



## OFFICE of INTELLIGENCE and ANALYSIS

## INTELLIGENCE IN BRIEF

31 JANUARY 2022

DHS-IA-IB-2022-01498

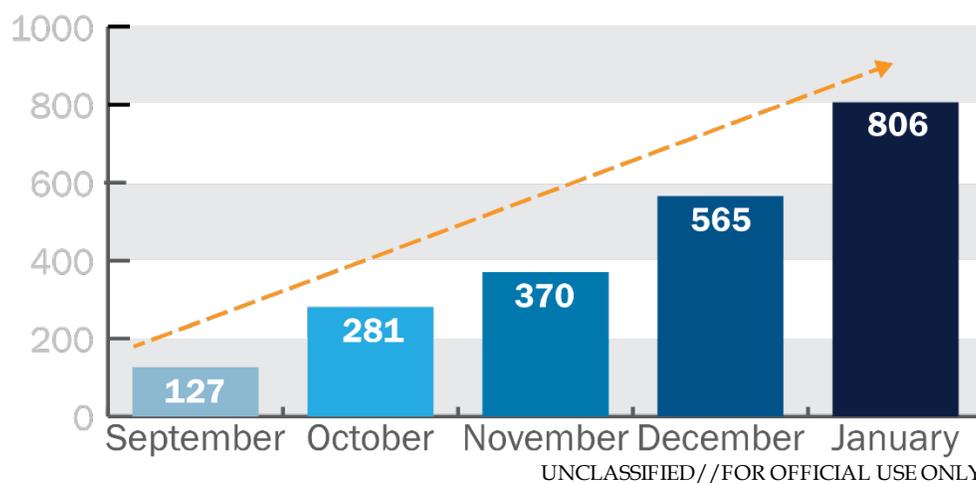
## FOREIGN INFLUENCE

## (U//FOUO) ADMINISTRATIVE REVISION: Russian Online Malign Influence Increasing in Response to Ukraine Crisis

(U//FOUO) Since September 2021, Russian state media and proxy websites have been increasing the quantity and proportion of anti-Ukrainian and anti-American narratives which likely will intensify as the crisis over Ukraine worsens. This campaign constitutes the most significant Kremlin-driven messaging campaign in the last year. We base this assessment on a DHS database of Russian state media and proxy website publication history and its correlation with Western reports of Russia's military buildup along Ukraine's border.

- (U//FOUO) From September 2021 to January 2022, Russian state media and proxy websites published a greater number of anti-Ukrainian and anti-American narratives on a month-by-month basis than during any preceding period, according to review of a DHS database of Russian outlet publication history and Western news reports (see graphic, below).

### (U//FOUO) Ukraine-Focused Article Production by Russian Media Outlets



- (U//FOUO) Since November, Russian state media groups RT and Sputnik have consistently messaged that Russia has no intent to invade Ukraine and that the West fabricated the invasion story as an excuse for its own military buildup, as well as derogatory stories about NATO. RT and Sputnik have also surged their messaging in response to breaking events, such as Western news reports that negatively portray Russia’s interests and Russia-US negotiations, according to a body of Russian state media articles (see graphic, below).

(U//FOUO) Example of a Reactive Narrative to American-Russian Meetings



- (U//FOUO) Russian proxy websites typically published articles with more misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation than Russian state media, according to the DHS database of Russian outlet publication history. Russian proxy websites frequently published articles claiming US forces are deploying to Ukraine’s eastern front and US intelligence services are staging false-flag attacks in Ukraine to instigate conflict, as well as hyping a threat of conventional military attacks on US forces from Russian naval assets in the Black Sea, according to the DHS database (see graphic, below).

**(U//FOUO) Disinformation Example from Russian Proxy Website**

Avia Pro: American tanks seen near the border with Ukraine.

The US has begun moving its heavy tanks and light armored vehicles to the border with Ukraine, apparently preparing to use these vehicles to attack Russia. How exactly the tanks and other armored vehicles of the US Armed Forces got into the territory of Romania is unknown, however, it is alleged that the equipment is being transferred towards the Ukrainian border very intensively.

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**(U) Overview of Russian Malign Influence Efforts Targeting the United States**

(U//FOUO) Russia employs a variety of diplomatic, informational, cyber, and economic tools, in what we assess is a wide-ranging strategy to hasten the establishment of a multi-polar world with Russia – and specifically President Vladimir Putin – as an essential player. Moscow typically seeks to weaken US socio-political cohesion and confidence in Western liberal democratic institutions, as well as NATO's unity and resolve. Russia's robust network of state media outlets, covert online journals, and troll farms peddle and amplify pro-Russia and anti-US narratives and carry out acute influence campaigns like hack-and-leak operations. Russia also uses tools of soft power – including cultural outreach groups – in the United States to strengthen overt levers of influence, while covertly directing cyber espionage and efforts toward accessing US critical infrastructure, such as the SolarWinds supply chain compromise. Russia also tries to strengthen economic leverage over US allies and strategically important countries to counter perceived US influence. Thus far, in response to the building conflict with Ukraine, Russian malign influence efforts targeting US audiences have primarily been through online means.

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**Source, Reference, and Dissemination Information**


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<b>Source Summary Statement</b>	<i>(U//FOUO)</i> Since September 2021, Russian state media and proxy websites have been increasing the quantity and proportion of anti-Ukrainian and anti-American narratives which likely will intensify as the crisis over Ukraine worsens. We have <b>high confidence</b> in this assessment based on our ability to monitor major Russian state media and proxy websites. Additionally, we note the qualitative evolution of narratives as well as their quantitative appearance on the various websites.
<b>Privacy, Civil Rights, Civil Liberties, Intelligence Oversight Notice</b>	<i>(U//FOUO)</i> US persons linking, citing, quoting, or voicing the same arguments raised by these foreign influence activities likely are engaging in First Amendment-protected activity, unless they are acting at the direction or control of a foreign threat actor. Furthermore, variants of the topics covered in this product, even those that include divisive terms, should not be assumed to reflect foreign influence or malign activity absent information specifically attributing the content to malign foreign actors. This information should be considered in the context of all applicable legal and policy authorities to use open-source information while protecting privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties.
<b>Definitions</b>	<p><i>(U//FOUO)</i> <b>Foreign Influence:</b> Any covert, fraudulent, deceptive, or unlawful activity of foreign governments—or persons acting on their behalf—undertaken with the purpose or effect of influencing, undermining confidence in, or adversely affecting US democratic processes or institutions or otherwise affecting socio-political sentiment or public discourse to achieve malign objectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>(U//FOUO)</i> <b>Covert Influence:</b> Activities in which a foreign government hides its involvement, including the use of agents of influence, covert media relationships, cyber influence activities, front organizations, organized crime groups, or clandestine funds for political action.</li> <li>• <i>(U//FOUO)</i> <b>Overt Influence:</b> Activities that a foreign government conducts openly or has clear ties to, including the use of strategic communications, public diplomacy, financial support, and some forms of propaganda.</li> </ul> <p><i>(U//FOUO)</i> <b>Disinformation:</b> A foreign government’s deliberate use of false or misleading information intentionally directed at another government’s decisionmakers and decision-making processes to mislead the target, force it to waste resources, or influence a decision in favor of a foreign government’s interests.</p> <p><i>(U//FOUO)</i> <b>Malinformation:</b> An adversary’s deliberate use of otherwise verifiable information with malicious intent, such as by amplifying the information selectively or out of context, or to the detriment of specific persons.</p> <p><i>(U//FOUO)</i> <b>Misinformation:</b> An adversary’s use of false or misleading information. An adversary’s intent can change misinformation to disinformation.</p> <p><i>(U//FOUO)</i> <b>Proxy Website:</b> News outlets, think tanks, and investigative journalist websites with covert or overt support from foreign governments or foreign government-linked businessmen and oligarchs that echo foreign government narratives, talking points, and disinformation. (Note: The websites used for this product are publicly attributed Russian proxy outlets).</p> <p><i>(U//FOUO)</i> <b>State Media:</b> State-owned outlets with control over editorial content through financial resources or direct or indirect political pressures.</p>
<b>Malign Foreign Influence Collection</b>	<i>(U//FOUO)</i> The Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) collects and receives reporting on messaging from foreign governments or any entity assessed to be operating on behalf of a foreign power, including reporting on covert, fraudulent, deceptive, and unlawful activities undertaken with the purpose or effect of influencing, undermining

<b>and Analysis Methodology</b>	<p>confidence in, or adversely affecting our democratic processes or institutions or otherwise affecting socio-political sentiment or public discourse to achieve malign objectives.</p> <p><i>(U//FOUO)</i> This reporting includes state-controlled media outlets – some that are officially registered under the Foreign Agents Registration Act – as well as covert proxy websites and social media accounts we assess are operated by foreign governments or entities operating on behalf of a foreign power.</p> <p><i>(U//FOUO)</i> I&amp;A routinely reviews the totality of this malign foreign influence content and, in the case of this report, identified a number of prominent US election, domestic, and socio-political themes regularly presented by these actors since the beginning of 2020.</p>
<b>Dissemination</b>	<i>(U//FOUO)</i> Federal, state, local, and private sector stakeholders.
<b>Warning Notices &amp; Handling Caveats</b>	<p><i>(U)</i> <b>Warning:</b> This document is UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY</p> <p><i>(U//FOUO)</i> It contains information that may be exempt from public release under the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552). It is to be controlled, stored, handled, transmitted, distributed, and disposed of in accordance with DHS policy relating to FOUO information and is not to be released to the public, the media, or other personnel who do not have a valid need to know without prior approval of an authorized DHS official. State and local homeland security officials may share this document with authorized critical infrastructure and key resource personnel and private sector security officials without further approval from DHS.</p>



Product Title:

All survey responses are completely anonymous. No personally identifiable information is captured unless you voluntarily offer personal or contact information in any of the comment fields. Additionally, your responses are combined with those of many others and summarized in a report to further protect your anonymity.

**1. Please select partner type: \_\_\_\_\_ and function: \_\_\_\_\_**

**2. What is the highest level of intelligence information that you receive?**

**3. Please complete the following sentence: "I focus most of my time on:"**

**4. Please rate your satisfaction with each of the following:**

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	N/A
Product's overall usefulness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Product's relevance to your mission	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Product's timeliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Product's responsiveness to your intelligence needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**5. How do you plan to use this product in support of your mission? (Check all that apply.)**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drive planning and preparedness efforts, training, and/or emergency response operations | <input type="checkbox"/> Initiate a law enforcement investigation       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Observe, identify, and/or disrupt threats   | <input type="checkbox"/> Initiate your own regional-specific analysis   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Share with partners   | <input type="checkbox"/> Initiate your own topic-specific analysis      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Allocate resources (e.g. equipment and personnel)                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Develop long-term homeland security strategies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reprioritize organizational focus   | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not plan to use                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Author or adjust policies and guidelines  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: <input type="text"/>                    |

**6. To further understand your response to question #5, please provide specific details about situations in which you might use this product.**

**7. What did this product not address that you anticipated it would?**

**8. To what extent do you agree with the following two statements?**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
This product will enable me to make better decisions regarding this topic.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This product provided me with intelligence information I did not find elsewhere.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**9. How did you obtain this product?**

**10. Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up conversation about your feedback?**

To help us understand more about your organization so we can better tailor future products, please provide:

Name: <input type="text"/>	Position: <input type="text"/>
Organization: <input type="text"/>	State: <input type="text"/>
Contact Number: <input type="text"/>	Email: <input type="text"/>



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