

Voice of America, Radio Liberty Respond to New 'Foreign Agent' Status

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U.S. media outlets Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) have said they are reviewing the Russian Justice Ministry's decision to add them to a new list of "foreign agent" news organizations.

The Justice Ministry on Tuesday <u>added</u> 9 U.S. news outlets to its new list of "foreign agent" media, including VOA, Radio Liberty and Current Time TV. Russian lawmakers said the move was a response to Kremlin-funded media being pressured to register under anti-propaganda laws in the United States.

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"The Russian Ministry of Justice has indicated that the new status will imply greater restrictions on the work of Voice of America in Russia," VOA director Amanda Bennett told the

RBC business portal.

"But the extent of these restrictions is still unknown."

Tom Kent, president of RFE/RL <u>said</u> in a videotaped statement on the radio's website that, "So far, the nature of these limitations is not known. We will study carefully all communications from the Ministry [of Justice] and other official Russian organizations," he said.

Restrictions on U.S. news organizations operating in Russia have been increasing in the past five years.

RFE/RL<u>stopped</u> AM broadcasting in Russian in 2012, following a new law restricting media companies with majority-foreign ownership. It<u>continued</u> to broadcast on shortwave radio until 2016 when operations were moved to the internet.

Russia <u>pulled</u> VOA off the air in 2014, forcing the radio station to move online.

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