

Chinese State-Run Media Company Registers Under the Foreign Agents Registration Act

February 6, 2019

On February 1, 2019, Chinese state-run media company CGTN America (CGTN) registered as a U.S.-based agent of a foreign government under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA). CGTN is the Washington bureau of the China Global Television Network, a state-owned enterprise of the People's Republic of China.

According to media reports, in September 2018, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) ordered CGTN to register as a foreign agent under FARA. Although DOJ's correspondence with CGTN has not yet been made public, the agency presumably concluded that CGTN is required to register under FARA because it is engaged in "political activities," acts as a "publicity agent," and/or as an "information-service employee" for the Chinese government. Although the statute contains a "news/press exemption," it is narrowly construed and has been deemed inapplicable where a foreign government retains editorial control over programming content. It was along this same line of reasoning that DOJ concluded that RTTV America, Inc. was required to register under FARA as a foreign agent of the Russian government back in 2017.

This recent development underscores the broad reach of the statute and DOJ's continued heightened focus on FARA enforcement beyond traditional lobbying entities.

For more information about FARA, please contact one of the authors of this alert.

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Practice Areas

Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA)
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