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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

May 22, 2025

Acting CEO Victor Morales
U.S. Agency for Global Media
1875 Pennsylvania Ave N.W.
Washington, DC 20006

Senior Advisor Kari Lake
U.S. Agency for Global Media
1875 Pennsylvania Ave N.W.
Washington, DC 20006

Dear CEO Morales and Ms. Lake,

We write to express concern and dismay over the approach that you have taken to U.S. federal networks Voice of America (VOA) and Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB) – both outlets vital to our efforts to counter foreign disinformation. Under your leadership, we fear that these storied institutions, established decades ago to counter Nazi and Communist propaganda through accurate and unbiased news, will either cease to exist or endure in forms no different than the Kremlin's RT or the People's Republic of China's Xinhua News Agency.

Ms. Lake told Fox News last month that she wants to “modernize” the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM) and “shrink...bloat.” If this is your goal, you will find both Democrats and Republicans prepared to work with you on cost saving measures that preserve the mission of USAGM's federal networks. However, USAGM's decision to place approximately 1,300 VOA employees on administrative leave “until further notice” caused VOA to halt its broadcasting for the first time since 1942. VOA is losing its carefully built audience of 354 million people – an important national security asset for the United States. This assault on VOA is not modernization – it is decapitation.

While we appreciate Ms. Lake's recognition that USAGM leadership does not “have editorial control over the content of VOA and OCB programming,” we were deeply concerned by her recent announcement of a partnership for federal networks with One America News (OAN) Network. OAN falsely alleged “widespread” fraud after the 2020 elections, defamed Capitol Police Officers in the aftermath of the January 6 assault on the Capitol, has launched partisan attacks against former officials to deflect fair criticism from the Trump Administration and airs a show whose host the House Ethics Committee had found “substantial evidence” had “engaged in sexual activity with a 17-year-old girl.” The idea that this type of partisan content could appear on VOA or OCB disrespects these institutions and their staff. Moreover, this initiative suggests to the world that federal networks and the political party with which OAN aligns its content are one entity – an utterly dangerous proposition for our democracy and stature in the world.

Ms. Lake also told Fox News that she may work to incorporate VOA and OCB into the Department of State, which sounds like state-run media – precisely what this administration has pledged to avoid. U.S. law requires the editorial independence of these federal networks. U.S.

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law (22 USC § 6202) requires VOA to “represent America, not any single segment of American society,” and that VOA must be “accurate, objective, and comprehensive.” The Radio Broadcasting to Cuba Act (22 USC § 1465) echoes these same standards. We expect you to adhere to all applicable laws and work in a cooperative manner with congressional committees of jurisdiction prior to any change of status for the federal networks.

We urge you to immediately terminate USAGM’s partnership with OAN, to protect the editorial independence of the federal networks, and to restore Voice of America without delay.

Sincerely,



Senator Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator