

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.