

# Voice of America

Mission Brief | 2020



VOICE OF AMERICA

*A Free Press Matters*



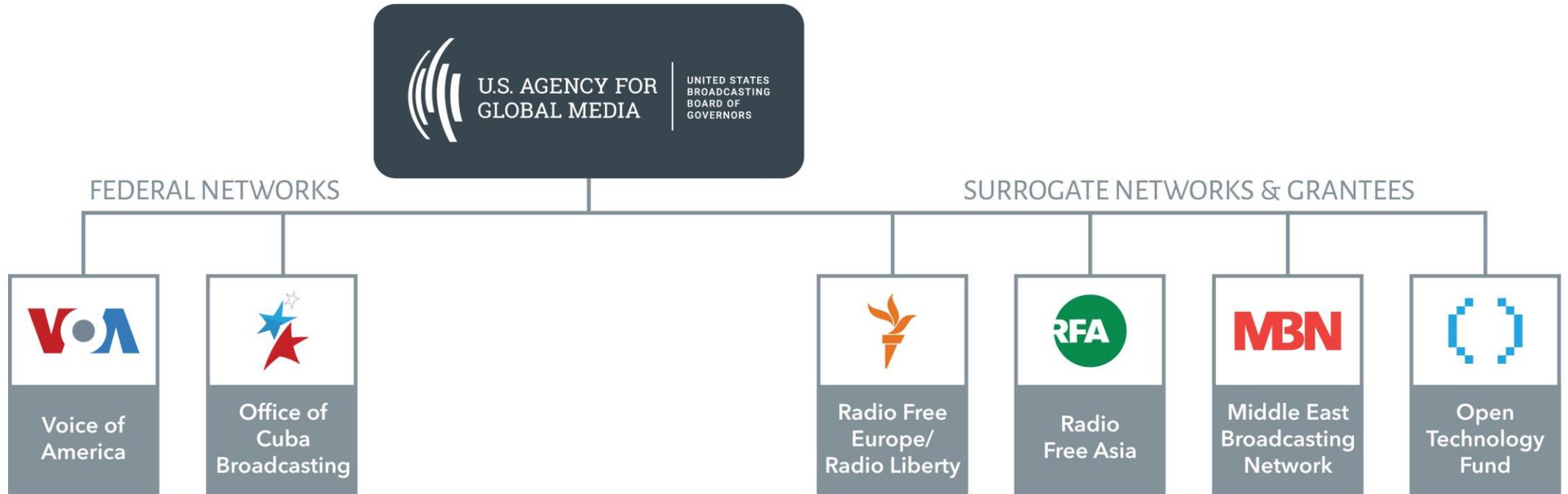
# Who We Are

International broadcasters providing news and information to **85 countries** in **more than 40 languages** via television, radio, web and mobile.

- Weekly audience of 280.9 million (FY19)
- Annual budget: \$250.06 million (FY19)
- 1000+ workforce



# VOA is one of five networks under the U.S. Agency for Global Media



\*OTF is a grantee that funds internet freedom technologies and initiatives, many used by VOA.



# Why We Were Created

During WWII, in response to the needs of closed societies and war-torn countries, VOA's accurate and objective news reports countered the onslaught of Nazi and fascist propaganda.



# Press Freedom

Many countries limit or prohibit a free and independent press. Throughout World War II, the Cold War, the fight against global terrorism and the struggle for freedom around the globe today, VOA exemplifies the principles of a free press.

- For many nations, VOA is the only source of reliable news and information.
- Despite interference by foreign governments, VOA continues its broadcasts.
- Press freedom around the world continues to decline.

*"The liberty of the press is essential to the security of the state."*

John Adams (Second president of the United States)



# The Charter

VOA will:

- Serve as “a consistently reliable and authoritative source of news.”
- Be “accurate, objective, and comprehensive.”
- “Represent America... through a balanced and comprehensive projection of significant American thought and institutions.”
- “Present the policies of the United States and foster responsible discussion and opinion of these policies.”

# Firewall

The editorial integrity of VOA journalists is ensured by the “firewall” that was first codified in the VOA Charter of 1976 and later reinforced in the U.S. International Broadcasting Act of 1994 and the National Defense Authorization Act of 2016.

- Prohibits interference by U.S. government officials, including officials of USAGM, in news coverage
- Requires VOA journalists to develop content of the highest journalistic standards that is free of political interference

# VOA & Journalism Initiatives

- Collaborating with Arizona State University's Cronkite School of Journalism, VOA contributes to transparency, working collectively on software to make it easier and quicker for journalists to post visible corrections to stories.
- Participates in a state-of-the-art coalition of news industry standards editors that meets quarterly, tackling the toughest journalistic challenges facing news organizations today.
- As a member of the #OneFreePress coalition, VOA joins prominent editors and publishers using its global reach to spotlight journalists who are under attack.

# Smith-Mundt Act

Passed by Congress in 1948, the Smith-Mundt law prevents VOA from broadcasting in the United States.

The law was amended in July 2013 allowing VOA to share only original content inside the U.S. upon request.

- VOA can accept requests for one-time use of its radio, TV or web original products.
- VOA can accept requests for ongoing use of its programs, unless they originate from an entity that intends to broadcast our content to audiences located within the United States.



# Risking Their Lives

- VOA journalists often report from dangerous areas of the world, covering wars, regional conflicts and natural disasters.
- VOA journalists have lost their lives in pursuit of the truth and regularly experience threats and harassment while reporting in authoritarian regimes.

# Hall of Fame

- Willis Conover – Credited with introducing jazz to many parts of Eastern Europe through his VOA radio broadcasts.
- Leo Sarkisian – Brought African music to millions through his VOA radio show “Music Time in Africa.”
- Edward R. Murrow – Led the U.S. Information Agency, the predecessor of USAGM.
- Philomena Jurey – One of the first female White House correspondents, she covered U.S. presidents Nixon, Carter, and Reagan.



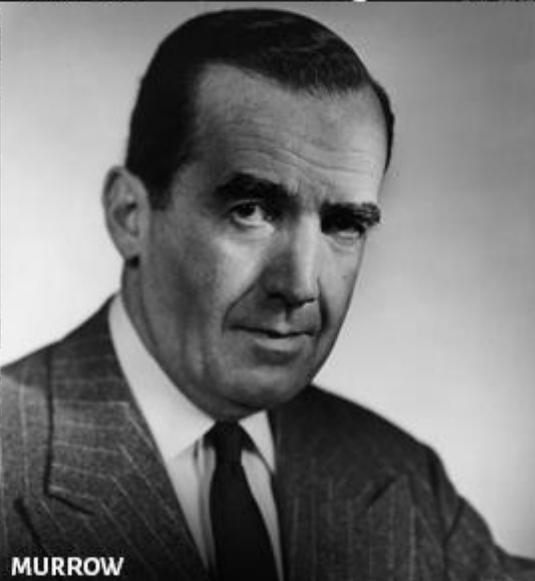
CONOVER



SARKISIAN



JUREY



MURROW

# Today's VOA Broadcasters

Some of today's VOA broadcasters include:

- Steve Herman – White House bureau chief who spent 26 years reporting from Asia including in Japan, India, South Korea, and Thailand.
- Myroslava Gongadze – Chief of VOA's Ukrainian service, award-winning reporter, named one of 100 most successful women in Ukraine by “New Time” magazine.
- Navbahor Imamova – A leading authority on geopolitics and national development in Central Asia and the only U.S. journalist to receive accreditation from the Republic of Uzbekistan to work as foreign media correspondent inside that country.
- Roger Muntu – A well-known radio and television host in francophone Africa. His popular “RM Show” radio program and “Vous et Nous” TV program feature music and conversation with some of the region's most notable personalities.



HERMAN



GONGADZE



MUNTU



IMAMOVA



# Covering America, Broadcasting to the World

Headquartered in Washington, D.C., VOA reporters are at the White House, State Department, Pentagon and the U.S. Congress, as well as in bureaus around the world.

VOA has 14 television and 40+ radio studios in the U.S., serving more than 40 language services.

# Areas of News Coverage

- **America's Story.** Gives international audiences a look at life in the United States — its people, government, values, and culture.
- **Refugees.** Content by and for refugees engages and informs communities at risk.
- **Extremism.** The Extremism **Watch Desk** reports on terrorist activities around the world.
- **Press Freedom.** Serves as a model of a free press, especially in authoritarian areas such as China, Iran, North Korea and Russia.
- **Science & Technology.** VOA's **Silicon Valley** bureau provides in-depth coverage of innovation and entrepreneurship.
- **Women's Issues.** Often under-covered by local media, VOA reports on women as equal actors in the global story.
- **Disinformation.** Polygraph.info, a fact-checking website, identifies false or misleading information, with an emphasis on Russian-Western relations.



# VOA – RFE/RL Joint Ventures

- **VOA 365:** This global cross-platform effort by VOA & RFE/RL is the re-launch of programming confronting the Iranian regime’s disinformation efforts, with Persian-language programs inside Iran and to the global diaspora.
- **Current Time TV:** The 24/7 Russian-language TV & digital network by RFE/RL & VOA provides a trustworthy alternative to Kremlin-controlled media in 26 countries throughout Europe and Eurasia.

# Worldwide Presence

VOA has a vast network of correspondents and freelancers around the globe who report in multiple languages.

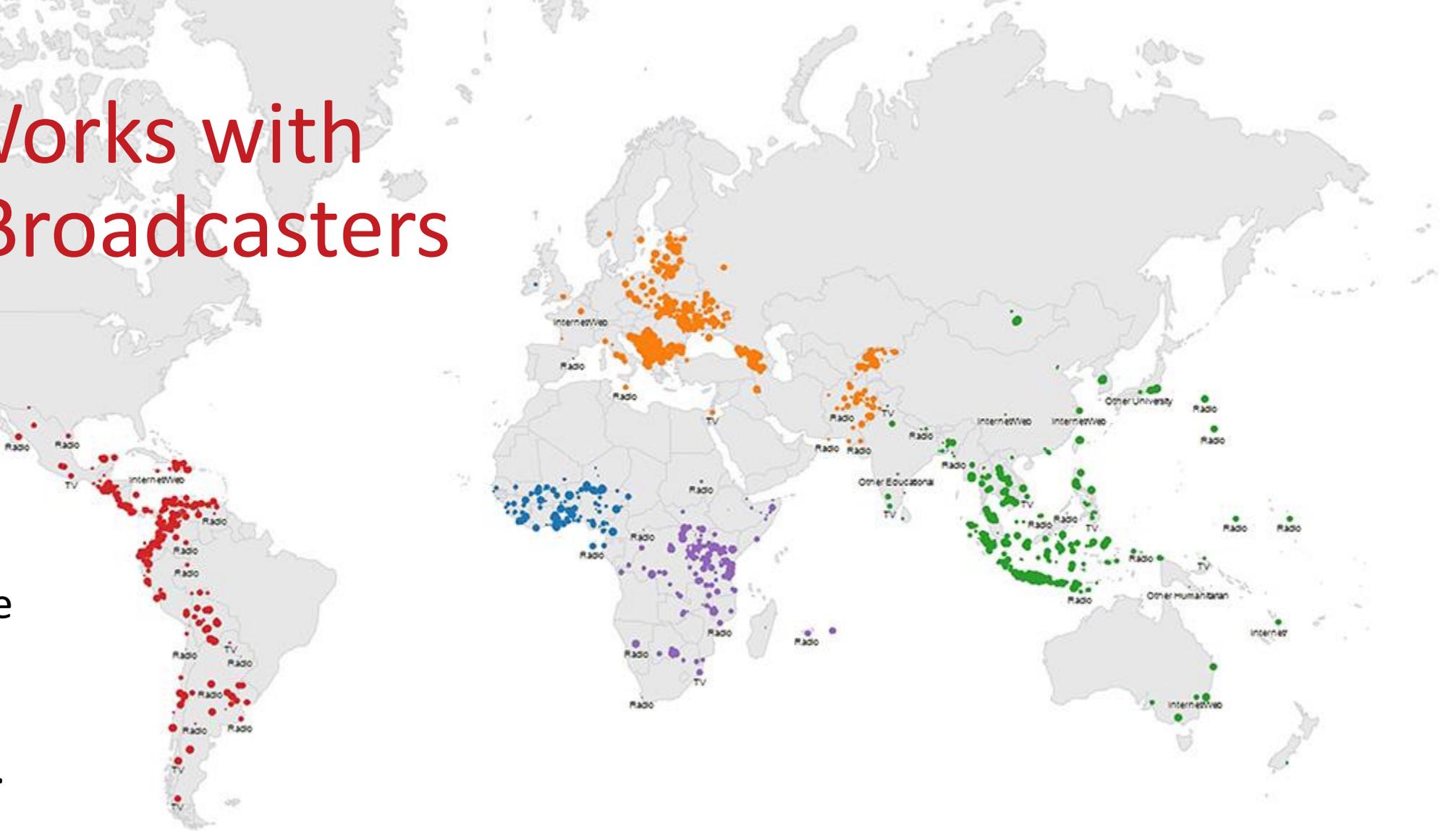
VOA has bureaus and reporters in:

- Africa
- Asia
- Europe
- Latin America
- United States



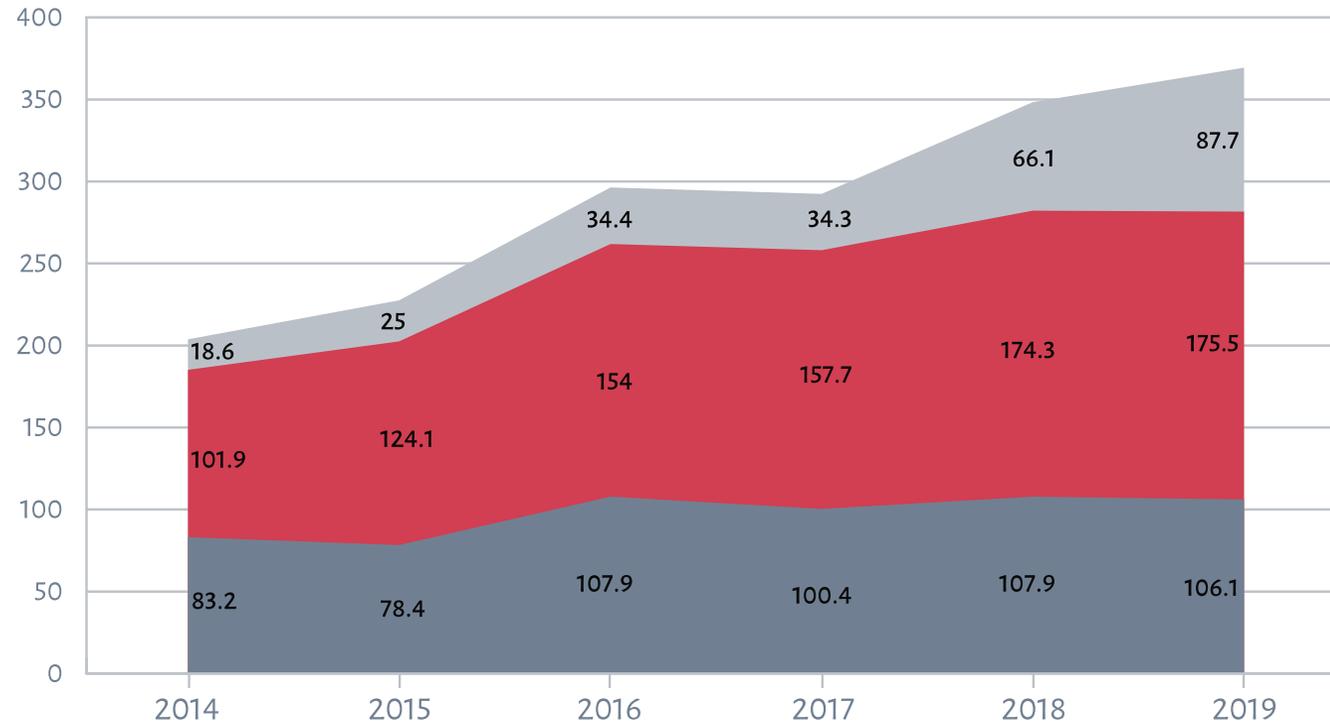
# VOA Works with Local Broadcasters

A network of more than 3,000 affiliate stations broadcasts VOA content.



# VOA Weekly Audiences 2014-2019

(in millions)



*Platform audiences do not total 100% of the VOA global audience, in which consumers of multiple platforms are counted only once.*

## 5 Year Increase

■ Digital  
+69.1 million

■ TV  
+73.6 million

■ Radio  
+22.9 million

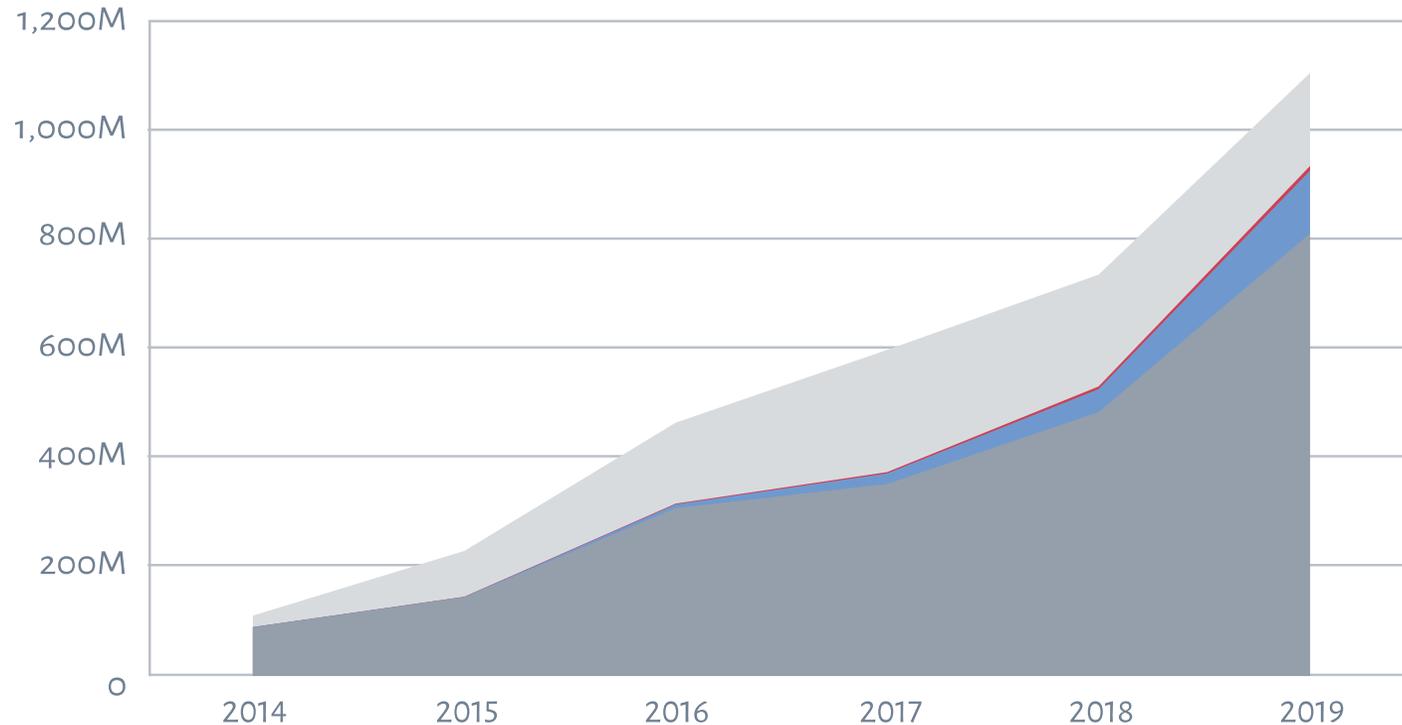
# 83% of Global Audience Trusts VOA

Afghanistan	79%	Niger	96%
China	89%	Nigeria	90%
DRC	89%	Pakistan	73%
Ethiopia	99%	Russia	49%
Indonesia	79%	Somalia	87%
Iran	85%	Turkey	79%
Kenya	84%	Ukraine	65%

This trust data is based on more than 100 surveys of a statistically significant portion of adult populations in these countries, measuring their trust in VOA to tell the truth. Each survey was conducted by one of a number of global research companies (including Gallup and Kantar) contracted to VOA between 2013 and 2018.

# Social Media Growth 2014-2019

(in millions)



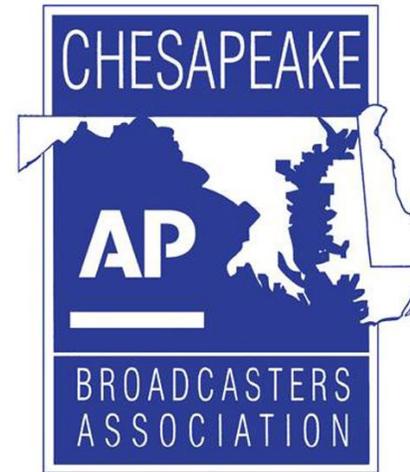
## 5 Year Increase

- **Facebook** +148.9 million Engagement Actions
- **Twitter** +8.29 million Engagement Actions
- **Instagram** +115.4 million Engagement Actions
- **YouTube** +722.6 million Video Views

# Awards & Honors



**NATIONAL  
HEADLINER  
AWARDS**



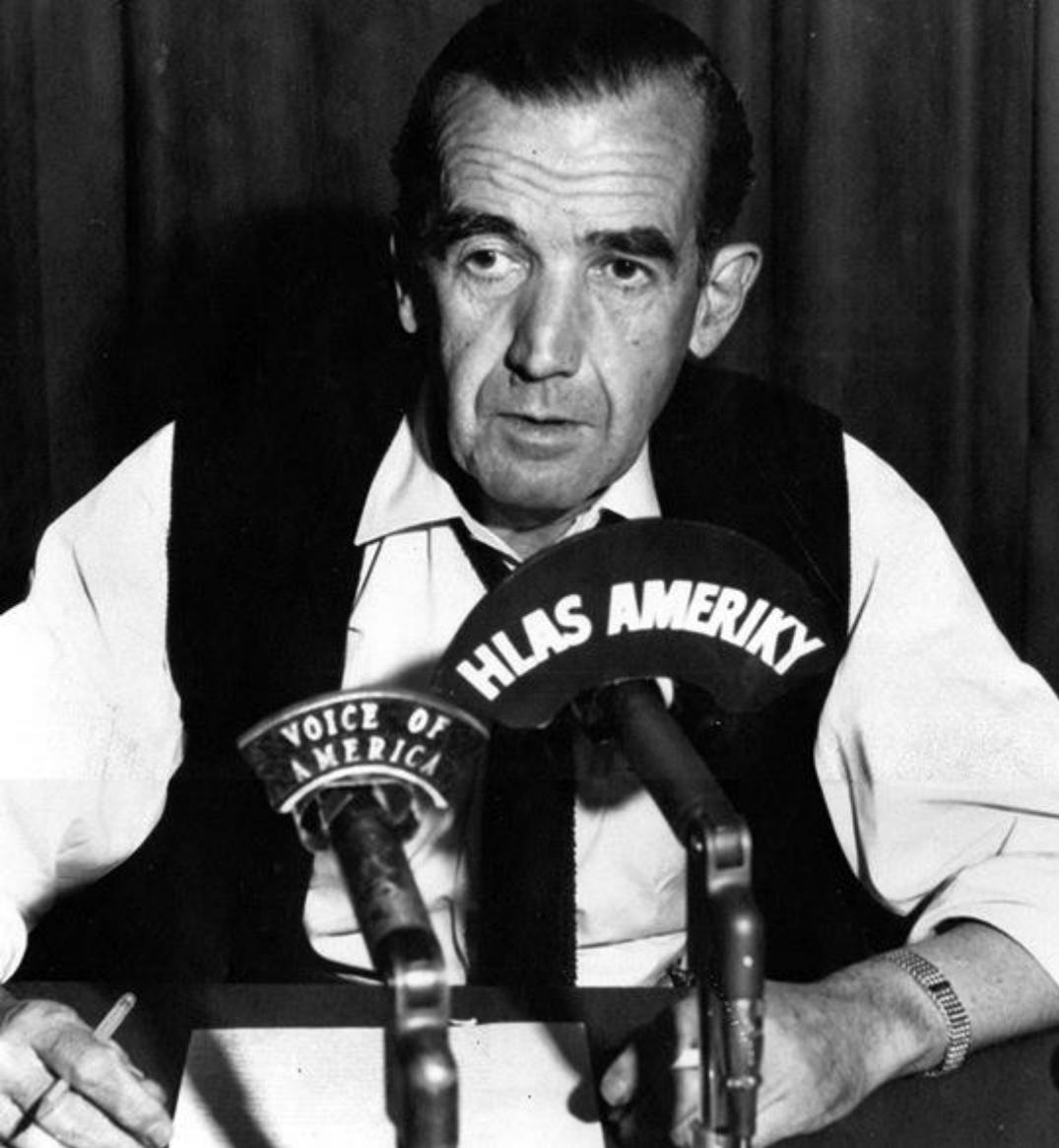
*Gabriel Awards*



# Our Promise

“The news may be good.  
The news may be bad.  
We shall tell you the truth.”

*William Harlan Hale, first VOA broadcast, 1942*



“To be persuasive we must be believable; to be believable we must be credible; to be credible we must be truthful.”

*Legendary broadcaster Edward R. Murrow, 1963*

Director of the U.S. Information Agency (the predecessor of USAGM), 1961–1964

# Questions