

U.S. judge bars Trump appointee from interfering in Voice of America




VOICE
OF
AMERICA

Audio tour & main entrance
located on C Street on the
opposite side of the building.

**Voice of America has U.S.-funded digital, broadcast and radio outlets in several countries.
(Photo: Andrew Harnik / AP)**

Washington, November 22 (RHC)-- A federal judge in the United States has effectively barred the head of the agency that runs the state-funded news organization Voice of America (VOA) from interfering in editorial operations or making personnel decisions.

The ruling against U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM) CEO Michael Pack comes after he was accused of trying to turn VOA into a propaganda outlet in support of Donald Trump and the U.S. president's agenda.

Founded during World War II, VOA has U.S.-funded digital, broadcast and radio outlets in several countries. Some of these outlets are branches of VOA, while others operate as separate entities. Under its congressional charter, the organization is meant to present independent news and information to international audiences.

The lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia in October by five executives who had been fired or suspended, accused Pack and his senior advisers of violating the "statutory firewall" intended to protect the news organizations from political interference.

In her ruling, Judge Beryl Howell imposed preliminary injunctions that prevent Pack from making personnel decisions about journalists employed by the agency, directly communicating with them, and conducting any investigations into editorial content or individual journalists.

Pack and his aides have "violated and continue to violate [journalists'] First Amendment rights because, among other unconstitutional effects, they result in self-censorship and the chilling of First Amendment expression", Howell wrote in her opinion.

Pack, a conservative filmmaker and previous associate of former Trump adviser Steve Bannon, was confirmed to his position in June. Since then, he has been accused of interfering in VOA's coverage, including calling for an investigation into a July video report on President-elect Joe Biden that he dubbed to be "pro-Biden."

Pack had also allegedly sought to purge leadership at several VOA sister operations, including Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Middle East Broadcasting Networks and the Open Technology Fund, which aims to provide secure internet access to people around the world.

Under Pack, foreign journalists working for VOA and other organizations also had their U.S. visas denied, a move he said was in the interest of national security. In an August interview with the Federalist news website, Pack said news organizations operating under USAGM were "great cover for a spy" and "from the beginning ... they've been penetrated."

Shortly after, 14 senior VOA journalists sent a letter to management in protest against Pack, saying his words and actions "endanger the personal security of VOA reporters at home and abroad, as well as threatening to harm U.S. national security objectives."

<https://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/internacionales/240423-us-judge-bars-trump-appointee-from-interfering-in-voice-of-america>



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