



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on June 16, 2020

Trump Appointee Takes Over at VOA; Two Top Staffers Immediately Quit

Within days of Michael Pack taking over as head of the Voice of America (VOA), [both VOA's director and deputy director quit](#). They knew Pack wouldn't countenance their liberal-left and often anti-American viewpoints going out to hundreds of millions in foreign countries, using its perception as pro-America and a reliable source of information on important issues to sway people leftward.



When the president nominated Pack two years ago to be the head of the U.S. Agency for Global Media, which oversees the VOA, he declared it a victory: "Congratulations to Michael Pack! Nobody has any idea what a big victory this is for America! Why? Because he is going to be running the [Voice of America] and everything associated with it [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, and the Cuba-focused Radio and Television Marti]. Michael is Tough, Smart and Loves our Country. This has been a big battle in Congress for 25 years. Thank you to our Great Republican Senate!"

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Michael also is patient. The maker of numerous documentaries, including *Created Equal: Clarence Thomas in His Own Words*, seen by millions at AMC theaters across the country this year, his nomination languished for more than a year before the first hearing was held. Finally, the Senate moved ahead with his confirmation which it granted, 53-30, on June 4.

His confirmation hearing was predictably contentious, with critics complaining that Pack would influence VOA to correspond with Trump's worldviews. Pack refuted those charges: "The whole agency rests on the belief that reporters are independent, that no political influence is telling them how to report the news and what to say. Without that trust, I think, the agency is completely undermined.... I think that is a bedrock principle."

He added:

The first principle has to be the editorial independence of journalists in the field, and no one should be telling them what to report or how to shade the news.

The message about not pushing biased news from the top was delivered: The left-liberal slant of the top staffers at VOA for the past four years would be gone.

Prior to joining the VOA in April 2016, director Amanda Bennett, a graduate of Harvard College, served as an executive editor at *Bloomberg News* and contributed regularly to the *Washington Post*. Her deputy director, Sandy Sugawara, a graduate of Wellesley College, had previously held senior management positions at the *Washington Post*.

They both knew their worldviews wouldn't be compatible with the incoming CEO. In a press release announcing their departure, they celebrated the four years they enjoyed at the helm of the VOA, claiming that while there they brought "objective news and information to those without a free press,



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telling America’s story, explaining America’s government and policies to the world and representing all of the U.S.”

In April, while Pack’s nomination was still pending, President Trump decided to give it a shove. In a White House policy release he said:

Journalists should report the facts, but VOA has instead amplified Beijing’s propaganda. This week, VOA called China’s Wuhan lockdown a successful “model” copied by much of the world — and then tweeted out video of the Communist government’s celebratory light show marking the quarantine’s alleged end.

Even worse, while much of the U.S. media takes its lead from China, VOA went one step further: It created graphics with Communist government statistics to compare China’s Coronavirus death toll to America’s. As intelligence experts point out, there is simply no way to verify the accuracy of China’s numbers.

The Coronavirus story is just one example of this pattern. Last year, VOA helped highlight the Twitter feed of Iran Foreign Minister Javad Zarif while he was issuing threats against the U.S. and sharing Russian anti-U.S. propaganda videos.

Pack has the opportunity now to appoint at least two new people to the now vacant top staff positions. Although the agency has more than 1,000 employees and journalists, the final decision as to what goes out on the airwaves to the hundreds of millions of people across the world listening to VOA rests in their hands. If Pack’s production of *Created Equal* is any indicator, his new staffers are about to present a fairer, more complete and better-balanced view of America to them.

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