

The Trump Administration Shouldn't Disarm Itself Against Iran



Flag in front of Iran's Foreign Ministry building in Tehran(*Morteza Nikoubazl/Reuters*)

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Closing the Middle East Broadcast Network is not making America great again in a region critical to President Trump's foreign policy agenda.

The Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN), which I lead, is a grantee of the federal government overseen by the United States Agency for Global Media (USAGM). Or perhaps I should say "was." The Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) came for MBN in early March.

Congress actually approved our funding on March 14 — the day DOGE was wrapping up its work at our parent agency. The very next morning came the letter terminating our grant agreement.

The anti-American tyrants that rule Iran have been rejoicing ever since. Hamas, Hezbollah, and Houthis are licking their chops. “Their soft power has failed,” cheered an Iranian-backed militia in Iraq right after the news of MBN’s closure was made public.

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Meanwhile, as we’re DOGE’d, Qatar continues its lavish funding of anti-American, anti-Israeli *Al-Jazeera*. The United Arab Emirates has its voice; the UAE backs Sky Arabia. The Saudis finance their network, Al Arabiya. And then there’s the French, the Germans, and BBC Arabic, each and every one with their own Arabic language service and slant.

And America wants to opt out? Iran’s state broadcaster’s budget [will increase by 50 percent despite ongoing economic woes](#). Observers say the regime is betting on propaganda to steer public opinion.

In Lebanon, Iran’s cyber armies distort, manipulate, and silence anti-Hamas and anti-Hezbollah voices. This, while we report on how these terror networks traffic drugs, launder money, and smuggle weapons to undermine stability, democratization, and development.

Moreover: MBN’s local brand, Alhurra, tells the American story across the Middle East. Unless courts step in, the only U.S.-funded Arabic language news network will be lost in just a couple of weeks. We’ve already furloughed virtually all of our employees.

It was never supposed to be this way. The Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025 was supposed to serve as a guide to promote policies and personnel for a conservative governing agenda. USAGM and MBN are part of that Heritage report. The mandate? Reduce costs, eliminate duplication, align with U.S. foreign policy goals — wipe up liberal bias. We’ve been doing exactly this.

When President Trump named Kari Lake as senior adviser to USAGM in February, we thought this was the plan. When we received our March 14 letter terminating our grant agreement signed by Ms. Lake, we were shocked. We suddenly had the suspicion that Elon Musk’s DOGE had taken over the show. This we know: DOGE never engaged with us. Lake has declined to meet with me — or visit MBN.

When I started as MBN’s CEO eleven months ago, we began a transformation process. We parted with 200 employees, reduced company costs by 25 percent — and saved our funder, the American taxpayer, \$20 million right off the bat. We were preparing for additional strategic cuts when we received notice without explanation this month that MBN was to be shuttered. It’s utterly baffling.

MBN is a 24/7 U.S.-funded, Arabic language television and digital media company that, in a given week, reaches as many as 34 million people across 22 countries in the Middle East and North Africa. The cost? The price of two Apache helicopters.

With accurate, honest, fair-minded reporting, we tell the American story — and counter the ghastly antisemitism that Iran and others in the region relentlessly promote. It has been heartening to learn of so much support in the Jewish, pro-Israel community. Letters and testimonials stream in.

We've been working on our journalism this past year, too. We engage our critics. We believe in craft. We check and correct mistakes. And we're passionate about purpose. An MBN editor from the region writes me: *"We're the Shepherd dog fighting the wolves to protect the sheep."*

Iran gets this. At home, the regime is a mess: intensifying repression, miserable economic conditions, and mounting popular discontent. The worse the conditions at home, the more aggressive the mullahs become abroad. The Iranian regime dives into duplicity and destabilization.

Close America's Middle East Broadcasting and gift Iran an easy win? We cannot accept this. Regretfully, and as a last resort, we've decided to sue the Trump administration. We simply cannot let Iran win. We'll fight this in court.