

Trump pulls the plug on Radio Martí



Radio Martí studio in 2008 (source: [bbq.gov/Commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Radio_Mart%C3%AD_studio_in_2008.jpg))

Last Friday, US President Donald Trump issued an executive order instructing the United States Agency for Global Media (USAGM) to reduce its operations to a legally required minimum. The order also affects the Office of Cuban Broadcasting (OCB), which operates the state propaganda stations *Radio Martí* and *TV Martí*, which have been broadcasting to Cuba for decades.

According to an [AP report](#), the Trump administration has already made controversial decisions regarding the US international broadcaster *Voice of America* (VOA), which has also been affected. A journalist who criticized Trump was suspended, the report said. In addition, contracts that allowed VOA to use material from independent news organizations such as the Associated Press were terminated.

Staff on leave, access blocked

On Saturday, employees of *Radio Martí* and *TV Martí* in Miami received only an email informing them that they were on leave, [reports the](#) *Miami Herald* newspaper. They were also instructed not to enter the office premises during this time.

The order stipulates that the heads of the government agencies concerned must submit a report within seven days confirming full compliance with the order and explaining which components or functions of their organization, if any, are required by law and to what extent.

According to the regulation, the aim of the measure is “to continue the reduction of federal bureaucracy”. Observers also see it as a blow against institutions critical of Trump. His administration began closing [programs of the US development agency USAID](#) back in March to cut spending it deemed unnecessary.

Failed propaganda war

Radio and especially TV Martí were long seen as the epitome of the Cold War against Cuba. Founded by the US in 1985 and 1990, respectively, to spread propaganda against the socialist government in Havana, the broadcasters proved largely ineffective.

The TV channel in particular was never able to overcome Cuban jammers. The radio program did reach the island, but only a limited audience. More recently, Martí media outlets have tried to reach their audience via digital platforms. This service is now also facing closure.

In February 2019, an independent panel of experts commissioned by the USAGM [came to the conclusion](#) that Radio and TV Martí's reporting was both “poor journalism” and “ineffective propaganda”. The experts criticized bias and a lack of context, describing the programs as “old-style propaganda with constant hammering”.

The decision has sparked heated debate on social media. As the Cuban news agency Prensa Latina [reports](#), some users see it as another “gift” from Trump to the Cuban-American community in Florida that supports and elected him – even though he is now harming this group of voters in a number of ways. In addition to the reorganization of the propaganda stations, the government recently cut funding for Cuban exile groups that had supported Trump's campaign. ([Cubaheute](#))