

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 27, 2022

Mark Zuckerberg
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Meta
1 Hacker Way
Menlo Park, California 94025

Dear Mr. Zuckerberg,

We write to express deep concern over persistent and growing efforts by the Kremlin to spread and amplify disinformation on Facebook and WhatsApp five months into Putin's unjustified, unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. As Putin's regime takes increasingly draconian measures to prevent its own citizens from accessing the truth, by blocking social media and stamping out any remaining semblance of independent media in the country, Russian state media continues to exploit the platforms provided by Facebook and WhatsApp to amplify and export its lies abroad. Ongoing and heightened efforts by Russian state media to target the Western Hemisphere, especially through Spanish-language disinformation, are particularly disturbing.

While Facebook has restricted, and in some cases, blocked access to Russian state media in Europe, these outlets continue to abuse your platforms and others like Twitter and Telegram to quickly reach mass audiences elsewhere. This includes in our own hemisphere, where RT and Sputnik—Russian state media outlets that are required to register as foreign agents in the United States under the Foreign Agent Registration Act and that have been identified by the State Department as the cornerstone of Russia's disinformation and propaganda ecosystem—actively spread English and Spanish-language disinformation across Latin America and the Caribbean in clear disregard of your moderation policies.

The Kremlin has long considered its Spanish-language disinformation campaign among its most successful efforts, and it has repeatedly used disinformation and propaganda to undermine democracy, polarize its adversaries' societies, and incite chaos in the Western Hemisphere. We also know that disinformation campaigns by Russian state media's Spanish-language outlets targeted at Latin American and Caribbean audiences regularly reach Spanish-speaking communities in the United States, directly harming our national interests. We are deeply concerned by reports that the operations and reach of such outlets have only increased amid Putin's actions in Ukraine.

To defend regional allies and partners across Latin America and support the Ukrainian people, we call on Meta to similarly restrict content of RT en Español and Sputnik Mundo, two of the Russian state media's most popular services on Spanish-language social media, beyond Europe. We also urge you to dramatically increase efforts to identify and restrict the spread of disinformation in Spanish about the tragic events in Ukraine and robustly enforce Meta's own policies to ensure parity with efforts to mitigate the spread of such disinformation in English.

In these extraordinary circumstances, we must remain vigilant about the ability of known purveyors of Russian disinformation to propagate falsehoods about Putin's invasion of Ukraine, whether in Spanish or any other language.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator