apart from state-controlled propaganda networks like Russia's RT and the PRC's CGTN. Audiences see our example of openness and candor in exercising press freedom in a democratic society as proof of our credibility. In so many countries, people yearn for the truth – even if it is a painful truth. In times of crisis, traffic to our networks' websites and social media often spikes as audiences seek us out. We have seen this again and again in recent years, from the coup in Burma to the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the recent protests in Cuba and Iran, and the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria. In accordance with the legislated firewall, our agency is committed to continuing to work with interagency partners, with external stakeholders, with this Committee and all of Congress in a bipartisan fashion, to ensure USAGM has the operational support and resources necessary to fulfill its mission.

Conclusion

This is the most important time for this agency since the Cold War, and perhaps since World War II. USAGM must be positioned to be consistently competitive in today's dangerous world of information manipulation and heavy investment by authoritarian regimes and other bad actors. To do so, we will stay true to our agency-wide priorities: modeling transparency and accountability in everything we do; maintaining mission focus; expanding and improving access to USAGM content; ensuring journalistic independence for every broadcaster and entity; and bolstering journalistic safety, security, training and ethics.

USAGM remains committed to delivering on our mission to inform, engage, and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy. We cannot do this without the partnership of Congress. We are confident that any increased investment you might consider making in our work will be crucial in our role on the frontlines of the global information war. Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Hagerty, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, we are deeply grateful for your support of and interest in our work and we value your oversight role. Thank you, and I look forward to any questions you may have.