

**Commission on Security & Cooperation in Europe:  
U.S. Helsinki Commission**

**Helsinki on the Hill Podcast**

**“Defending against Disinformation”**

**Guests:**

**Jamie Fly, President and CEO, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty;  
Mark Toner, Senior State Department Advisor, Commission for Security and  
Cooperation in Europe;  
Tatiana Vaksberg, Journalist, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Sofia Bureau**

**Host:**

**Alex Tiersky, Senior Policy Advisor, Commission for Security and  
Cooperation in Europe**

TIERSKY: Hello, and welcome back to Helsinki on the Hill, a series of conversations hosted by the United States Helsinki Commission on human rights and comprehensive security in Europe and beyond. I'm your host, Alex Tiersky, senior policy advisor on the Helsinki Commission staff.

Listeners, I recently had the great privilege to travel all the way from Washington, D.C. to the country of Lithuania. For those of you who may not be familiar with the geography, Lithuania is a beautiful, small Baltic country that is, like the United States, a member of the NATO alliance. It used to be part of the Soviet Union. Anyway, lots of the conversations I had during that trip had to do with the topic of today's podcast. That topic is disinformation, specifically false stories being promoted by the Russian government to further the Kremlin's interests.

Wouldn't you know it, as I prepared for today's conversation what should pop up on my social media feed but some pretty alarming, quote/unquote, "news." It was an official-looking press release, supposedly from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania. And it stated that the U.S. planned to build a military base and transfer nuclear weapons to the Baltic states. Now, the release wove in some information about the presence in U.S. forces in Lithuania, which by the way is true. They're there at the invitation of the Lithuanian government to deter Russian aggression in the region. But they wove that together with this release – wove that together with totally fabricated information about supposed nuclear weapons that is clearly designed to alarm and divide local populations. Now, in this case, the real Lithuanian Foreign Affairs Ministry quickly and effectively sprang into action, knocked down the hoax, called it a cyberattack.

But it wasn't the first time the U.S., and NATO, and the region have been targets of fake reports. Another notable example, in 2017 journalists in the region received emails containing made up – let me emphasize again, totally false – allegations that German soldiers who had been deployed to Lithuania as part of NATO measures to deter local aggression had raped a local girl. That news, after spreading rapidly, also, fortunately, got fairly little traction locally before it was effectively countered.

So, listeners, on today's episode we're going to explore the problem of this kind of disinformation. Just as importantly, we're going to talk about some tools at our disposal to do something about it. We're also going to talk about the risks that reporters face in trying to be truth-tellers in today's contested information space.

And I can't tell you how excited I am that we have some incredibly authoritative voices to help us along in that conversation. So today you'll hear three voices on our microphones. The first person I'd like to introduce, calling in from Prague, is my old friend Jamie Fly. Jamie, thanks for joining us.

FLY: Thanks for having me, Alex.

TIERSKY: Colleagues, listeners, Jamie was named on August the 1st of this year the president and CEO of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Just to remind our listeners, Radio Free Europe, you might hear us call it RFE/RL for short, serves as a surrogate free press in 22

countries where the free flow of information is either banned by government authorities or not fully developed. It's funded by the United States Congress and it operates a news operation that includes over 600 journalists at their headquarters in Prague, as well as 20 local bureaus with approximately 450 journalists and some 750 freelancers and stringers. They also have two bureaus in the United States. Jamie, thanks, again, for joining us.

Listeners, you'll also hear on this podcast from my good friend and colleague Mark Toner, who joins us in the studio today.

Mark, welcome.

TONER: Thanks.

TIERSKY: Mark is a senior foreign service officer. He currently serves as the Helsinki Commission's senior State Department advisor. His incredible career has given him a first-row seat to this information conflict, including during his time as acting spokesperson and deputy spokesperson for the Department of State, as well as in the senior positions he held in the Bureaus of European Affairs and Public Affairs. Mark, welcome, again, to the – to the podcast.

Gentlemen, I'll ask you to bear with me because I'm very eager to hear from you, but I do want to start the conversation with our third guest. Joining us from the frontlines, as it were, of the information war, from RFE/RL's bureau in Sofia, Bulgaria, we have veteran reporter Tatiana Vaksberg. Tatiana, thank you very much for joining us.

VAKSBERG: Thank you for having me.

TIERSKY: Tatiana, you're an award-winning journalist. You joined RFE/RL's Bulgarian service in January of 2019. I wanted to start our conversation with you, because this idea of disinformation can sometimes seem like something of an abstract threat. As an RFE/RL reporter, however, you're clearly operating in an environment that's deeply impacted by disinformation. So there you are, you're based in Bulgaria. Your country is a proud member of both NATO and the European Union. Tell us, is disinformation a problem in Bulgaria? And if so, how?

VAKSBERG: Yes, it is. You know, this is not a very big country. It's as big as Tennessee, both in size and in population. And what happens here reminds me a lot what you just said about Lithuania. Radio Free Europe, we withdrew from Bulgaria in 2004, when Bulgaria was already a NATO member and it was considered to be a democratic country with a free press. And then Bulgaria ranked 36th in the freedom of speech ranking of Reporters Without Borders. And it was invited to join the EU. Everything was perfect. Now, the question is, why Radio Free Europe has to come back in that country that has all the necessary characteristics of a democratic country with a free press.

So what happened in these 15 years? Now Bulgaria ranks 111 in the freedom of speech ranking. And this is a least-free media country in the EU. And the society's too often the victim of disinformation campaigns that usually starts from a small online media, and then are capable

to jump to big television channels. So what we do in Free Europe to counter this, which is not very elegant and it's not very easy, we decided to privilege exclusively the information, giving the public back the sense that the truth is knowable. We strictly follow journalistic standards. We don't publish anything which is not proven. We double check and triple check the information that we got. And we know that this is the only weapon that we have against the disinformation campaign.

TIERSKY: Tatiana, that's extraordinary. Hearing about the sad drop from the rank of 36 to 111th in press freedom and the need for RFE/RL to come back. Thank you for sharing that with us. You mentioned that oftentimes this kind of information where you live starts with small online media and jumps to big television channels. Can you tell us a little bit more about kind of how that happens?

VAKSBERG: Yes, I can give you one example from the last month. When several schools in Roma different neighborhoods had to close last month because the parents withdrew their children from schools. They said that they knew from Turkic sources that the state authorities were prepared to take the children off for the assembly, and then send them in Western Europe to be sold to homosexual couples. The hysteria was overwhelming. Parents were panicking. They literally run into the schools to get their children. And you understand that when you hear this, it's very hard to find a rational argument.

But let me tell you what we found out finally. We discovered that several nationalist parties, together with a socialist party member, several NGOs, and the Orthodox church representative were related to a year-long campaign against the state strategy to protect children from abuse. And they were saying that the child should not – that the Bulgarian child – should not be considered as an autonomous person with personal rights and dignity because, according to Bulgarian tradition, the children belong to their parents. And if a state document says something else, that would mean that the Western powers influenced our government to violate our orthodox traditions by destructing the family.

And then we found out that all of these groups of people that disseminate this story were very close to some of the Orthodox nationalist ideologies in Moscow that are close to the Kremlin. And from their website you can find the same type of disinformation, according to which the protection of children represented a violation of the Slavic tradition and Slavic family.

TIERSKY: Tatiana, this is a shocking example, thank you for sharing it with us. And I hear very clearly the link that you're making from essentially this campaign that we hear about from the Kremlin in traditional family values, using disinformation to sow kind of division in a country like Bulgaria, and to have the Bulgarian public become skeptical of Western institutions, like the European Union. I think that's a fantastic example. But is Bulgaria particularly vulnerable to this kind of a disinformation campaign?

VAKSBERG: Yes. Unfortunately, every time that this happens, because this is not the only example. We have many examples of this kind. And on two occasions, unfortunately, the government withdrew the document that it proposed. So the impact is huge.

TIERSKY: So tell me – tell me what it's like to see this happening in real time, and have a sense that this is false information – as you said, it whipped up hysteria. How was this situation addressed? What RFE/RL able to play a role? Who knocked down these false rumors?

VAKSBERG: You know, when this happens and you are in the middle of the situation, in the beginning it's very difficult to react. Something like this, like the story of the children, happened two years ago when many media reported the fake news, according to which the defense of women from domestic violence was also somehow related to imposing homosexual behavior or same-sex marriages, or something like this. And what the association of the European journalists noticed is that in the space of only one month there was over 7,000 articles in the press that debated on this issue, and that more than the half of them was negative towards an international convention of protection of the women.

So you understand that this is very difficult to drive to this wave, to this ocean of disinformation. Seven thousand articles is something really huge. And what we do, I told you, we work only – primarily on the quality of information. And that is our only weapon. And we are really proud to tell that we have over 1 million and 100,000 at least monthly to our site. We started only in January. We have 450,000 unique visitors monthly, which is also huge from a small country like Bulgaria. But being proud of it is very, how to say, like unperfect sentiment, because we know that you have big success only because the situation in the country is not so good.

TIERSKY: Hmm. Tatiana, thank you for sharing those examples. I mean, I think you're really describing an extraordinarily powerful – and extraordinarily powerful danger of these disinformation campaigns in how quickly they disseminate and the difficulty of countering them. Thank you also for sharing some of – some of the success of the RFE/RL service in Bulgaria.

I want to turn to Jamie Fly. And, Jamie, I'd like to bring you in again. You're calling in from Prague. You're the president and CEO of RFE/RL. I want to say, first of all, congratulations on your relatively still new position, and salute the courageous group of folks that you've been – you've been selected to lead. What's your reaction to what you've heard from Tatiana, your reporter in Sofia?

FLY: Well, I think what Tatiana describes is as very good example of the challenges that we're still facing on the – as you described – the frontlines of this problem. The concerning thing to me is that, you know, we thought, I think, for quite many years that this was just a frontline problem that those of us in the United States and in Western Europe could ignore. And the reality is that this is now a challenge that we're facing inside of all of our own societies. The

Russians in particular and now other actors have become very adept at manipulating divisions within our societies, about turning our citizens against each other, trying to do that for their own political gain in certain circumstances, or just to sow confusion and chaos in others. And so I think we ignore the challenges that are happening in places like Bulgaria at our peril in the United States and in Western Europe, because this is not a problem that is going to stay on the frontlines, as has now been shown in 2016 in the U.S., as well as multiple elections in Western Europe.

TIERSKY: Boy, Jamie, that's a great point. Let me ask you this. I know that before you joined to – joined RFE/RL, you know, this is not your first kind of exposure to the disinformation fight. I recall that you focused quite intensively on this issue during your time at the German Marshall Fund. Can you tell us a little bit about the work you did there and how it informs your approach to this job that you have now?

FLY: At the German Marshall Fund I was co-director of a project called the Alliance for Securing Democracy, which was trying to raise awareness about these tactics, about foreign interference in democracy more broadly, but also about disinformation. We did that through a variety of tools to just educate the public about this threat. I mean, the biggest challenge in many of these cases is that the citizens, who are the targets of these sorts of activities, often don't realize what is getting thrown at them. They don't realize that there are malign actors on social media who are pushing certain messages towards them that may be biased or that may not be real journalism. Sometimes the Russian in particular hide behind what appear to be journalistic outfits when they're sowing disinformation or conspiracy theories.

And so our project was an effort to raise awareness about the challenge and then develop strategies about how to respond. And it was through that work that got me interested in a place like RFE/RL because I think I came to the conclusion that one of the best ways to tackle this challenge is to make sure that we have strong, solid journalism occurring in all the key markets. And that's a problem we face right now in the United States with the decline of local media. It's a problem in many of the places – the 22 countries that RFE/RL operates where, in some cases, we are the only independent media operating, and in others we're one of the few neutral media outlets that doesn't come in with a particular political bias trying to influence the conversation. And so by shoring up real journalism that adheres to standards – the way Tatiana described – we play an important role, I believe, in countering disinformation across our entire broadcast area.

TIERSKY: Jamie, thank you for that. Stay on the line, if you will. Tatiana, you as well. I want to bring Mark into the conversation now.

Mark, you have personal experience as one of our leading diplomats dealing with public messaging in times of crisis. How have you seen this issue manifest in terms of the broader U.S. diplomatic effort?

TONER: Sure. First of all, I want to thank Jamie and Tatiana both for really framing the issue very well. The examples that Tatiana gave, as Jamie agreed, are classic in kind of disinformation tactics. For my own part, I was the person in charge – so, as you mentioned, I was the spokesperson and deputy spokesperson for a long time. So I've dealt with a lot of these issues at the podium at the State Department. We had RT and Sputnik in our briefing room nearly every day, often armed with kind of leading or gotcha questions. And our approach was, you know, we allowed – and we got considerable blowback from people who questioned why they were allowed in the briefing room. And our response was, you know, we're not afraid. We're transparent. And we're willing to take those questions – their questions on and answer them as best we can.

But I was also speaking about the other frontline experience that I've had. I was also the person in charge of strategic communications for the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs in 2014, when Russia moved to illegally annex Crimea and then, of course, moved its little green men into eastern Ukraine. And I would say, almost as shocking as these aggressive military actions were – and they were shocking – was the well-coordinated disinformation campaign that accompanied it. It was – I would say the first time that many of us, certainly myself, realized what we were up against in terms of scope and sophistication. It was very well-resourced. And, as I said, it was very sophisticated and, as Jamie noted, operating in multiple markets concurrently.

For our own part, we scrambled to respond to what we were seeing. Numerous false narratives that were being generated on social media, but also via Kremlin-sponsored media outlets, broadcast media. And they were justifying their actions in Ukraine, as well as attacking Western values and institutions. Again, kind of classic blueprint for Russian disinformation. At times it felt like – you know, the analogy I would describe is we were like the little Dutch boy with his finger in the dam, trying to keep the flood from bursting out and overtaking us all. Maybe a better analogy is kind of playing whack-a-mole, trying to knock down all the different narratives, or false narratives, we were seeing out there.

But just to, you know, make the point that one of the clear needs that we heard from our counterparts in Ukraine, in the Baltics, and other frontline states, I'd put it that way, was a need for credible, fact-based programs in Russian. And certainly, we were working with what was then called the Broadcasting Board of Governors, the BBG. But we asked them to take on that challenge. And their answer was the creation of Current Time. And that's since expanded. Jamie could certainly speak to this more than I can. But the essential core of that was a 30-minute news program in Russian that was fact-based and relevant, and talking about these issues, and providing that information to these audiences that craved and really had no access to reliable information.

TIERSKY: Thanks, Mark.

Let me then send it back to Jamie. Jamie, is there anything you'd like to say about Current Time and Russian-language programming in particular? I mean, Mark identifies this as a key need that was a demand signal that we were getting from some countries that were either Russian-speaking themselves or had Russian-speaking minorities.

FLY: Yeah. And Mark raises a good point. And I was working in the Senate at that time, in 2014. And I saw it from a congressional perspective, that after Russia's annexation of Crimea and invasion of eastern Ukraine, I think a lot of us watching this realized that we had fallen woefully behind, and saw what the Russians were doing with their information operations, and realized that we needed a response. And Mark's right, Current Time, which is now a 24/7 Russian language network, grew out of that. It initially was a very short daily live news program.

And so it's an example of how RFE/RL has tried to adapt to the times in recent years, to make sure that we can provide more Russian language content, both to people who want to

watch, or listen, or follow us online in Russia, as well as Russian speakers in the diaspora in other parts of the world, including in the Baltic states and other parts of Europe. And so it's a continued priority for us. And we're always looking to increase our reach to that important Russian audience.

TIERSKY: So, Jamie, let me – let me follow up with a question, then. Do you feel that we're doing better as – on our side of this information conflict than we were in 2014? You've talked about some of the new initiatives that have been launched, but I guess what I'm getting to is, how do we measure the impact of our efforts, the reach of our communications, and whether they're actually combatting some of this disinformation?

FLY: Yeah. I think it's a tough question. I mean, we're certainly doing better than we were in 2014, but the question is: Are we doing enough? I'm not sure. I mean, I think we need to be doing much more. Some of it is resource dependent and it's just a question of how much the U.S. government, the U.S. Congress, prioritizes this challenge, which is important. I do think we, at RFE/RL, are trying to adapt, which is really key in this space. People, not just in United States or in Western Europe, but in most of the countries in which we broadcast to or report in, are getting their news and information from a variety of sources now.

I'm sitting here in a radio booth in Prague. The reality, though, is that we're using fewer and fewer of our radio booths right now in Prague. We're expanding our TV studio space here. Every single one of our 26 language services has extensive digital teams now to provide news and journalism on the platforms where people are receiving that news and information, and going to for that news and information. So we're trying to adapt as much as possible.

But it's difficult to stay ahead of the challenge, in part because it's not just the Russians. It's not just the Chinese. These tactics are now proliferating. And you see a whole host of other countries who I think are learning from the success of Russian disinformation. And you even see private entities, including in advanced democracies, adopting some of these tactics. And it creates a very confused information space where people ultimately, I think, lose sight of the fact that there is something called the truth. And that, as Tatiana talked about earlier, is part of our role, in shoring that notion of truth up in those societies and convincing people that there is a source of news and information that truly is not biased.

TIERSKY: Tatiana, let me then bring you back into the conversation. I think it's a great point that Jamie makes that the information space is becoming more and more complicated, there are more and more players putting out what may or may not be good information. How are information consumers expected to know which source to turn to? And I wanted to ask you, what does this look like as you are working for a relatively new – or, renewed RFE/RL service in Sofia, where you are? How are you convincing consumers that – to put it crudely – RFE/RL isn't just another kind of propaganda?

VAKSBERG: Well, it's two questions. In fact, first of all I totally agree that the – that the media space is more difficult and more complicated than it was several years ago. I'd also say that privileging the information brings a great risk for your media, because the risk is that you are not as attractive as many other because you don't have any sensational things to say –



(laughter) – like the statement that the government would steal people’s children, for example. So this is one thing. You have to pay the price of not being attractive. Or, sometimes not being attractive. (Laughs.)

And there is also one other – the other side of your question is related to Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, which has a meaning that preceded – precedes our work, because this radio was created in the beginning of the ’50s to counter the disinformation of the communist states. And after the fall of the Berlin Wall in ’89, I had also the privilege to work in a free environment for the same Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in Bulgaria, in Sofia. And I feel today that now they’re very often – they’re very often media is much more closer to the RFE/RL of the ’50s than to the RFE of the ’90s, because it has – because it is not just one element of a free environment. This is – this is one media that starts – that tries, that struggles, to counter – to counter something bigger – something bigger, like the war of disinformation that you said.

TIERSKY: Yeah. Tatiana, let me – let me ask you then, do you have allies in this information space in Sofia? Is RFE/RL the only organization that’s really go this mission of promoting the truth for the truth’s sake?

VAKSBERG: No, fortunately. We have – no, fortunately we have many, many colleagues. We have several media partners. We have journalists that never – that never abandoned their work. That got fired, censored, or marginalized, but never silence. So we are really not alone.

TIERSKY: Tatiana, that’s great to hear. That’s very encouraging. But of course, I know that being an RFE/RL reporter can be dangerous. And here, I guess I want to bring Jamie back into the conversation. Jamie, the Helsinki Commission – the members of the Commission and the staff as well, we were very saddened to hear about the verdict against the journalist Stanislav Aseyev. Can you tell us a little bit about him and what was recently decided in his case?

FLY: Yeah. We found out yesterday that there was a verdict that had been released, I guess, several months ago, but not notified publicly until this week, for – we call him – Stas Aseyev – goes by Stas – who was a contributor of ours who was living in eastern Ukraine, reporting on what was going on with the fighting there. And he went missing two years ago at this point. And for a while we didn’t even know where he was, who was holding him. He eventually was paraded in front of some Russian TV cameras, and an interview and a forced confession were aired on Russian TV, where they basically made him out to be a spy, which is what he was supposedly convicted for yesterday.

So we’ve been calling for quite some time for his release and urging the government of Ukraine and the Russian government to prioritize his release, and obviously are worried about his health. We have other former contributors, Halaziuk, as well, who’s also, we believe, being held in the east. We have a contributor in Crimea, Mykola Semena, who’s under house arrest because of his contributions about life in occupied Crimea.

Unfortunately, that’s not a new challenge for our journalists. Many of them every day go to work, you know, showing great courage, facing great pressure. And even those who are not

reporting from inside their countries – I just met with one of our services, which I won't name today. You know, some of them are banned from going back to their countries. Some of them can't go visit ailing family members back in their home countries because their governments are angry about the work they do from Prague. And some are even threatened on a regular basis by intelligence agencies, even though they now are able to live thousands of miles away. It's an ongoing struggle that many of our journalists face.

And it's, you know, just a sign, I think, of how especially authoritarian regimes are incredibly sensitive about the truth and those who seek to propagate the truth, because they realize how dangerous the truth is to their grip on power ultimately. And that's what a lot of this and our work is about. It's about presenting that risk to authoritarians. And the authoritarians often deploy the most brutal methods in response.

TIERSKY: Jamie, thank you for that. I'll just note in passing a news story that I noticed that the Russian state Duma has recently said – a commission from the Russian state Duma said it found violations of election law by six foreign and independent news outlets operating in Russia, including RFE/RL. So I think that fits into this – in this picture that you're describing as well.

Let me bring Mark Toner back in. Mark, clearly this is an issue that the U.S. Helsinki Commission and its members have been seized of. I think our faithful listeners will know that we have this relationship with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the OSCE, that's also active for similar reasons on this set of challenges. Can you tell us a little bit about the Helsinki Commission's work and how that relates to the OSCE as well?

TONER: Sure. Just to drill down to the basic crux of it, it is, you know, when citizens in a democracy lack access to credible, relevant information about the issues most important to their lives, they're unable to make good, informed decisions. And, you know, if you take that way, you take away their ability to vote and to make decisions with respect to their – the people they elect, and the policies they support. Then democracy as a whole suffers. And that's why disinformation is such a real and urgent threat. Certainly this speaks to all of the work that the Helsinki Commission does and, as you say, more broadly what the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe does.

I also want to speak to Jamie's point about, and your point as well, about the safety of journalists. That's another area – first of all, it is an extremely dangerous job that these reporters do in trying to get out and tell the truth, and to report factually from many of these hot spots. And as Jamie rightly notes as well, even those who are, quote/unquote, "out of harm's way," face legal and other forms of intimidation. That's another area where our voice can hopefully be influential in urging the release of these journalists, and raising concern about the safety and well-being of these journalists, and really shining a light on what's happening to these journalists – certainly in the case of this – the RFE/RL reporter Stas, who was reporting from the Donbas region.

Finally, our commissioners are often raising the issue of disinformation at our Parliamentary Assembly meetings. That's a chance where we get to, you know, lock horns and

get into some pretty heated debates with parliamentarians from all of the other 57 participating states. And that's – again, that's an opportunity for us to shine a light on the problem, and the urgency of disinformation. I'll just say, you know, Senator Wicker last year, in the winter meeting, called out Russia for its ongoing interference in the run-up to Ukraine's parliamentary elections. So part of a good defense on disinformation is going on offense from time to time. And that's – you know, that means shining a light on the perpetrators, both state and nonstate, as Jamie rightly puts it.

TIERSKY: Thanks for that, Mark.

I think we're coming towards the end of our time on this recording. What I'd like to do now, Tatiana, you've given us some terrific examples of what you're up against. And we certainly wish you all the success with the continued work that you're doing with RFE/RL. We're thrilled to hear that you have allies in what you're doing on the ground in Sofia.

Jamie, can I ask you, from the strategic level, what's your vision for RFE/RL going forward? What would you like to see the service doing more of, going into the future? And, again, we alluded to this a little bit when you – when you talked about it depends on resourcing. So let's flesh that out a little bit.

FLY: Yeah. I think one of my priorities is to complete our digital transformation. And I talked about this a big. Five years ago, when we were discussing the launch of Current Time, this was primarily still a radio organization. Over the last five years, we've made great strides in developing products like Current Time, 24/7 Russian language network. Many of our other services have more TV content than ever before. But I really see the next area that we need to focus even more energy on is just that digital space. And where Tatiana is, in Sofia, is a good example of this. When we relaunched in Bulgaria and Romania within the last year, we relaunched a digital only service.

Not all of our services will, I think, in the future be digital only. Some of our markets, we still do radio because that's where the listeners are. But we need to professionalize our digital operations and prioritize them, now that we are a truly multimedia organization. So that's one of my top priorities. I'm also just spending a lot of my time advocating on behalf of our colleagues, like Stas and Oleg and Mykola, who are either detained, under pressure, highlighting the challenges that many of our reporters face, engaging when we run into accreditation problems, which is a major challenge in a place like Tajikistan right now where they're literally trying to strangle our bureau out of existence by denying our journalists accreditation and depriving them of the ability to do their jobs.

So, you know, there's never a moment here when there's not a challenge that we're tackling. But, you know, I think the major situation we're going to face in the coming years is to prioritize in each market the platforms where people are going to get their news and information because, you know, we need to make sure that as trends change as different – new generations get their news and information differently, that we're there to engage them with serious journalism and help report the facts and provide the truth in the way that they want to receive them.

TIERSKY: Jamie, I think both you and Tatiana, and Mark as well, have done a tremendous job in describing for us that kind of never-ending challenge that you've talked about. And I have to say, we're thrilled to have you all working on this issue on all of our behalves. Jamie, Tatiana, I want to thank you for joining Mark and I on the podcast today. More importantly, I want to thank you, again, for the work that you do on behalf of RFE/RL's mission to promote democratic values and institutions and combatting intolerance. These are, of course, principles that the U.S. Helsinki Commission was also created to defend. So we are so grateful to you – to have you as partners in this – in this journey. And I want to make sure to say that we salute the courageous reports and truth-tellers, whether they work for RFE/RL or not, who put themselves in harm's way in the service of this noble cause.

Jamie, before we go, can you please give our listeners a quick reminder of where they might go to find the excellent content that RFE/RL is producing, but also where they can stay informed about the cases of specific contributors that you have, and journalists, who are being persecuted for the work that they do?

FLY: They can visit RFERL.org, which is our English language website, which I should note has only a small portion of all of the content that we produce in our 26 languages on a daily basis. But there you can view factsheets about each of our language services, and you can sign up for newsletters about specific countries. And also we have, I believe, a Journalist Under Pressure newsletter that people can sign up for as well – RFERL.org.

TIERSKY: Jamie, thank you for that. And thank you for joining us. Tatiana, thank you for joining us as well.

VAKSBERG: Thank you. Thank you for having me.

TIERSKY: Mark, thanks for being on the mics with me today.

TONER: Thanks so much.

TIERSKY: With that, listeners, we've come to the end of another episode of Helsinki on the Hill. As you know, we're always interested in hearing back from you with feedback. Get in touch via our website at CSCE.gov, our Facebook page, or on Twitter. Thanks again for joining us for the podcast Helsinki on the Hill. Until the next conversation, I'm Alex Tiersky, signing off.

(END)