

US Slow-Motion Shutdown of RT and Sputnik? Threat to Free Speech and Independent Media

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Hostile US demands on popular English-language Russian media, combined with social media censorship of alternative views called "fake news," threatens press freedom in America.

It's tyranny by any standard, the way all police states operate, controlling news, information and analysis, suppressing alternative truth-telling, notably on vital issues.

America is on a dangerous slippery slope in this direction, the future of independent reporting and commentaries at stake, along with other fundamental freedoms – gravely threatened if speech, media and academic freedoms are lost.

The Justice Department demanded a company providing services for RT America register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA). An FBI probe is checking for Sputnik News for FARA violations.

FARA was enacted in 1938, aimed at checking NAZI propaganda near the onset of WW II.

It requires agents representing foreign powers politically or quasi-politically to disclose their relationship with governments, along with information about their personnel, activities and finances.

Its enactment had nothing to do with regulating or acting against foreign media. US media operate freely in Russia.

America's global propaganda operations include Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, along with Radio and TV Marti aimed at Cuba, and Middle East broadcasting networks.

On Thursday, RT said the Justice Department ordered its US operation to register under FARA as a foreign agent – by November 13.

Otherwise, its director risks arrest, along with its assets frozen and likely seized – the

demand part of raging Russophobia in America, possible prelude to direct confrontation.

Fact: RT America (and its parent RT International) are media operations – not foreign agents of Russia or any other country.

No evidence suggests otherwise. Rogue state America needs none to pursue its ruthless agenda, defiling rule of law principles, waging war on humanity at home and abroad, operating extrajudicially worldwide..

Hundreds of entities are registered under FARA, no media in any foreign country. Russia's Foreign Ministry said hostile action against RT "will have serious legal consequences."

It'll "compromise the safety of (its) employees." RT editor-in-chief Margarita Simonyan justifiably blasted the move, saying it forces the broadcaster to accept "conditions in which we cannot work" – Washington's demand an attempt to "drive (RT) out of the country."

RT America will comply and register, she said. A court challenge will follow – likely to achieve nothing, US federal courts stacked with right-wing extremists, including at the appeal and Supreme Court levels.

Simonyan said RT will prove in court that actions against it are "discriminat(ory), contradict(ing) democracy and freedom of speech principles."

Registering under FARA "deprives us of fair competition with other international channels, which are not registered as foreign agents."

According to earlier [Pew Research](#) data, around 160 foreign correspondents reported for their media in Washington in 1968.

In 1994, "507 foreign news organizations from 79 nations and territories work(ed) (in) Washington."

In fall 2008, 1,490 foreign correspondents, representing scores of nations on every continent, reported from Washington.

Included are full-time reporters, stringers and part-time correspondents. Nearly a decade later, their ranks are likely much larger.

None of the media they represent were forced to register under FARA, RT the only one, solely for political reasons, perhaps prelude to banning the broadcaster altogether – for its truth-telling, conflicting with the official narrative.

Washington wants alternative views silenced. Targeting RT may be prelude to hostile actions against other independent media sources, notably online.

Russia earlier warned it will respond tit-for-tat against hostile actions on its media, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova saying:

"If someone starts to fight dirty, perverting the law by using it as a tool to eradicate the TV station, every move aimed against the Russian media outlet would be repaid in kind."

Digital democracy in America is threatened. Greater government censorship remains an ominous possibility – the defining feature of totalitarian rule.

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My newest book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine: How the US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III."

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