

Radio Free Europe Says U.S. Shut Its Russian Broadcast

By [AFP](#)

April 03, 2025



The TV studio at the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty headquarters in Prague. **Martin Divisek / EPA / TASS**

The head of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty said on Thursday that the U.S. government had switched off a satellite that transmitted its Russian-language program into Russia.

The Prague-based station, founded by the United States during the Cold War to counter Soviet propaganda, has seen its funding frozen by U.S. President Donald Trump amid a drive to slash the size of the federal government.

RFE/RL won a temporary restraining order in court, but the U.S. Agency for Global Media, the U.S. government agency that oversees its operations, has not yet released funding.

"We came into work today and saw that satellite services that reach into Russia had been turned off by USAGM," RFE/RL chief executive Stephen Capus told AFP.

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The decision affects the 24-hour Russian-language Current Time channel's broadcasts to Russia, Ukraine, Central Asia, eastern Europe and other regions.

"USAGM notified RFE/RL that satellite contracts carrying Current Time to Europe were terminated," Capus added.

USAGM did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Capus said that Russian clients were now getting a red TV screen with a sign: "We regret to inform you that U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM) has decided to terminate the distribution of Current Time."

RFE/RL reaches almost 50 million people in countries including Belarus, China, Iran or Russia, seeking to counter the official propaganda.

Employing 1,700 staff, it broadcasts in 27 languages to 23 countries.

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RFE/RL moved to Prague from Munich in 1995, following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Capus said the radio had other means of reaching the Russian audience.

"But ... this wasn't the Russian government taking such an action. This was ordered by the USAGM," he said.

RFE/RL put many staff on reduced-pay leave on Tuesday as it waited for the USAGM to disburse the \$77 million the radio needs to keep running until October.

"I don't think there's any question that the Trump administration would like to see us shut down. I think that's pretty clear," Capus said.

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