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Hudson Institute Event: A Challenging Crossroad: Media and Politics in Iran

BBG CEO and Director John F. Lansing

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BBG CEO & Director

*Following a panel
discussion with Ilan
Berman, Michael Doran,
and Haroon Ullah.*

Hello everyone. Thank you to the Hudson Institute and Chairman Ken Weinstein for hosting this important discussion.

I also want to thank...

- Ilan Berman, Michael Doran and Haroon Ullah for the excellent panel; and
- Setareh Sieg, for your thoughts today and the positive changes taking place at the VOA's Persian Service.

As most of you may know by now, the BBG has two networks that broadcast in Persian—Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty—with a measured weekly audience of nearly 25 percent of adults in Iran.

That's a reach of 14 million people across digital, mobile, TV, and radio platforms.

Our skyrocketing audience in Iran is aided by the BBG's internet freedom tools which allow citizens there to circumvent Iranian government censorship.



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As the video just illustrated, our recent coverage during the wave of protests that rippled through Iran in late December clearly shows our impressive reach and impact.

At the height of the protests, BBG-sponsored circumvention technology averaged 800,000 users per day and ranked in the top three downloads among all apps.

Our coverage of the President's announcement of the U.S. withdrawal from the Iran deal also saw enormous engagement across platforms.

On social media, videos of the President Trump's remarks were viewed more than two million times.

This included simultaneous translation in Persian of the announcement and live reactions from diaspora representatives in Los Angeles and Paris.

Based on our most recent survey data, a strong majority of RFE/RL Farda and VOA Persian audiences trust our programming.

They see it as a key source of objective news during moments of uncertainty as well as in their everyday lives.

And we continue to make great strides to improve the delivery and content of our programming to Persian-speaking audiences in Iran and to the worldwide diaspora.

I'm excited to announce that we are working on a new project for Iran.



Broadcasting Board of Governors

It will build upon the successful model set by our 24/7 Russian-language digital network, Current Time.

Current Time is collaboration between RFE/RL and VOA launched in 2017.

And it's doing incredibly well.

Over the last year, Current Time had more than 400 million online views—half of them from Russian federation.

Carrying that success forward, we will launch a 24/7 Persian-language GLOBAL NETWORK—yet another cooperative effort of VOA and RFE/RL.

The network will build on the BBG's existing, strong Persian-language brands.

Our goal is to reach Persian-speakers in Iran and around the world.

We want to meet the market demand among Persian-language audiences for multifaceted and dynamic programming.

The network will be distributed in Iran and wherever large Persian diaspora audiences can be found from Paris to Dubai and beyond.

In the meantime, here's a preview of this exciting new venture.

[Play video.]

Thank you.