

April 14, 2021

Diana Shaw
Deputy Inspector General
U.S. Department of State
1700 North Moore Street
Arlington, VA 22209

Dear Deputy Inspector General Shaw:

I write regarding a whistleblower complaint about the conduct of Michael Pack, the United States Agency for Global Media (USAGM)'s former CEO. I am particularly interested to know if the Inspector General's office has taken any steps to investigate the complaint.

I recently received a copy of a whistleblower complaint, which was first sent to the State Department's Inspector General in November, 2020. The whistleblower complaint asserts that Mr. Pack violated the law to divert U.S. government funds to Ultrasurf, a controversial Virtual Private Networking app. U.S. law states that USAGM global internet freedom funding "may only be made available to support open-source technologies that undergo comprehensive security audits...to ensure that such technology is secure." Ultrasurf, however, is not open-source, and the complaint includes a copy of an independent security audit, which assessed that the application was dangerously insecure. The audit states, "censoring Ultrasurf nation-wide would have been trivial for a moderate-budget adversary" and that "nothing short of complete and fundamental redesign of Ultrasurf ... can mitigate against these shortcomings."

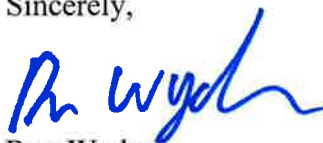
Last year, I led a bicameral letter warning Mr. Pack against directing taxpayer funds to insecure internet freedom technologies. Mr. Pack not only ignored our letter, but in December media reports revealed that the USAGM awarded a contract to Ultrasurf, in direct violation of longstanding legal requirements related to internet freedom funding. Mr. Pack's circumvention of this cybersecurity law is deeply concerning, particularly given how many people around the world entrust their safety to internet freedom technologies incubated and supported by the U.S. government. To help me understand the harm Mr. Pack's actions may have caused, please answer the following questions:

- What steps, if any, has your office taken to investigate USAGM's financial support of Ultrasurf?
- Has your office recommended that USAGM adopt additional policies to ensure that internet freedom funds are not used to support or promote insecure technologies that can be easily blocked or compromised by authoritarian governments?

Presidents of both parties have long championed internet freedom, and the Congress appropriates funding each year, on a bipartisan basis, to help people around the world communicate safely and freely. U.S.-backed technologies enable hundreds of millions of people living under authoritarian regimes to take great risks to circumvent oppressive internet filters, freely practice their religion, and document human rights abuses. It is imperative for the United States to ensure the safety, security, and effectiveness of the tools on which so many people rely.

I thank you for your attention to this important matter and look forward to your prompt response by May 18, 2021.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ron Wyden", with a stylized, cursive script.

Ron Wyden
United States Senator