Report

The Russian Propaganda Nesting Doll

How RT is Layered Into the Digital Information Environment

G | M | F Alliance for Securing Democracy

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The Alliance for Securing Democracy (ASD) at the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) is a nonpartisan initiative that develops comprehensive strategies to deter, defend against, and raise the costs on autocratic efforts to undermine and interfere in democratic institutions. ASD has staff in Washington, DC, and Brussels, bringing together experts on disinformation, malign finance, emerging technologies, elections integrity, economic coercion, and cybersecurity, as well as Russia, China, and the Middle East, to collaborate across traditional stovepipes and develop cross-cutting frameworks.

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Executive Summary

Over the past year, ASD at GMF, the University of Amsterdam (UvA), and the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) have collaborated to develop the Information Laundromat, an open-source tool to uncover content and metadata similarities between and among websites. This report, the second in a series of reports dedicated to exploring content laundering practices across the web, highlights the myriad pathways through which content from Russian state media website RT.com reaches audiences in Europe and the United States. Using the laundromat tool, we queried more than 1,500 RT articles published in 2023 and discovered roughly 400 domains–ranging from mirror sites and content aggregators to faux local news outlets and sites ostensibly focused on spirituality and men's interests—that republished articles that were identical or nearly identical to those that originated on RT.com. In some cases, these sites were transparent or quasi-transparent about sourcing content from RT; in others, the provenance of the content was opaque or seemingly intentionally masked. In all cases, these sites allowed Russian state media to reach a wider audience, including in the EU, where RT itself is banned.

Key findings:

- We discovered RT articles reposted to third-party websites targeting audiences from Iraq to Ethiopia to New Zealand, often without any indication that the content was sourced from a Russian propaganda outlet. In total, we found content originally published on RT.com on websites with country code top-level domains (for example, .ru, .de, .uk) registered in at least 40 countries on six continents.
- Despite RT being effectively blocked in EU search results, RT content was widely available in Europe when republished on third-party websites whose domains are not subject to sanctions. We found more than 3,019 unique links on 316 domains in EU search results that linked to content that was identical or a near-duplicate to queried RT articles.
- Though we do not categorize link sharing on social media as "information laundering", social media and user-generated video sites play a significant role in the dissemination of laundered RT content in search results. Reddit and YouTube ranked among the 15 most observed domains in our study, even though Reddit has banned all links to RT and YouTube has blocked all channels affiliated with RT. On Reddit, users bypassed restrictions by linking to RT articles posted on mirror or content reposter sites; on YouTube, RT articles were narrated using an automated text-to-speech generator. Those tactics allowed content from RT to not only appear on those platforms but to spread across the open web, boosted by the "authoritativeness" of those respective domains. In our study, we also found links on tested search engines of original or reposted RT articles posted on Gab, Telegram, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, Substack, VKontakte, Instagram, Pinterest, 8kun, and Rumble.1
- RT articles were republished, verbatim, on state-controlled or state-captured media outlets in Cambodia, Lebanon, Namibia, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Yemen, and Iran. We also found evidence of RT content repeatedly

[1] Certain social media sites, most notably X (formerly Twitter), did not meet our threshold for inclusion in our final list of aggregated domains. (See "Data Collection & Filtering for more information). However, a manual review of URLs in our dataset showed conclusive evidence of RT content on all of the above mentioned sites.

republished on Al Manar TV (almanar[.]com[.]lb), a Lebanese outlet owned and operated by Hezbollah that is designated a “special terrorist entity” and banned in the United States and multiple European countries.

- Many of the sites that regularly repost RT content are not, at least overtly, news sites. This includes sites like manstuffnews[.]com, a site largely dedicated to sports, grilling, cars, and other stereotypical “men’s interests”, but whose “world news” section is sourced almost exclusively from RT. There are also a number of sites ostensibly focused on wellness, spirituality, and religion that launder RT content—including a site connected to a Christian ministry in Texas, one focused on the rapture, and a “conspirituality” site connected to an alleged human trafficker that blends wellness, new age religiosity, and pro-Kremlin geopolitics.
- A number of laundering sites in our study were focused primarily or exclusively on the Middle East, most with a distinctly pro-Palestinian editorial line. Because our study used articles published in 2023 during the Israel-Hamas war, it is not surprising that there was a disproportionate number of RT op-eds in our data that focused on the region. The pollination of pro-Palestinian sites with RT content is also not surprising given Russia’s position on the war and the number of RT contributors who are openly aligned with pro-Palestinian causes. However, many of the RT articles republished by pro-Palestinian sites had nothing to do with the conflict or even the region, including articles alleging that the “EU is cracking down on democracy in Moldova” and that “Western propaganda” is responsible for “burying the Chinese economy”.

Introduction

RT (formerly Russia Today) is infamous for both its outsized role in the global political economy of disinformation and as an instrument of Russia’s “sharp power” strategy. For nearly two decades, RT has been trying to exert influence in Western news environments. It is the most well-funded, well-staffed news organization in the service of the Kremlin, and its financing provides a competitive edge over independent Western media outlets, many of which struggle to sustain their existence.

Multiple countries, tech platforms, and television providers have banned or restricted access to RT. The channel was banned in Ukraine following Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014, and it was similarly blocked by Latvia and Lithuania in 2020. Responding to Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the European Union and United Kingdom sanctioned TV-Novosti, RT’s parent company, compelling service providers to suspend RT and Sputnik News within the EU and the United Kingdom. Canada’s telecommunications regulators mirrored these actions by removing RT from its airwaves. In the United States, RT America halted its broadcasts after most cable and satellite TV providers cut ties with the network. Similarly, many social media platforms either removed or restricted channels, pages, or accounts associated with RT and its affiliates, making it difficult, if not impossible, for content on RT’s website to appear in news feeds. Thus, RT, at precisely the time the Kremlin needs it most, has found itself without the ability to widely disseminate its message to audiences in the West.

Monitoring for the reemergence of RT in the Western media landscape has therefore become a pressing task for journalists, academics, and civil society organizations, who rightly question how the Kremlin is reaching audiences in the absence of its primary distribution channels. Analysis of RT thus has shifted from a focus on its content to a focus on its distribution, with an emphasis on how RT is bypassing sanctions and platform restrictions.

This report is a comprehensive exploration of both newly discovered and previously identified websites reposting RT content, analyzing their characteristics and techniques, as well as their prominence in the United States and Europe. Through data analysis and in-depth case studies, we aim to highlight the diversity, and at times absurdity, of the websites engaged in disseminating Russian propaganda around the globe. We also hope to highlight broader issues related to "information laundering", a practice that effectively masks the true source of information from news consumers, regulators, and search algorithms.

Importantly, however, our research methods cannot determine intent. It is unclear whether any sites identified in this report have reposted RT content because of any specific ideological motives or if they are simply trying to drive traffic to their respective websites, either to generate ad revenue or to boost the visibility of other content. We also are not able to determine whether these sites republished RT content with the consent or even knowledge of RT. In short, this research is meant to further our understanding of how RT content has continued to reach Western audiences despite restrictions and bans; it is not meant to establish proof of an intentional, coordinated campaign to evade sanctions or mislead audiences—though we cannot, in some cases, rule that out.

Understanding Information Laundering

While there is not one agreed-upon definition, information laundering—also known as content or narrative laundering—refers to the process of moving a piece of information from an unverified or untrustworthy source into a mainstream or trusted news outlet(s), thereby gaining credibility in the process. This process therefore resembles money laundering, where illicit funds need to find an entry point into the financial system, then move between banks or financial products to hide the identity of the owner, and finally be woven into an asset from which seemingly legitimate funds can be drawn. In both cases, the goal, in effect, is to take an illegitimate product—either ill-gotten money or unreliable information–and legitimize it through a complex web of subterfuge.

In the context of Russian disinformation, information laundering has a long history. Perhaps the most infamous example is a Soviet-era disinformation campaign known as "Operation Infektion", where the KGB used a cutout newspaper in India to claim that the AIDS virus originated in a US government bioresearch facility in Frederick, Maryland. That claim was then effectively "laundered" by both witting and unwitting sources until it eventually found its way onto the CBS Evening News with Dan Rather, one of the United States' most trusted news sources.

In this report, we take some liberties with the usage of the term information laundering. One could argue that the term is not valid in the context of the dissemination of state-backed propaganda, given that the provenance of the information is quite clear (in contrast to intelligence-led disinformation campaigns, where the true source of information is intentionally masked). In addition, certain websites in our study were fully transparent about the fact that they were reposting content from RT. Those sites could justifiably argue that they are no more guilty of information laundering than the thousands of news outlets that republish content from the Associated Press.

Despite these reasonable arguments, we find the term to be appropriate here for a number of reasons. First, news consumers that first encounter content from RT on other websites may not immediately understand that the content they are viewing was sourced from a Russian government funded outlet. This lack of awareness is, of course, magnified in cases where RT articles are republished without attribution or with misleading attribution, making it exceedingly difficult to trace the point-of-origin of the original article. Second, in environments where Russian content is blocked or restricted, resposters of RT content—regardless of their intent—provide the only avenue for RT to reach certain audiences. By repeating Russian narratives from a non-Russian source, they also play a critical role in legitimizing Kremlin-friendly talking points. Third, the purpose of RT is to influence foreign publics, so whether RT is specifically aware of or consent to the wider dissemination of their content, they benefit from the greater visibility of their message and the reduced visibility of their brand. We therefore find it appropriate to label the activity in this report as "information laundering", though we acknowledge that the term is more applicable to some activity uncovered in this study than others.

Prior Evidence of RT Laundering Operations

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, there have been several studies examining the dissemination of content from RT via third-party websites, channels, and accounts. Research by NewsGuard, for example, uncovered more than 250 RT-produced documentaries about the war that were reposted across more than 100 channels on YouTube, despite YouTube's complete ban of RT and its affiliated channels. Similarly, ASD research found that video content from RT en Español, RT's Spanish-language outlet, was widely accessible on other YouTube channels, including those that were quite clearly associated with the outlet.

A recent report from ISD offers a more complete view of copy-paste and mirror websites that launder RT's content. Their research introduces a categorization for the various types of web entities that share RT's content, such as: alternative domains and subdomains of RT; mirror websites that were identical copies of RT but hosted on different domains; content reposter websites that copy-paste articles from RT in their entirety; and aggregator websites that are used for boosting search rank in Google and other search engines. ISD's report is buttressed by additional research into the use of unaffiliated domains, including ASD's report for Ofcom, which showed that in UK search environments, people were four times more likely to encounter RT content on sites with no affiliation to RT than on RT itself.

Additional research has also shown that while EU sanctions took a bite out of RT's overt state media circulation within the bloc, RT was able to skirt restrictions by having its content posted to Russian government social media accounts as well as those of state media journalists and staff, like RT editor-in-chief Margarita Simonyan. This finding was validated by a European Commission report that identified failures by social media platforms to detect and remove a range of circumvention behaviors, from the use of back-up accounts and rebranded channels to cross-posting by proxies, used to promote Russian state media and pro-Kremlin content.

Methodology

To uncover the domains engaged in laundering content from RT, we first extracted every opinion piece published on RT.com's English-language website in 2023. This created an initial sample of 490 articles. We chose to test op-eds rather than news articles because opinion pieces tend to be longer and have more unique headlines and introductory text than straight news reporting. This, in theory, reduces the risk of false positives. Opinion pieces on RT's website also contain bylines—a rarity for content published by RT. Though these bylines are often removed from content reposter sites, particularly those that do not cite the original source, when found, they offer strong evidence that the content was sourced directly from RT.

Additionally, we decided to test whether we could identify any laundering sites that are perhaps more geopolitically motivated by searching for RT articles with "Zelensky" (using RT's spelling of the last name of Ukrainian President Volodomyr Zelenskyy) or "NATO" in the headlines. This produced, respectively, an additional 497 and 560 articles, for a total of 1,547 unique URLs.

We then entered all collected RT URLs into the Information Laundromat, an open-source tool developed by the authors of this report, to detect whether those articles had been reposted to domains not affiliated with RT. To test if the EU's ban on RT affected our ability to discover RT content republished on unaffiliated sites, we geolocated our searches to the United States and Belgium, which was chosen because it is the de facto capital of the EU. Of course, there are limitations with the selection of Belgium as a location to compare against the United States: Belgium is a much smaller media environment and its largest outlets cater to French, Flemish, and German speakers. For this study, however, Belgium was simply selected to study if the EU's ban affected the visibility of content published by RT within an EU search environment.

How the Information Laundromat Tool Works

The Information Laundromat is a lead generation tool designed to determine if and how websites share architecture and content. The Information Laundromat provides two core functions: content similarity and domain metadata matching. For this report, we used the content similarity function to generate the list of potential content reposters.

The laundromat tool generates leads by running a queried headline, snippet of content, or URL against four major search engines (Google, Bing, Yandex, and DuckDuckGo), the GDelt database, and a plagiarism detection tool to surface near-duplicate content. Because this method leverages search results, there are articles that surface that share some similarities with the queried text but that are fundamentally different. To improve the accuracy of results, we use gestalt string matching, a technique to determine the similarity of two pieces of text ("strings") based on their common substrings to determine the similarity between the queried text and the surfaced article. This technique is useful in cases where a piece of text may have been lightly edited or words inserted or removed, as often happens with headlines and articles. A score of 100% indicates a complete match between the queried text and a result, while a value of 0% indicates no match. While this scoring method is very accurate when querying a snippet of text, it is less accurate when querying URLs because websites often contain sidebars or other text on the page that is different from the original source, even if the article itself is identical. The information laundromat tool may therefore produce lower similarity scores when querying URLs than the strength of the match would otherwise suggest.

Data Collection and Filtering

Using the laundromat tool to query the selected RT articles, we generated more than 60,000 URLs from 3,600 unique domains. We sorted URLs by match score (see the "How the Information Laundromat Tool Works" section for more information about the match score) and deduplicated URLs to get the highest match by URL. We then extracted the fully qualified domain (for example, tech.example.co.uk), grouped the URLs by domain, and generated average and median scores for each domain and the number of URLs in that domain. To remove spurious matches, we filtered out all domains with an average match score below 60%, meaning that domains with multiple URLs were excluded even if some URLs in our dataset met or exceeded the 60% threshold. We applied this threshold after robust testing determined that match scores at or above 60% generally reduced the probability of false positives (and false negatives) when querying article URLs. To further minimize the risk of including false positives or domains that incidentally reposted RT content, we filtered out domains that had match scores greater than or equal to 60% but less than 70% if we had fewer than three URLs from that domain in our dataset. Additionally, we filtered out domains with a match score greater than or equal to 70% but less than 80% if we only had one URL from that domain in our dataset. All observations of domains with match scores equal to or greater than 80% were included, regardless of the number of observations in our dataset.

After we limited our sample to results that met the above criteria, we were left with 391 domains that our system identified as having potentially reposted, in whole or in part, content that originated from RT.com. A manual review discovered five sites that were not relevant, all of which surfaced due to high match scores on one RT URL that was a short blurb about Finland joining NATO. After removing false positives, we were left with 386 domains. Of those domains, 330 were found in searches geolocated in the United States, and 321 were discovered in searches geolocated in Belgium, with almost all of the most observed domains available in both environments. (Of note, searches geolocated in the United States usually uncovered, as one would expect, the original RT article. In Belgium, RT was absent from our results, which suggests that tested search services are effectively blocking the RT.com domain, in compliance with EU sanctions).

Number of Unique Links and Domains that Reposted RT.com Articles

Sample Searched	# of Articles Searched	# Unique Links after Filtering	# Unique Domains after Filtering
Op-Eds	490	2312	239
Zelensky	497	1228	195
NATO	560	1319	180
Total	1547	5792	386*

Figure 1 - The total number of RT articles queried in our study and the corresponding number of unique links and domains that reposted those articles after we applied filtering to identify the strongest matches.

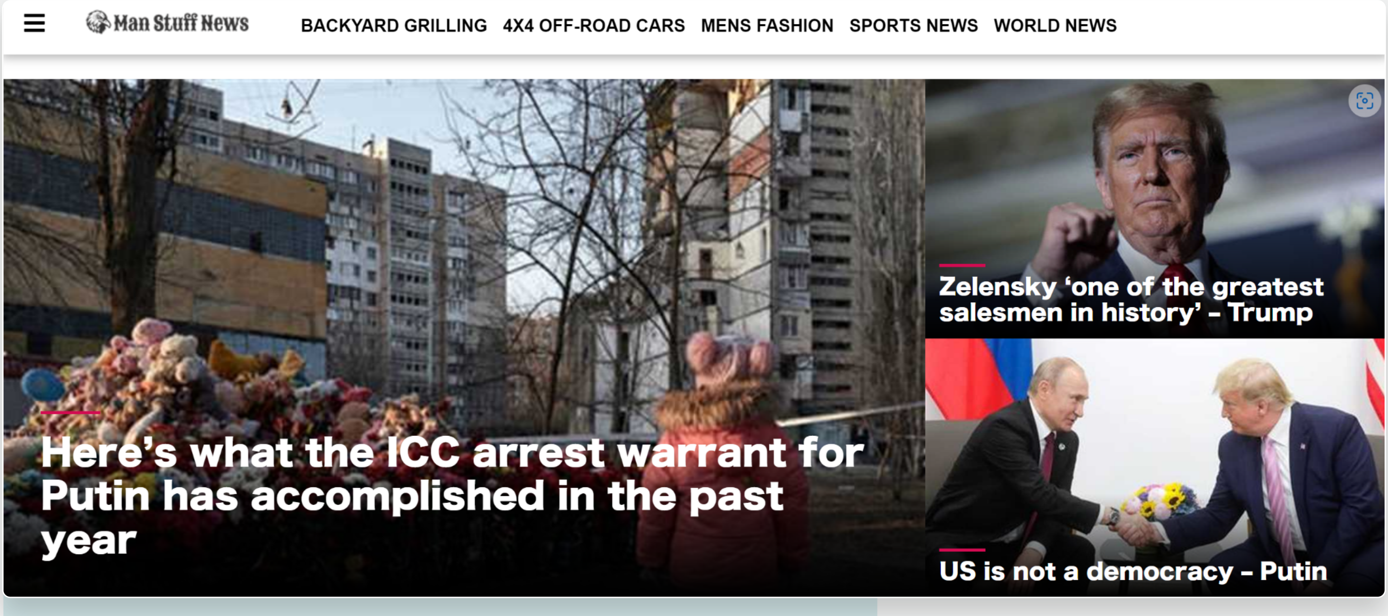
**The total number of unique domains is the sum of unique domains across all three samples, meaning that a domain that showed up in each searched sample was only counted once.*

Although we believe that the filtering criteria we applied minimized the risk of false positives, it is possible that some domains were included that published articles that were textually similar to queried RT articles but would not be considered near duplicates. Still, we estimate that, at most, around 20 domains that were considered relevant would be removed after a more thorough manual review. We also believe, and tests confirm, that the thresholds we applied were more likely to produce false negatives than false positives. The reason for this, as discussed in the "How the Information Laundromat Tool Works" explainer section, is that some near-duplicate articles appeared as sidebar items on pages that were otherwise focused on another topic or topics. Thus, it is our belief that the number of domains cited in this report as potential launderers of RT is likely an undercount rather than an over-count. We therefore believe it is accurate to say that our study uncovered roughly 400 domains engaged in laundering RT content, though again, we caution that some of these domains were fully transparent about reposting RT content and some, perhaps many, did so without an intent to mislead audiences or bypass platform or government restrictions.

Beyond issues related to false negatives, there are a few other notable limitations with the process we used to detect laundered content. First, a website must be indexed by a search service and must not be delisted by that service to appear in search results. Second, the laundromat tool only collects the first 40 search results from each tested search engine. This means that websites that consistently repost content from RT but that are blocked or sufficiently downranked (perhaps precisely because they plagiarize content) would not surface in our results. Another limitation is that queried articles that have been translated from English into another language or have been significantly altered—either by humans or through automated processes—are less likely to be detected than articles that have been reposted verbatim in English. Future iterations of the tool will attempt to improve upon our ability to detect this type of behavior, but, for now, we assume that there are RT launderers that our methods cannot sufficiently detect.

Data Analysis

The 386 domains we identified in our study as having likely reposted near-duplicate RT articles catered to a range of audiences, including so-called “anti-imperialists”, conspiracy theorists, local news consumers, and those looking to access RT directly from regions where the outlet is banned. But they also included sites that were not, at least on the surface, news sites. This included an array of sites that focused on topics as diverse as religion and spirituality to men’s interest sites, like manstuffnews[.]com, which layered RT content among posts on grilling, sports, and off-road cars.



Here’s what the ICC arrest warrant for Putin has accomplished in the past year

Zelensky ‘one of the greatest salesmen in history’ – Trump

US is not a democracy – Putin

Figure 2 - A screenshot from manstuffnews[.]com showing RT headlines mixed with tabs focusing on more stereotypical men’s interests.

In a few cases, we uncovered mirrors of RT sites that were connected to RT.com. We also found evidence of non-Russian state-backed media outlets that reposted RT content, which suggests, at a minimum, an informal content-sharing agreement with RT. In most cases, however, we could not find evidence that proved or even suggested any official coordination between identified sites and RT. It is very possible that RT itself is, at least in the case of fringier, low-traffic sites, unaware that their content has been republished or repurposed. At the same time, RT has little incentive to pursue these sites on copyright infringement grounds, given that content reposting sites, whatever their motives, are effectively helping the Kremlin both circumvent legal restrictions and reach a wider audience.

The global reach of the sites in our study was evidenced both by domain names and their country code top-level domains (ccTLD)—for example, .de (Germany) and .ca (Canada). Of the roughly 400 domains that met our criteria for inclusion, we found domains registered in more than 40 countries on six continents, though some ccTLD’s are open use, meaning registrars do not need to be based in, or even do business in, the registered country.

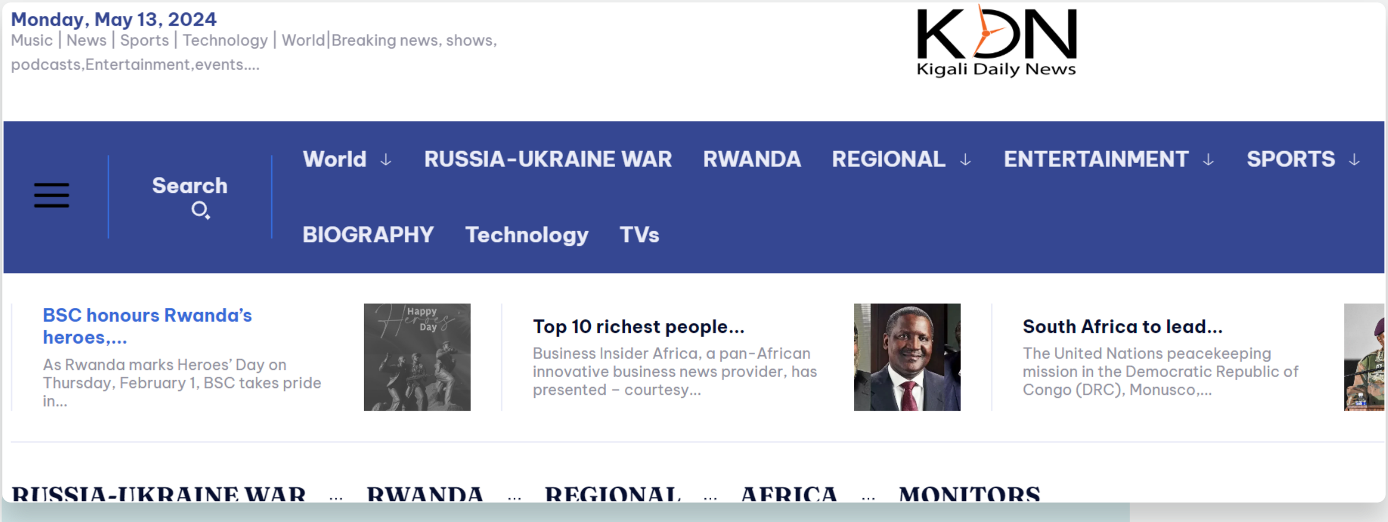
The 10 Most Observed Top-Level Domains (TLDs)

Top-Level Domain (TLD)	Associated Country (if applicable)
.com	N/A
.net	N/A
.org	N/A
.news	N/A
.ru	Russia
.info	N/A
.us	United States
.ca	Canada
.lb	Lebanon
.in	India

Figure 3 - The most common top-level domains (TLDs) among the 386 domains that posted near-duplicate content to RT and met our criteria for inclusion.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, .ru (Russia) was the most common ccTLD, followed by .us (United States), .ca (Canada), and .lb (Lebanon), while .com, .net, and .org sites topped the overall list.

In addition, we found many examples of domains that presented themselves as local, national, or regional outlets that laundered RT content. Some of these domains were part of known faux local news networks that effectively act as content reposter sites; others had a stronger veneer of authenticity, effectively blending real local coverage or genuine opinion pieces with RT-produced international coverage. This included sites like capitalethiopia[.]com, dailytelegraph[.]co[.]nz, and kigalidailynews[.]com, the latter of which oddly included a dedicated tab to the “Russia-Ukraine war” before a tab dedicated to “Rwanda”, its supposed country of origin. (A more thorough examination of the role of faux local outlets is provided in case study number three.)



Monday, May 13, 2024

Music | News | Sports | Technology | World|Breaking news, shows, podcasts,Entertainment,events....

KDN Kigali Daily News

BSC honours Rwanda’s heroes,...

As Rwanda marks Heroes’ Day on Thursday, February 1, BSC takes pride in...

Top 10 richest people...

Business Insider Africa, a pan-African innovative business news provider, has presented – courtesy...

South Africa to lead...

The United Nations peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Monusco,...

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR ... RWANDA ... REGIONAL ... AFRICA ... MONITORS

Figure 4 - The masthead of Kigali Daily News, with a tab dedicated to the “Russia-Ukraine War”.

Of the roughly 400 domains that we classified as likely reposters of RT content, approximately 31% were observed five or more times in our data, suggesting that the reposting of RT content by those sites was not incidental. Critically, this finding does not indicate that those sites posted more RT articles than other sites we identified; it only indicates that those sites appeared more often when the laundromat tool queried our sample of RT articles against search engines and selected databases. In fact, our analysis of domains that met the criteria for inclusion found that most of them—regardless of the number of observations in our study—regularly reposted RT content. Observations should therefore be interpreted as a potential indicator of a given site's relative importance in the RT laundering ecosystem (due to the prominence of those sites in search results), rather than an indication that they republish a greater volume of RT articles than other sites identified in our study.

Social media, video-sharing, and blogging platforms accounted for roughly one-quarter of the most observed domains, which we categorized as domains that met our criteria for inclusion and had more than 25 URLs in our study. This finding is not in and of itself surprising. Unlike news gathering sites, these platforms are focused on user-generated posts, opening the door for millions of users to post links directly to RT content or to intermediary sites that republish RT content. The fact that social media platforms surfaced regularly in search results pages is also not surprising, given that search engines are far more likely to consider social media platforms trustworthy than a low-trafficked blog. (We provide a detailed exploration of the role of social media sites in case study number two.)

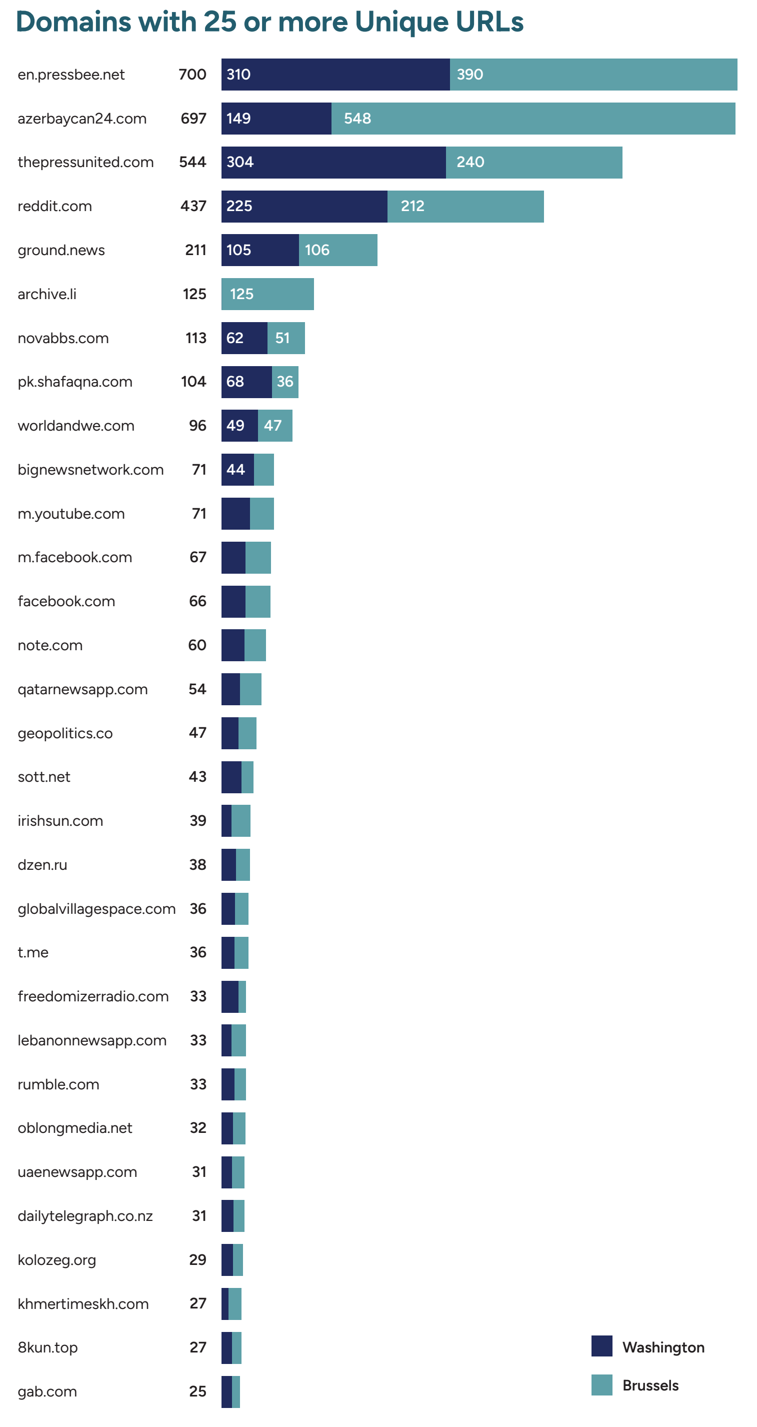
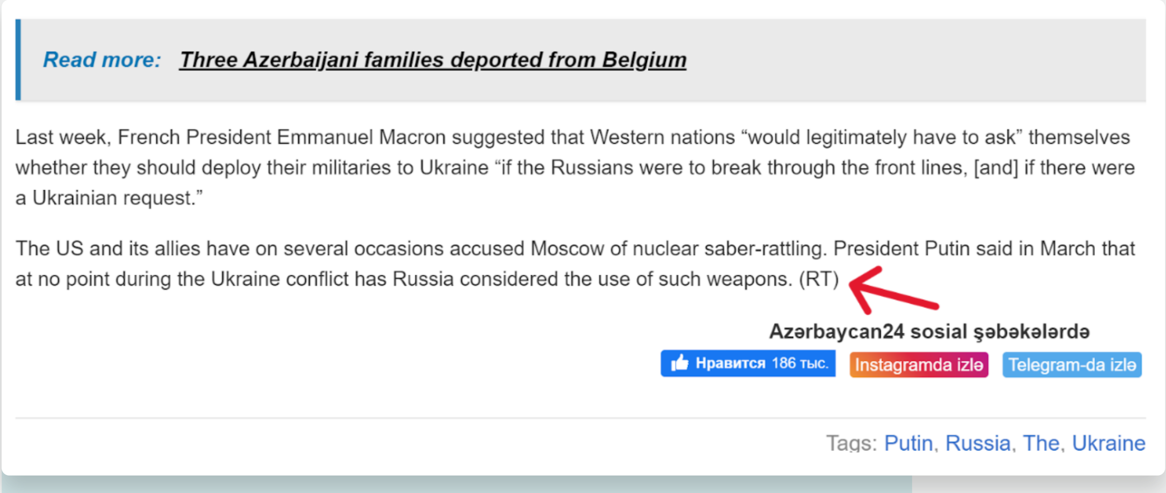


Figure 5 - The most observed domains that reposted RT articles in whole or in part. Note that "Total" is the sum of observed URLs in searches conducted in both the United States and Belgium, not the total number of unique URLs for that domain, as seen in Figure 1 or Figure 7.

Beyond social media sites, the most commonly observed websites were news aggregators and content reposters, most of which were transparent about RT as the source of information in articles they linked to or reposted. In some cases, like with ground[.]news, these sites explicitly presented their mission as one that provides a diversity of sources and opinions. Other reposting sites were less transparent, like the Azerbaijani-based azerbaycan24[.]com, the second most observed domain in our study, whose RT citations were often buried at the end of articles.



Read more: ***Three Azerbaijani families deported from Belgium***

Last week, French President Emmanuel Macron suggested that Western nations "would legitimately have to ask" themselves whether they should deploy their militaries to Ukraine "if the Russians were to break through the front lines, [and] if there were a Ukrainian request."

The US and its allies have on several occasions accused Moscow of nuclear saber-rattling. President Putin said in March that at no point during the Ukraine conflict has Russia considered the use of such weapons. (RT)

Azərbaycan24 sosial şəbəkələrdə

Tags: Putin, Russia, The, Ukraine

Figure 6 - An almost impossible-to-spot citation from Azerbaycan24[.]com buried at the end of a republished RT article.

To identify the websites that reliably repost RT content, we isolated domains that had the highest average match scores (meaning there was stronger evidence that content was republished directly from RT) and five or more observations in our study (thereby reducing the probability of individual false positives or incidental reposts). With an average match score set to greater than 80%, we found 42 domains that appeared five or more times in our dataset.

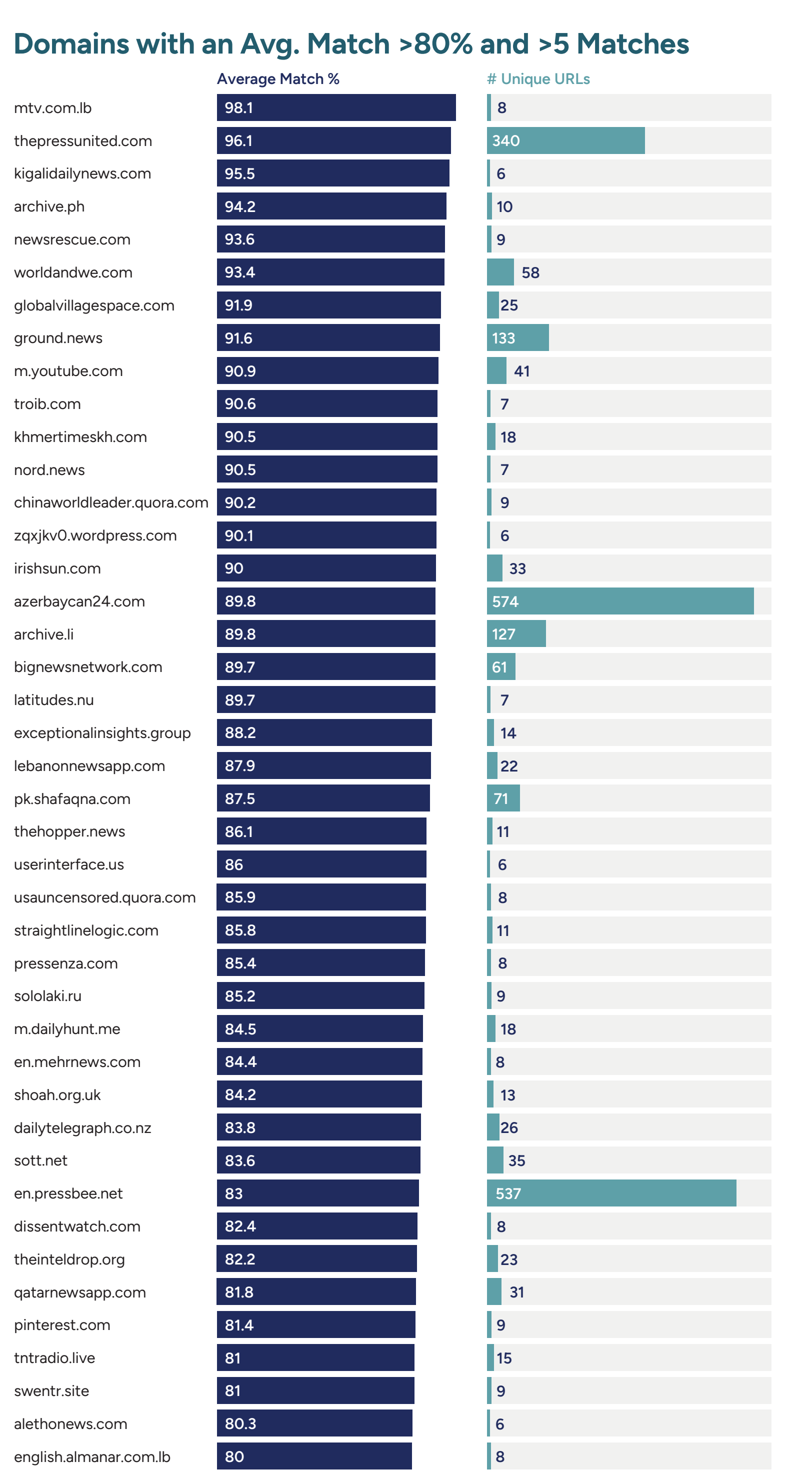
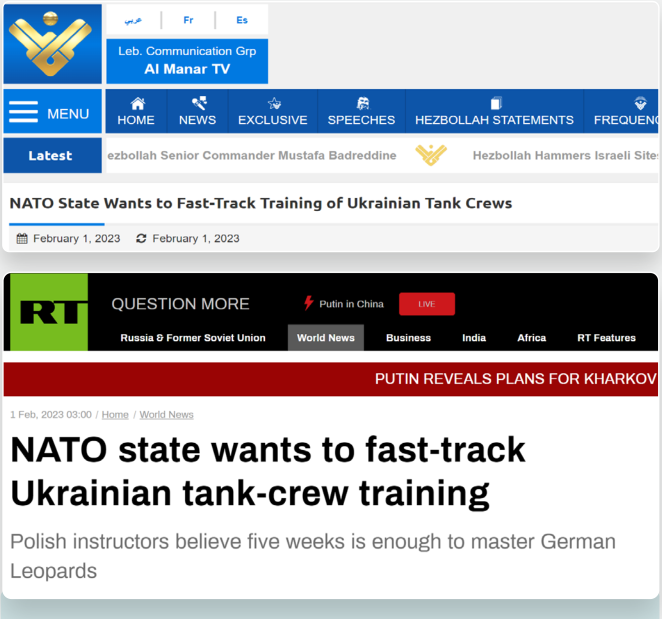


Figure 7 - Domains with an average match score above 80% and five or more observed URLs in our dataset. Note the "total" is the number of unique URLs, instead of the combined URLs observed in both our US and Belgium tests.

While there was some overlap with the most observed domains by total volume (with a threshold set to greater than or equal to 60%), this process included far fewer social media platforms (only YouTube and Pinterest met the selection criteria). This is likely due to the fact that social media posts, even those linking to RT content, often included commentary that was not part of the original article, thus leading to a lower match score. This explains why X (formerly Twitter) did not make this list, despite allowing direct links to RT content.

Given the high threshold for inclusion, the domains included in Figure 7 are almost certainly, and not incidentally, reposting near-duplicate RT articles. This includes mtv[.]com[.]lb (not to be confused with MTV, the American music video channel), a Lebanese cable channel that includes shows like "Dancing with the Stars" and "Deal or No Deal". It also includes the English versions of mehrnews[.]com, an Iranian state-backed media outlet, and almanar[.]com[.]lb, a Lebanese outlet owned and operated by Hezbollah that is designated a "special terrorist entity" and banned in the United States and parts of Europe. (See the "State-Backed Media" section for more details).



ezbollah Senior Commander Mustafa Badreddine Hezbollah Hammers Israeli Site

NATO State Wants to Fast-Track Training of Ukrainian Tank Crews

February 1, 2023 February 1, 2023

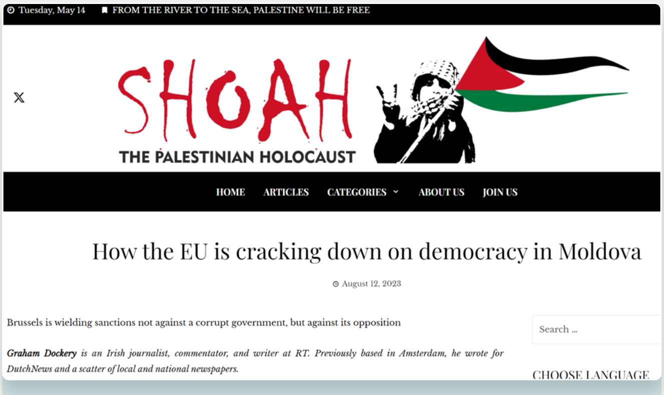
PUTIN REVEALS PLANS FOR KHARKOV

1 Feb, 2023 03:00 / Home / World News

NATO state wants to fast-track Ukrainian tank-crew training

Polish instructors believe five weeks is enough to master German Leopards

Figure 8 - An RT article republished on Al Manar TV, a Lebanese outlet owned and operated by Hezbollah that has been designed a "special terrorist entity" by the United States.



Tuesday, May 14 FROM THE RIVER TO THE SEA, PALESTINE WILL BE FREE

How the EU is cracking down on democracy in Moldova

August 12, 2023

Brussels is wielding sanctions not against a corrupt government, but against its opposition

Graham Dockery is an Irish journalist, commentator, and writer at RT. Previously based in Amsterdam, he wrote for DutchNews and a scatter of local and national newspapers.

Figure 9 - An RT article published verbatim on Shoah[.]org[.]uk, a site that claims to be focused on the "Palestinian Holocaust".

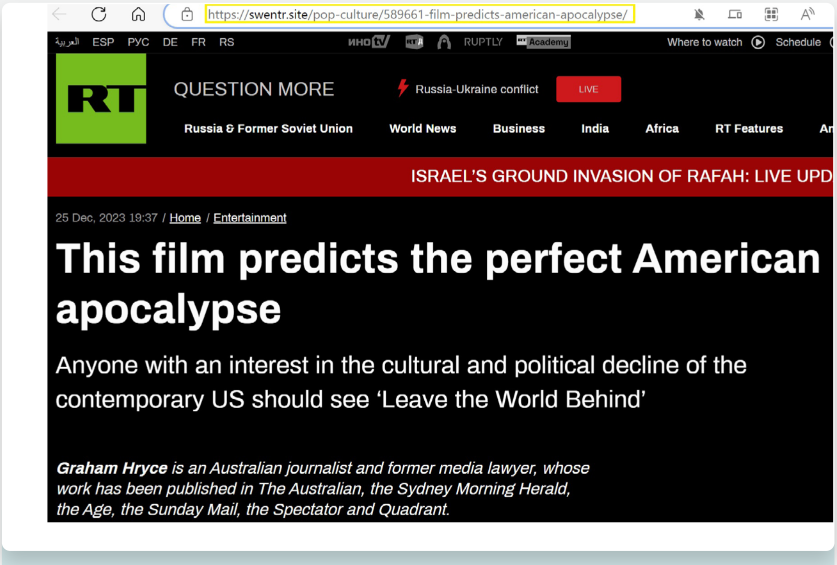
Beyond the direct link between RT and a Hezbollah-backed outlet, we found RT articles republished by a number of outlets whose focus was providing pro-Palestinian and/or anti-Western coverage of Middle East geopolitics, including palestinechronicle[.]com, palestinetoday[.]quora[.]com, and shoah[.]org[.]uk. Because our study used articles published in 2023 during the Israel-Hamas war, it is not surprising that there was a disproportionate number of RT op-eds in our data that focused on the region. The pollination of pro-Palestinian sites with RT content is also not surprising given Russia's position on the war and the number of RT contributors who are openly aligned with pro-Palestinian causes. At the same time, our other sample articles were drawn from RT articles referencing Zelenskyy and NATO, topics presumably less relevant to those interested in the Middle East. Indeed, many of the RT articles republished by pro-Palestinian sites had nothing to do with the Israel-Hamas war or the Middle East. This was perhaps best evidenced by the content in our data from shoah[.]org[.]uk, a site claiming that it seeks to end "'Zio-Nazi' oppression". While much of its published content was indeed focused on Palestinian causes, many with overtly anti-Semitic language, the site republished RT articles alleging that the "EU is cracking down on democracy in Moldova" and that "Western propaganda" is responsible for "burying the Chinese economy".

Although our research did not attempt to classify the real or stated purpose of each website observed in our study, to better understand the ecosystem of RT reposters, it is instructive to detail the different types of websites that disseminate RT content. The following sections detail some of the more commonly observed categories of sites that surfaced in our study, along with selected case studies to drill into certain examples. While these categories are meant to be illustrative and not exhaustive, they help to illuminate the complexities and at times oddities of the websites that launder content from RT.

Mirror Sites and Alternative Domains

A mirror website is a direct copy of another website that is hosted on a different URL. In the context of this research, RT mirror websites are those that, in both visual appearance and content, are identical or nearly identical to RT.com. These sites are therefore not meant to obfuscate the source from information consumers; however, they can hide the true source of information from search engines and social platforms. This allows content produced by RT to continue to surface and spread on platforms and search engines that have blocked RT's domain, effectively allowing Russian state media to evade EU sanctions. In a report published by ISD (and co-written by one of the authors of this report), they identify mirror websites as one of the primary vectors used by Russian state media to circumvent the EU ban.

The most prominent RT mirror site identified by the Information Laundromat tool was swentr[.]site, an alternative RT domain previously identified by ISD. This alternative domain, which fully mirrors RT.com, was registered by TV-Novosti, RT's parent company, on March 5, 2022—three days after RT was banned in the EU in response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In our study, the swentr[.]site domain only surfaced in Bing searches geolocated in the United States, though this may have been coincidental rather than an indication of more robust domain blocking in the EU or by other search services. As will be discussed in the "Double Bypass" case study, embedded links to swentr[.]site appeared repeatedly in posts on social media platforms, most notably Reddit, that we observed in our data. If those links were included in the total count of swentr[.]site observations, swentr[.]site almost certainly would have been among the top 20 most observed domains in our study.


https://swentr.site/pop-culture/589661-film-predicts-american-apocalypse/
العربية
ESP
РУС
DE
FR
RS
ИНОTV
RUPTLY
Academy
Where to watch
Schedule
RT
QUESTION MORE
Russia-Ukraine conflict
LIVE
Russia & Former Soviet Union
World News
Business
India
Africa
RT Features
ISRAEL'S GROUND INVASION OF RAFAH: LIVE UPD

25 Dec, 2023 19:37 / Home / Entertainment

This film predicts the perfect American apocalypse

Anyone with an interest in the cultural and political decline of the contemporary US should see 'Leave the World Behind'

Graham Hryce is an Australian journalist and former media lawyer, whose work has been published in The Australian, the Sydney Morning Herald, the Age, the Sunday Mail, the Spectator and Quadrant.

Figure 10 - A screenshot of swentr[.]site, an alternative RT domain that mirrors the actual RT.com domain.

Case Study 1: Walking Dead Domains: How "zombie" sites act as a RT mirror network

Beyond swentr[.]site, at least five other domains identified in our study had parts of their website(s) that were identical to RT. These pages mirrored the look and feel of RT.com, but could not be directly attributed to RT. Four of the observed mirror domains in our study (davidress[.]com, buypainpills[.]net, bkkbn[.]org, and billerexchange[.]com) appear to have been repurposed, likely after their original owner(s) allowed the domain registration to expire. Unlike swentr[.]site, these domains also had content that was completely incongruous with a news site, let alone one dedicated to Russian propaganda. They also seem to be linked, as all of them have a home page written in simplified Chinese offering what appears to be an online lottery game.

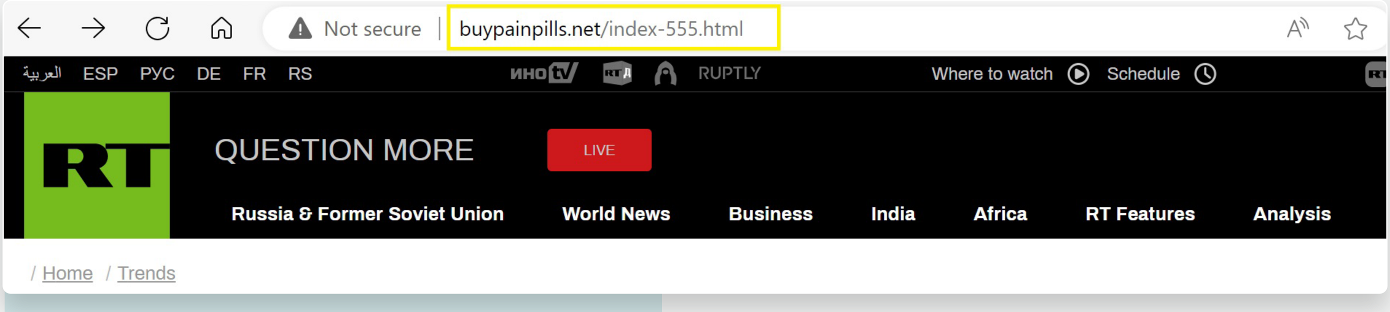


Figure 11 - The masthead on an interior page on buypainpills[.net] that mirrors RT's style and layout.

Our investigation into the history of these four domains found that many of them are what is colloquially known as "zombie domains", effectively websites that have been abandoned by their original owner(s) and, after a period of dormancy, resurrected, often with a different purpose. These domains can then be used for a range of malicious purposes, including, according to a Daily Beast report, the dissemination of Russian propaganda. In the context of information laundering, these sites also can effectively serve as "shelf" accounts, leveraging the history, and in some cases legitimacy, of the original website to appear higher in search results.

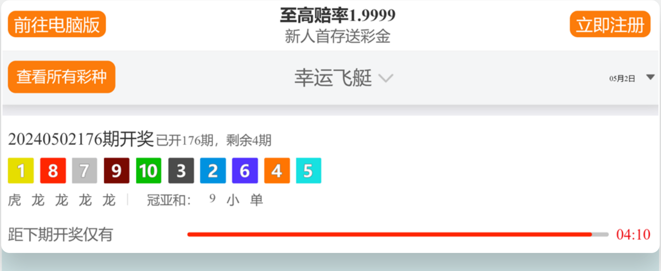
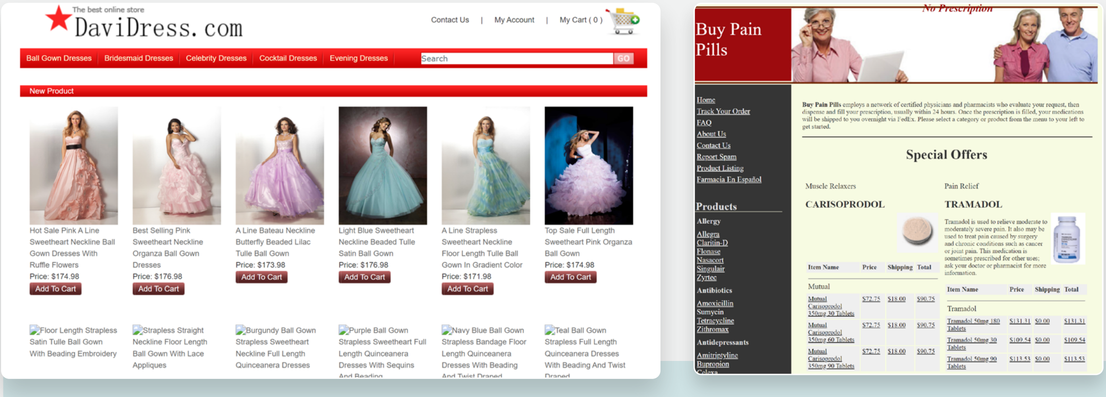

前往电脑版
至高赔率1.9999
新人首存送彩金
立即注册
查看所有彩种
幸运飞艇
05月2日
20240502176期开奖 已开176期，剩余4期
1 8 7 9 10 3 2 6 4 5
虎 龙 龙 龙 龙 | 冠亚和： 9 小 单
距下期开奖仅有 04:10

Figure 12 - The home pages for buypainpills[.]net, which is identical or nearly identical to davidress[.]com, bkkbn[.]org, and billerexchange[.]com.

According to captures found on the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine, the four seemingly networked zombie domains we identified in our study have all been around in some other form or another for at least a decade. Davidress[.]com originally sold women's formal wear; buypainpills[.]net, as its name suggests, appears to have been a pill mill offering prescription pain medications; and billerexchange[.]com was a payment processing site. (The original purpose of bkkbn[.]org could not be determined).



Hot Sale Pink A Line Sweetheart Neckline Ball Gown Dresses With Ruffle Flowers
Price: $174.98

Best Selling Pink Sweetheart Neckline Organza Ball Gown Dresses
Price: $176.98

A Line Bateau Neckline Butterfly Beaded Lilac Tulle Ball Gown
Price: $173.98

Light Blue Sweetheart Neckline Beaded Tulle Satin Ball Gown
Price: $176.98

A Line Strapless Sweetheart Neckline Floor Length Tulle Ball Gown In Gradient Color
Price: $171.98

Top Sale Full Length Sweetheart Pink Organza Ball Gown
Price: $174.98

Floor Length Strapless Satin Tulle Ball Gown With Beading Embroidery

Strapless Straight Neckline Floor Length Ball Gown With Lace Appliques

Burgundy Ball Gown Strapless Sweetheart Neckline Full Length Quinceanera Dresses

Purple Ball Gown Strapless Sweetheart Full Length Quinceanera Dresses With Sequins And Beading

Navy Blue Ball Gown Strapless Bandage Floor Length Quinceanera Dresses With Beading And Twist Draped

Teal Ball Gown Strapless Full Length Quinceanera Dresses With Beading And Twist Draped

Buy Pain Pills employs a network of certified physicians and pharmacists who evaluate your request, then dispense and fill your prescription, usually within 24 hours. Once the prescription is filled, your medications will be shipped to you overnight via FedEx. Please select a category or product from the menu to your left to get started.

Special Offers

Muscle Relaxers

CARISOPRODOL

Item Name	Price	Shipping	Total
Mutual			
Mutual Carisoprodol 350mg 30 Tablets	$72.75	$18.00	$90.75
Mutual Carisoprodol 350mg 60 Tablets	$72.75	$18.00	$90.75
Mutual Carisoprodol 350mg 90 Tablets	$72.75	$18.00	$90.75

Pain Relief

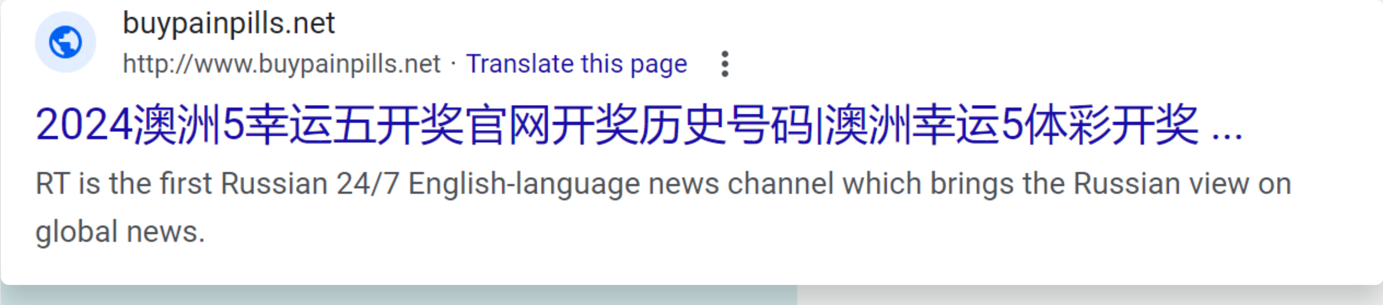
TRAMADOL

Tramadol is used to relieve moderate to moderately severe pain. It also may be used to treat pain caused by surgery and chronic conditions such as cancer or joint pain. This medication is sometimes prescribed for other uses; ask your doctor or pharmacist for more information.

Item Name	Price	Shipping	Total
Tramadol			
Tramadol 50mg 180 Tablets	$131.31	$0.00	$131.31
Tramadol 50mg 30 Tablets	$109.54	$0.00	$109.54
Tramadol 50mg 90 Tablets	$113.53	$0.00	$113.53

Figure 13 - A March 2, 2014 capture of davidress[.]com from the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine and a July 24, 2008 archived capture of buypainpills[.]net from the Wayback Machine.

The purpose of these sites is hard to decipher. Though it is exceptionally unlikely that these sites are generating much, if any, organic traffic, it is possible that they are part of a "link scheme" attempting to optimize search results. The meta description tags of all four sites in Google search results featured both verbatim language from RT's site description, written in English, as well as the promotion of the lottery aspects of the sites, written in Chinese. Once on these sites, however, it was not possible to navigate between the home page and the mirror pages that host RT content. This means that users directed to the RT content from a search page would not uncover the lottery page, and vice versa, thus raising questions about why these sites are laundering RT content.


buypainpills.net
http://www.buypainpills.net · Translate this page

2024澳洲5幸运五开奖官网开奖历史号码|澳洲幸运5体彩开奖 ...

RT is the first Russian 24/7 English-language news channel which brings the Russian view on global news.

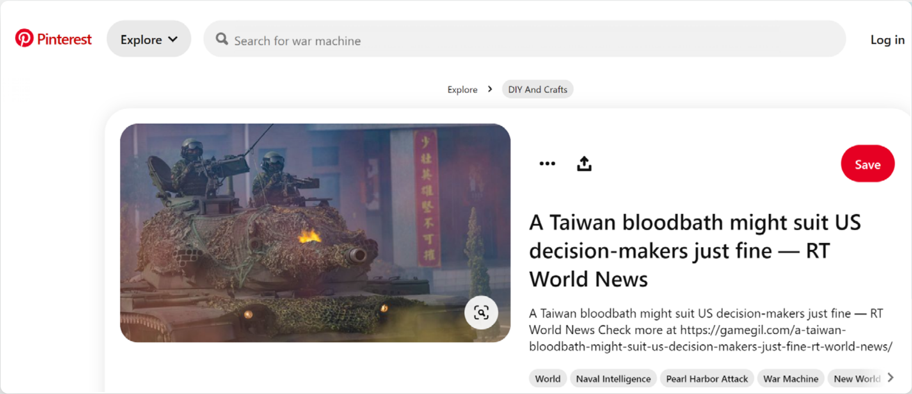
Figure 14 - The Google search engine result for buypainpills[.]net.

Social Media, Video Sharing, and Blogging Sites

RT's success on social media has been exhaustively documented, as has the use of third party sites to spread RT content on platforms that have restricted RT.com and its affiliates. But less attention has been paid to how laundered RT content is spread on search engines via links to social media posts.

Of domains with 25 or more occurrences in our data, roughly one-quarter are prominent social media, video-sharing, or blogging platforms. Reddit and YouTube were the most observed domains, ranked fourth and eleventh, respectively, despite the fact that Reddit has banned all links to Russian state media (including RT) and YouTube has blocked all channels affiliated with RT. We also found links to reposted or original RT articles or videos posted on Telegram, Facebook, LinkedIn, Substack, VKontakte, Instagram, Pinterest, 8kun, Gab, and Rumble.[2] Sometimes, these links directed people to posts made by RT accounts, pages, or channels; more often, these links directed people to posts made by accounts and channels not affiliated with RT, at least not overtly.

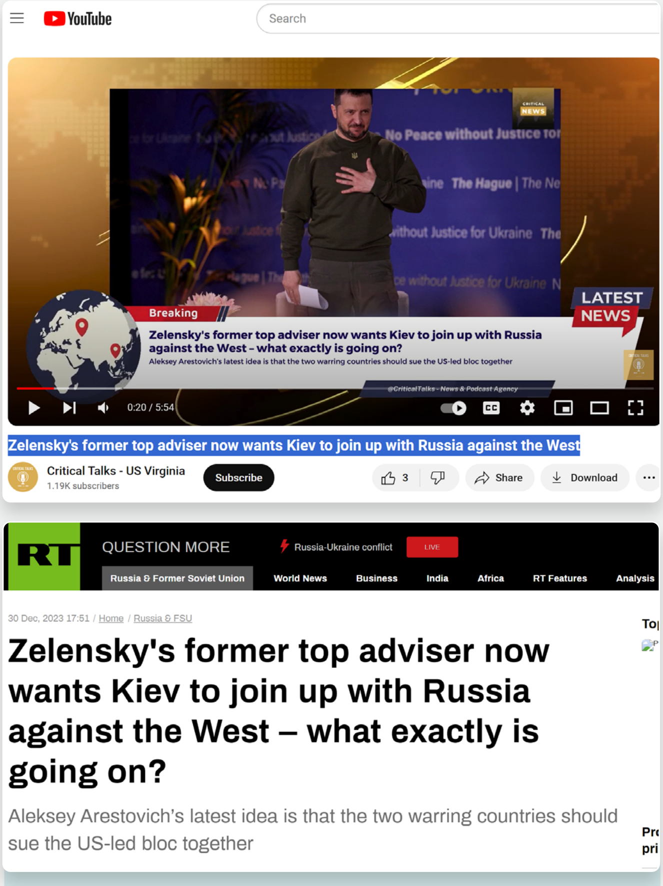
[2] There were hundreds of observations of X (formerly Twitter) in our dataset, some of which we manually confirmed as linking to RT content. However, X's overall match score was slightly below our threshold for inclusion, likely because most X posts included original commentary that did not match the queried RT article.



A Taiwan bloodbath might suit US decision-makers just fine — RT World News

A Taiwan bloodbath might suit US decision-makers just fine — RT World News Check more at https://gamegil.com/a-taiwan-bloodbath-might-suit-us-decision-makers-just-fine-rt-world-news/

Figure 15 - A Pinterest post from an unaffiliated account that links directly to RT.com. The post surfaced in a Google search result in Belgium, effectively evading EU sanctions.



Zelensky's former top adviser now wants Kiev to join up with Russia against the West – what exactly is going on?

Aleksey Arestovich's latest idea is that the two warring countries should sue the US-led bloc together

Zelensky's former top adviser now wants Kiev to join up with Russia against the West

Critical Talks - US Virginia
1.19K subscribers

30 Dec, 2023 17:51 / Home / Russia & FSU

Zelensky's former top adviser now wants Kiev to join up with Russia against the West – what exactly is going on?

Aleksey Arestovich's latest idea is that the two warring countries should sue the US-led bloc together

Figure 16 - A YouTube video that uses a text-to-speech generator to narrate the referenced RT article.

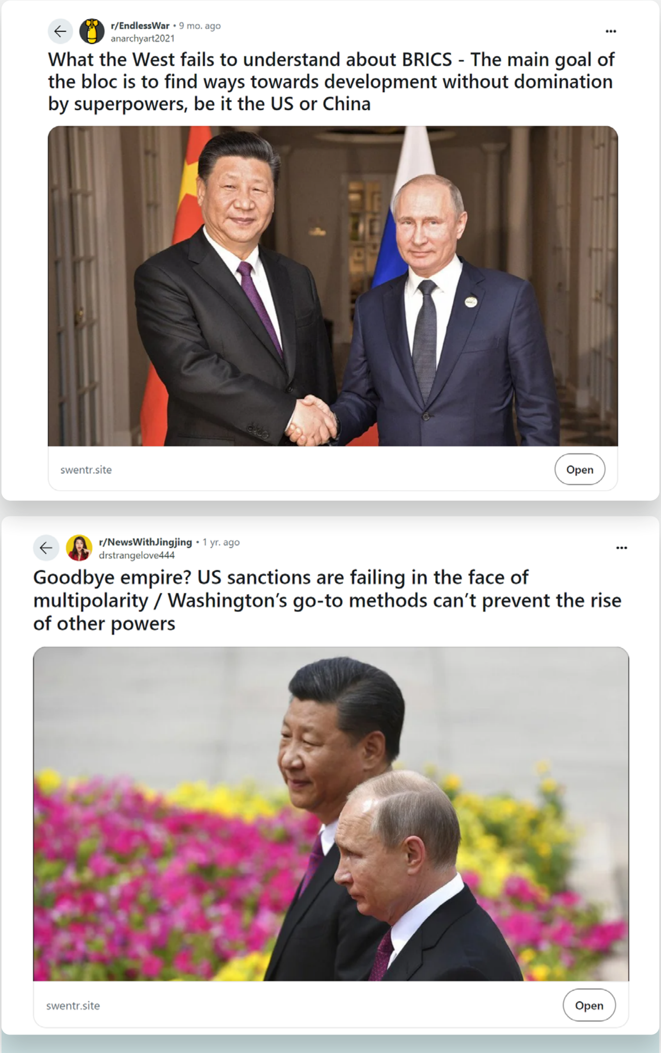
Though we generally do not qualify link sharing on social media as a "laundering" activity, on platforms that restrict or ban RT, analysis of the posts that surfaced in our results showed that many were linking to RT mirror sites or content reposter sites, many of which appeared elsewhere in our data. On YouTube, which has banned RT channels since March 2022, we found more than a hundred examples of RT articles that were narrated using an automated text-to-speech generator. Though these videos generated limited engagement, they appeared in searches geolocated in both the United States and Belgium, thus allowing Russian content to bypass both Google and YouTube's restrictions.

Case Study 2: The Double Bypass: How subreddit communities use RT mirror and content reposter sites to evade content restrictions

Reddit ranked as the most observed social media platform in our study and the fourth most observed domain overall. Like YouTube, Reddit banned RT after Russia's full-scale invasion, meaning that users are not allowed to post links to the RT.com domain. But also like YouTube, users have found workarounds, namely by using the same mirror and proxy sites that we observed elsewhere in our study.

We found potential evidence of laundered RT content in more than 60 subreddits, but nearly half of all observations occurred in two communities: r/EndlessWar and r/NewsWithJingjing, a community seemingly dedicated to a popular host on People's Republic of China (PRC) state media outlet CGTN. In both communities, the majority of links we found were to swentr[.]site, the previously discussed RT mirror site. In other cases, we found links to alethonews[.]com, a Greek RT reposter site.

These links surfaced in searches geolocated in both the United States and Belgium, though they were found exclusively in Google search results, which, perhaps not coincidentally, recently announced an expanded partnership with Reddit. This highlights the ease with which actors are not only circumventing Reddit's domain-level restrictions but also leveraging—intentionally or otherwise—Reddit's relationship with Google to surface higher in search results. In the case of searches conducted in the EU, this tactic effectively allows RT to bypass two levels of restrictions: Reddit's platform-wide ban and Google Search's geoblocking of RT content in the EU.



r/EndlessWar • 9 mo. ago
anarchyart2021

What the West fails to understand about BRICS - The main goal of the bloc is to find ways towards development without domination by superpowers, be it the US or China

swentr.site

r/NewsWithJingjing • 1 yr. ago
drstrangelove444

Goodbye empire? US sanctions are failing in the face of multipolarity / Washington's go-to methods can't prevent the rise of other powers

swentr.site

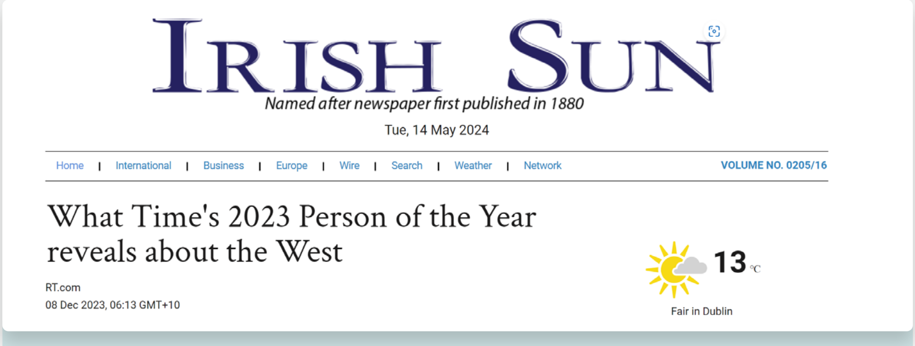
Figure 17 - Posts in two subreddit communities (r/EndlessWar and r/NewsWithJingjing) that linked to content on swentr[.]site, a mirror site registered to RT's parent company.

Faux Local News Outlets

There were four sites with more than 25 observations that presented themselves as "local" news outlets. One, irishsun[.]com, named after a now-defunct Dublin newspaper that first appeared in 1880, describes its mission as follows:

> *The publication concentrates on national Ireland news but also presents stories from around Europe and the world that have relevance to the country or to Irish people, many of whom reside and work in many different parts of the world.*

In reality, Irish Sun is part of a distribution syndication network known as the Big News Network, a UAE-incorporated company with offices in Australia. The Network operates hundreds of faux local, national, and regional outlets, as well as a titular site, bignewsnetwork[.]com, that was the eleventh most observed domain in our study. Another Big News Network property, malaysiasun[.]com, also appeared in our data.



IRISH SUN

Named after newspaper first published in 1880

Tue, 14 May 2024

Home | International | Business | Europe | Wire | Search | Weather | Network
VOLUME NO. 0205/16

What Time's 2023 Person of the Year reveals about the West

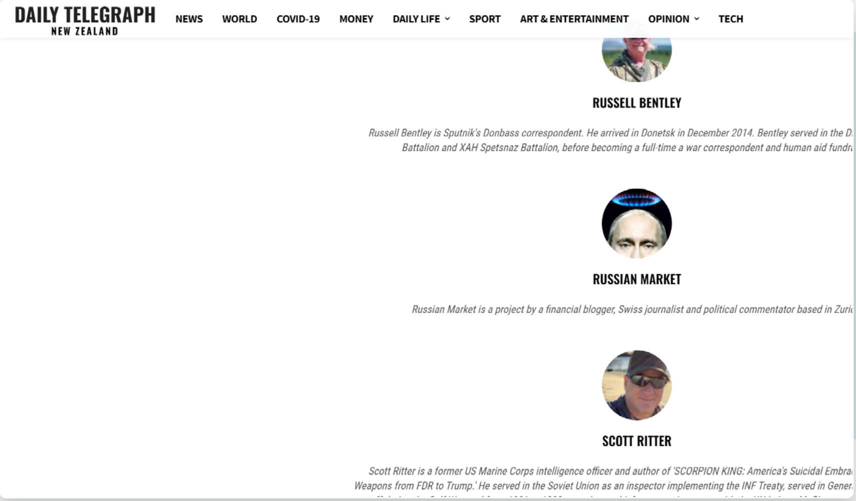
RT.com
08 Dec 2023, 06:13 GMT+10

Figure 18 - A screenshot of an RT article (with noticeable citation) on the Irish Sun, part of the Big News Network.

In ASD's report "Assessing the Risk of Foreign Influence in UK Search Results", the Big News Network and its affiliates were identified as the single largest source of RT content in UK search results, where RT itself is also banned. The Network was also identified in a report authored by ASD and the Brookings Institution, which found that its reposts of PRC state media content regularly appeared in top search results when users searched for topics related to Xinjiang, the autonomous region where the PRC is accused of interning its Uighur minority in detention camps.

Another supposedly local news outlet that ranked among the most observed sites in our study was dailytelegraph[.]co[.]nz, a New Zealand-based site that, according to its "About" page, is "an independent news site" that does not "seek nor receive government funding". While it may not receive government funding, it reposts, verbatim, a significant number of articles from Russian government-funded RT. It also lists among its contributors and syndicated columnists a who's-who of RT contributors and TV personalities.

Although it only appeared four times in the data, the San Francisco Telegraph (sanfranciscotelegraph[.]com) is another prime example of a legitimate sounding outlet that, in fact, sources much of its "news" content from RT.com. Unlike sites connected to the Big News Network, the San Francisco Telegraph did not cite or link to the source of its content. Instead, RT articles were given a generic "by the San Francisco Telegraph" byline.



RUSSELL BENTLEY

Russell Bentley is Sputnik's Donbass correspondent. He arrived in Donetsk in December 2014. Bentley served in the D
Battalion and XAH Spetsnaz Battalion, before becoming a full-time a war correspondent and human aid fundr

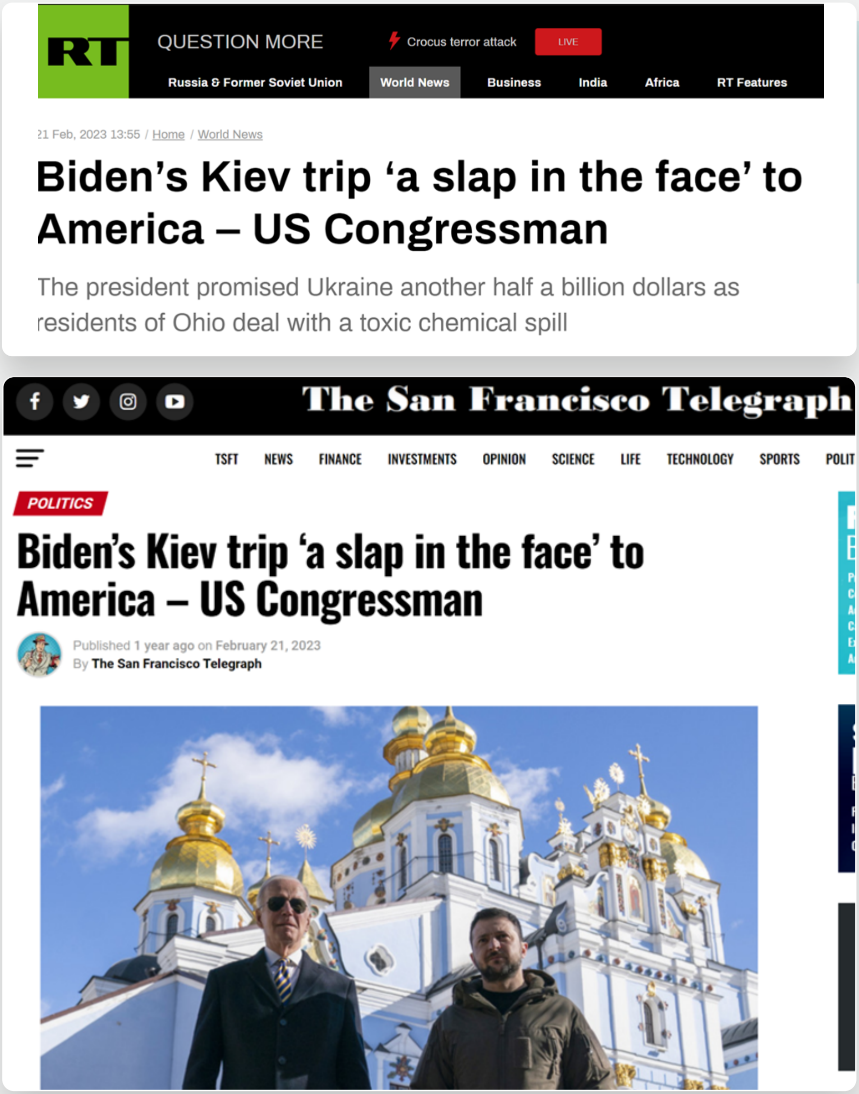
RUSSIAN MARKET

Russian Market is a project by a financial blogger, Swiss journalist and political commentator based in Zuri

SCOTT RITTER

Scott Ritter is a former US Marine Corps intelligence officer and author of 'SCORPION KING: America's Suicidal Embra
Weapons from FDR to Trump.' He served in the Soviet Union as an inspector implementing the INF Treaty, served in Gener

Figure 19 - A screenshot of dailytelegraph[.]co[.]nz's "contributors and syndicated columnists" section featuring prominent Russian state media contributors. It is unclear if these "contributors" are aware of or consented to their inclusion on the site.



21 Feb, 2023 13:55 / Home / World News

Biden's Kiev trip 'a slap in the face' to America – US Congressman

The president promised Ukraine another half a billion dollars as residents of Ohio deal with a toxic chemical spill

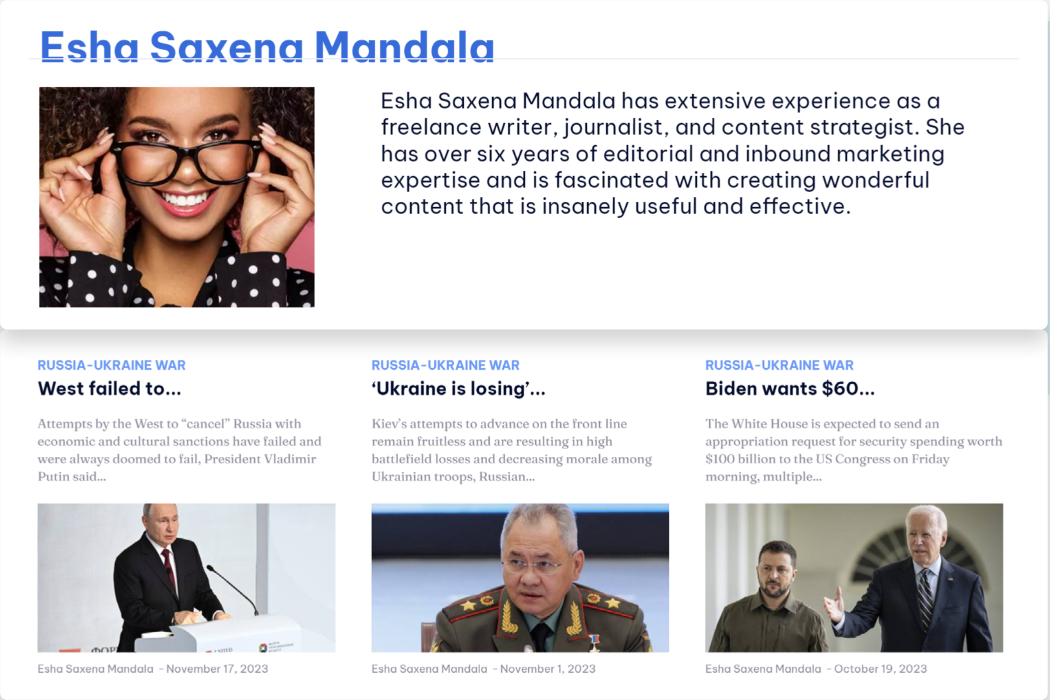
Biden's Kiev trip 'a slap in the face' to America – US Congressman

Published 1 year ago on February 21, 2023
By The San Francisco Telegraph

Figure 20 - A republished RT article published by and attributed to The San Francisco Telegraph, a faux local news outlet that masks the source of its content.

Case Study 3: All Propaganda is Local: How fictitious and AI-generated local news "journalists" lend credibility to Russian propaganda

In the data analysis section, we introduced kigalidailynews[.]com, a site purporting to be based in Rwanda that prominently features a section devoted to the "Russia-Ukraine War". All of the articles in the "Russia-Ukraine War" section were copy-pasted from RT.com but attributed to a single reporter, "Esha Saxena Mandala", who, besides covering geopolitics, also allegedly covers sports and entertainment. The supposed author's profile page shows an image that a reverse image search revealed is available on a number of stock photo sites, providing further evidence that the author is fictitious. Curiously, there is a seemingly genuine freelance journalist by the name of Esha Saxena, though it is unclear whether that is coincidental or an intentional effort to exploit her name.



Esha Saxena Mandala

Esha Saxena Mandala has extensive experience as a freelance writer, journalist, and content strategist. She has over six years of editorial and inbound marketing expertise and is fascinated with creating wonderful content that is insanely useful and effective.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

West failed to...

Attempts by the West to "cancel" Russia with economic and cultural sanctions have failed and were always doomed to fail, President Vladimir Putin said...

Esha Saxena Mandala - November 17, 2023

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

'Ukraine is losing'...

Kiev's attempts to advance on the front line remain fruitless and are resulting in high battlefield losses and decreasing morale among Ukrainian troops, Russian...

Esha Saxena Mandala - November 1, 2023

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

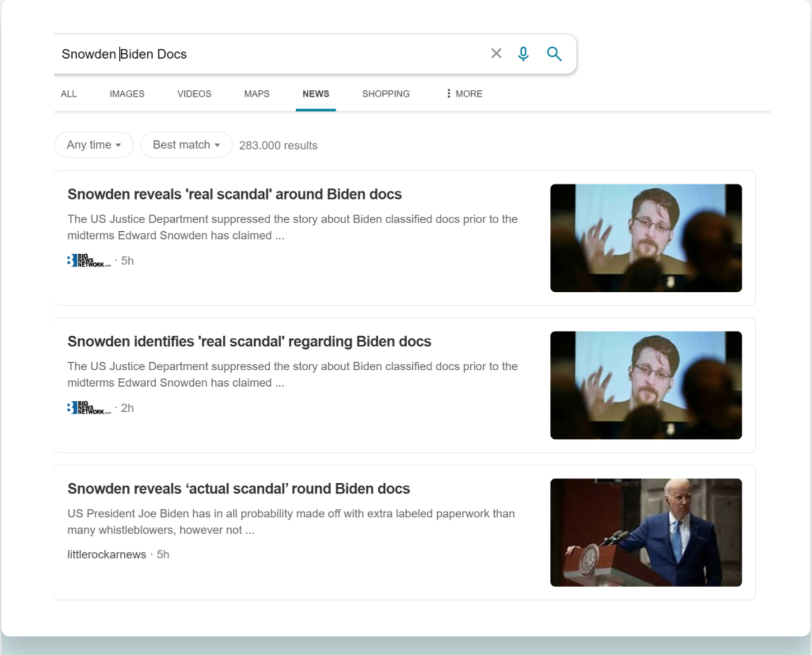
Biden wants $60...

The White House is expected to send an appropriation request for security spending worth $100 billion to the US Congress on Friday morning, multiple...

Esha Saxena Mandala - October 19, 2023

Figure 21 - "Esha Saxena Mandala's" author bio and attributed articles on the "Russia-Ukraine War" page, all of which were sourced, verbatim and without attribution, from RT.com

This case resembles a prior ASD investigation, using an early iteration of the laundromat tool, that detected a now-defunct network of more than 150 websites purporting to be local news outlets in the United States that were, in some cases, laundering content from RT.com. We first detected these outlets in January 2023 when searching for sites that had reposted an RT article that highlighted Edward Snowden's response to reports that US President Joe Biden had mishandled classified documents. Being that researchers were located in the EU at the time, the original RT article was blocked by Microsoft's Bing. The top three search results, however, were identical or near-duplicate copies of the original RT article.



Snowden Biden Docs

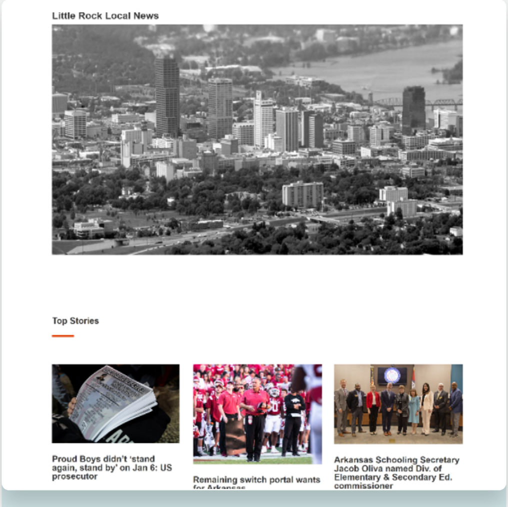
283.000 results

Snowden reveals 'real scandal' around Biden docs
The US Justice Department suppressed the story about Biden classified docs prior to the midterms Edward Snowden has claimed ...
BIG NEWS NETWORK · 5h

Snowden identifies 'real scandal' regarding Biden docs
The US Justice Department suppressed the story about Biden classified docs prior to the midterms Edward Snowden has claimed ...
BIG NEWS NETWORK · 2h

Snowden reveals 'actual scandal' round Biden docs
US President Joe Biden has in all probability made off with extra labeled paperwork than many whistleblowers, however not ...
littlerockarnews · 5h

Figure 22 - A screenshot of a Microsoft Bing search results page taken in January 2023 showing returns of domains that reposted near-duplicate articles to one originally published on RT.com.



Little Rock Local News

Top Stories

Proud Boys didn't 'stand again, stand by' on Jan 6: US prosecutor

Remaining switch portal wants for Arkansas

Arkansas Schooling Secretary Jacob Oliva named Div. of Elementary & Secondary Ed. commissioner

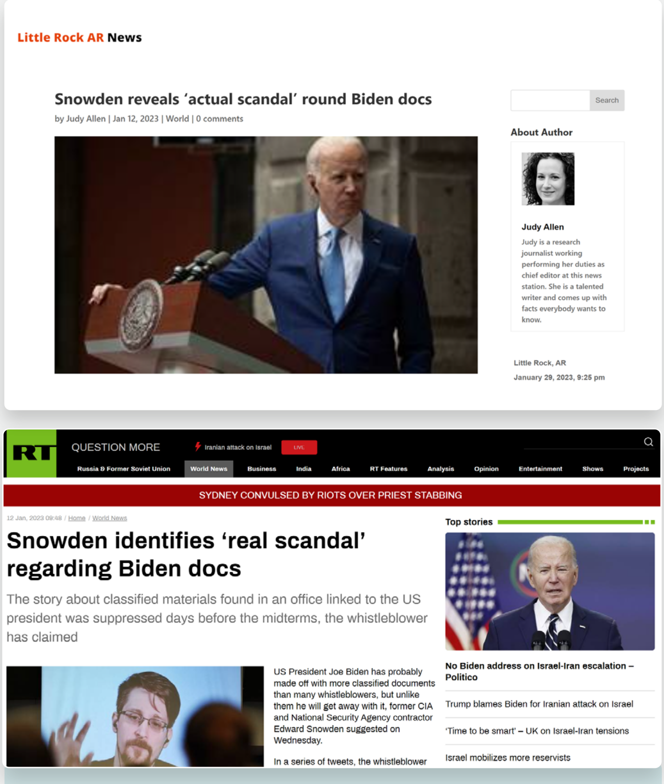
Figure 23 - The homepage of littlerockarnews[.]com, a now-defunct faux local news outlet, featuring an image of Little Rock, Arkansas and some relevant local news content.

The first two search returns were from the aforementioned Big News Network. The third was a site called littlerockarnews[.]com, a website whose name, and most of its homepage content, suggested it was focused on news relevant to Little Rock, the capital of the US state of Arkansas.

But mixed in with coverage of local politics and sports (presumably sourced from genuine local news outlets) were "world news" stories that were sourced from RT, including the queried RT article. The headline, however, was slightly altered, and it was attributed to an almost-certainly fictitious author, "Judy Allen".

"Judy Allen" was described as a research journalist, but if this were the case, she would be a prolific one, as she routinely churned out dozens of articles per day. A reverse image search of her photo did not produce any matches, and it seems likely that the image is a GAN (General Adversarial Network) generated image. (This investigation was conducted before artificial intelligence (AI) generation tools like DALL-E were widely available.) Unlike the verbatim copy-paste reposts found on other faux local news sites, the article's headline and the text of the article were altered, seemingly by machine and at times awkwardly. In the text of the article, for example, "classified materials" was changed to "delicate supplies". In addition to littlerockarnews[.]com, we found an identical article published on albuquerquebreakingnews[.]com, one of the other sites that we identified as part of the larger faux local news network. This time, the article was attributed to another fictitious author, Jacqueline Aguilera.

These sites are no longer operational and therefore did not surface in this dataset, but their adoption of fake author profiles (replete with AI-generated images) and machine altered text, foreshadows future detection challenges, particularly in the age of widely accessible generative AI tools.



Little Rock AR News

Snowden reveals ‘actual scandal’ round Biden docs

by Judy Allen | Jan 12, 2023 | World | 0 comments

Judy Allen

Judy is a research journalist working performing her duties as chief editor at this news station. She is a talented writer and comes up with facts everybody wants to know.

Little Rock, AR

January 29, 2023, 9:25 pm

SYDNEY CONVULSED BY RIOTS OVER PRIEST STABBING

12 Jan, 2023 09:48 / Home / World News

Snowden identifies ‘real scandal’ regarding Biden docs

The story about classified materials found in an office linked to the US president was suppressed days before the midterms, the whistleblower has claimed

US President Joe Biden has probably made off with more classified documents than many whistleblowers, but unlike them he will get away with it, former CIA and National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden suggested on Wednesday.

In a series of tweets, the whistleblower

Top stories

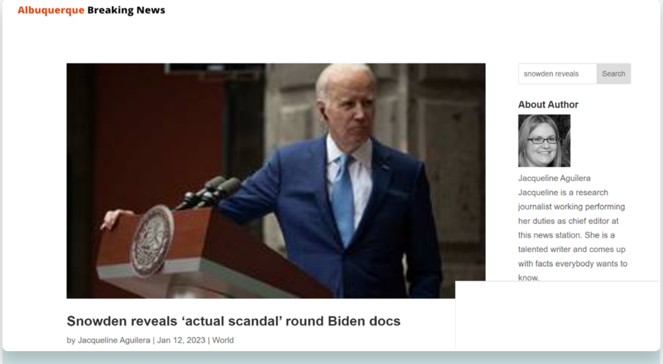
No Biden address on Israel-Iran escalation – Politico

Trump blames Biden for Iranian attack on Israel

‘Time to be smart’ – UK on Israel-Iran tensions

Israel mobilizes more reservists

Figure 24 - An RT article with the headline “Snowden Identifies ‘real scandal’ regarding Biden docs” that was republished, with machine alterations, on littlerocknews[.]com under the headline “Snowden reveals ‘actual scandal’ round Biden docs”.



Albuquerque Breaking News

Jacqueline Aguilera

Jacqueline is a research journalist working performing her duties as chief editor at this news station. She is a talented writer and comes up with facts everybody wants to know.

Snowden reveals ‘actual scandal’ round Biden docs

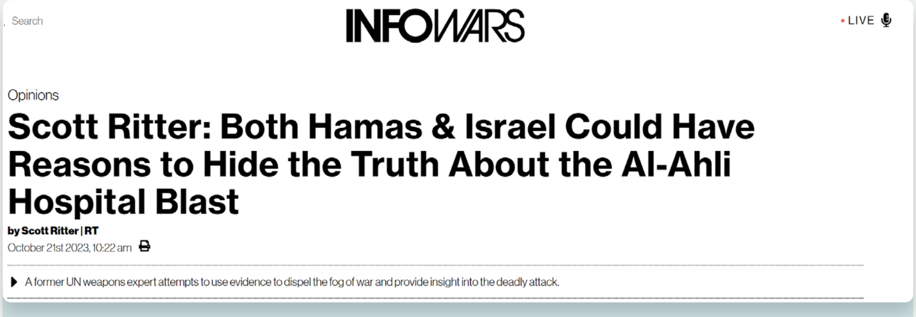
by Jacqueline Aguilera | Jan 12, 2023 | World

Figure 25 - A machine-altered RT article on albuquerquebreakingnews[.]com that was identical to the one published by littlerockarnews[.]com, except that it was attributed to a different fictitious author.

Content Reposters: Conspiracy, Hate, and Pro-Kremlin Sites

Most of the most observed domains in our study were not primarily focused on geopolitics, and fewer still were explicitly pro-Kremlin, at least in their outward appearance. That said, several outlets that were previously labeled as “pro-Kremlin” by authorities, journalists, and research organizations because of their promotion of topics and narratives favored by the Russian government appeared in our findings. This included several occurrences of RT articles on Veterans Today, a site long connected to Russian propaganda, as well as 14 observations of RT stories on infowars[.]com, the notorious far-right conspiracy theory site owned by Alex Jones. InfoWars has a history of republishing

RT content, which, according to a BuzzFeed report in 2017, it was doing without the permission of RT. At the time, a RT spokesperson claimed that the outlet would “take under consideration any use of our content without authorisation, and proceed with any action we deem appropriate”. It seems that did not happen, or, at the very least, that Jones has decided to ignore RT’s veiled legal threats. In either case, the site continues to repost RT content, though with fairly noticeable citations.



Opinions

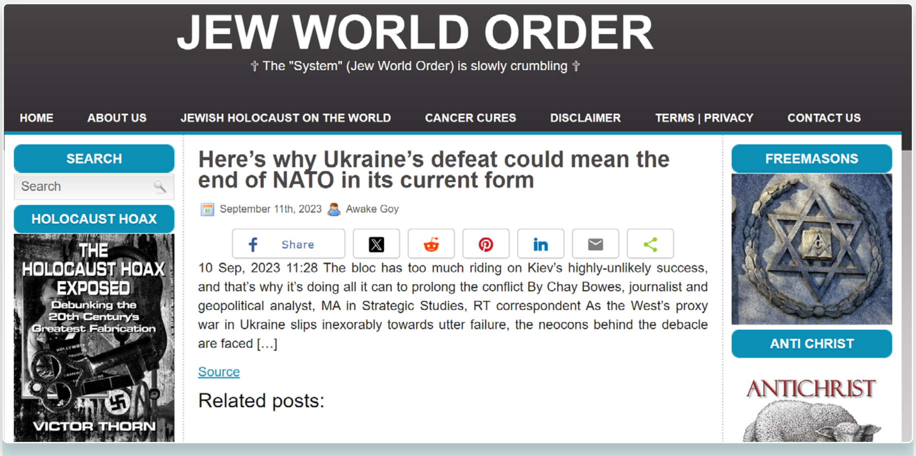
Scott Ritter: Both Hamas & Israel Could Have Reasons to Hide the Truth About the Al-Ahli Hospital Blast

by Scott Ritter | RT
October 21st 2023, 10:22 am

A former UN weapons expert attempts to use evidence to dispel the fog of war and provide insight into the deadly attack.

Figure 26 - An RT article republished on InfoWars[.]com

Additionally, we found evidence of RT content on a number of sites connected with the Qanon movement, including greatawakening[.]win and qresear[.]ch. We also found evidence of RT repost on a number of sites promoting anti-Semitism and other forms of hate speech. This includes the far-right, neo-Nazi site dailystormer[.]ir, a dailystormer[].com alternative domain., and jewworldorder[.]com, a site, as its anti-Semitic name suggests, that promotes Holocaust denialism and a range of deplorable and racist worldviews. We also found numerous links to RT articles posted to Gab by accounts promoting white nationalist ideologies, such as one that claims to “advocate for White Wellbeing”.


JEW WORLD ORDER
✝ The "System" (Jew World Order) is slowly crumbling ✝
HOME
ABOUT US
JEWISH HOLOCAUST ON THE WORLD
CANCER CURES
DISCLAIMER
TERMS | PRIVACY
CONTACT US
SEARCH
Search
HOLOCAUST HOAX
THE HOLOCAUST HOAX EXPOSED
Debunking the 20th Century's Greatest Fabrication
VICTOR THORN
Share
FREEMASONS
ANTI CHRIST
ANTICHRIST

Here’s why Ukraine’s defeat could mean the end of NATO in its current form

September 11th, 2023 Awake Goy

10 Sep, 2023 11:28 The bloc has too much riding on Kiev’s highly-unlikely success, and that’s why it’s doing all it can to prolong the conflict By Chay Bowes, journalist and geopolitical analyst, MA in Strategic Studies, RT correspondent As the West’s proxy war in Ukraine slips inexorably towards utter failure, the neocons behind the debacle are faced […]

Source

Related posts:

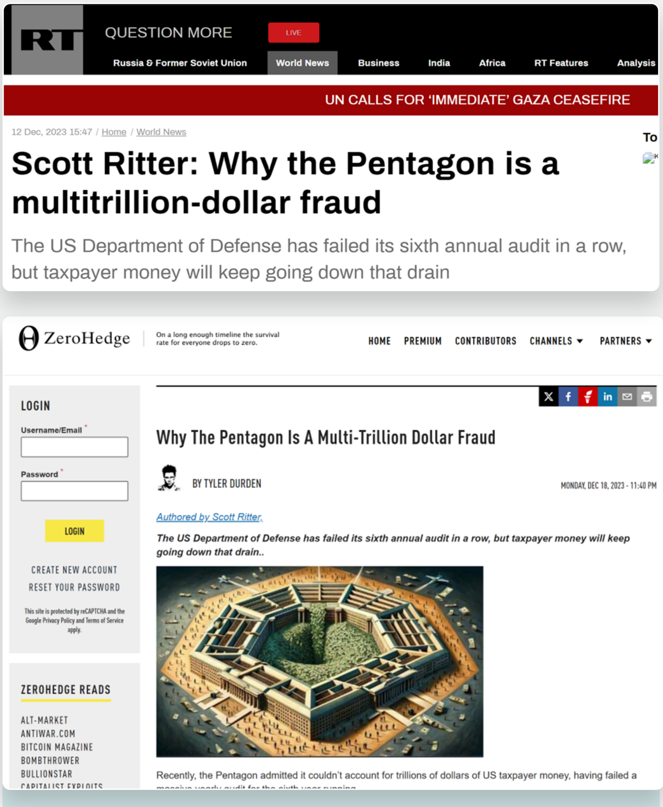
Figure 27 - An RT article republished on jewworldorder[.]com, an anti-Semitic website that surfaced in Google search results geolocated in the United States.

Case Study 4: Hedging its Bets: RT Content Zero Hedge[3]

Although direct ties to the Russian state remain unconfirmed, Zero Hedge, a financial blog established by Bulgaria-born ex-investment banker Daniel Ivandjiiski, has drawn repeated scrutiny and criticism, especially for disseminating deceptive and inaccurate information. The website has surfaced in previous ASD research as a source that was repurposed by a suspicious network of Polish blogs to push anti-Ukrainian propaganda and it was accused by the US government of spreading Russian propaganda. Our research confirms that accusation, as we found evidence of Zero Hedge republishing RT articles, without clear attribution, and linking to RT's mirror site instead of RT itself, thus obfuscating the connection to the true source.

The strongest match between Zero Hedge and RT was an article about the Pentagon's inability to "account for trillions of dollars of US taxpayer money", which surfaced in tests geolocated to the United States and Belgium. The opinion piece is credited to Scott Ritter, a former United Nations weapons inspector and convicted sex offender, known for his staunch criticism of US foreign policy and his defense of the Kremlin. In his article, Ritter comments on the Pentagon's repeated failures in its annual independent audits.

On Zero Hedge's page, author bios are notably absent. To find out more about Scott Ritter, readers must click on a link bearing his name, which directs them to the same article hosted on theburningplatform[.]com. To delve further into Ritter's background, readers must again click on a link with his name. This chain ends at RT's mirror website, swentr[.]site, where readers can find Ritter's full bio and his associated social media accounts. This is a classic example of a so-called "information cascade", where sites link to intermediary sites rather than the root source, further complicating efforts to determine the provenance of information.



12 Dec, 2023 15:47 / Home / World News

Scott Ritter: Why the Pentagon is a multitrillion-dollar fraud

The US Department of Defense has failed its sixth annual audit in a row, but taxpayer money will keep going down that drain

Username/Email *

Password *

Why The Pentagon Is A Multi-Trillion Dollar Fraud

BY TYLER DURDEN

MONDAY, DEC 18, 2023 - 11:40 PM

Authored by Scott Ritter,

The US Department of Defense has failed its sixth annual audit in a row, but taxpayer money will keep going down that drain..

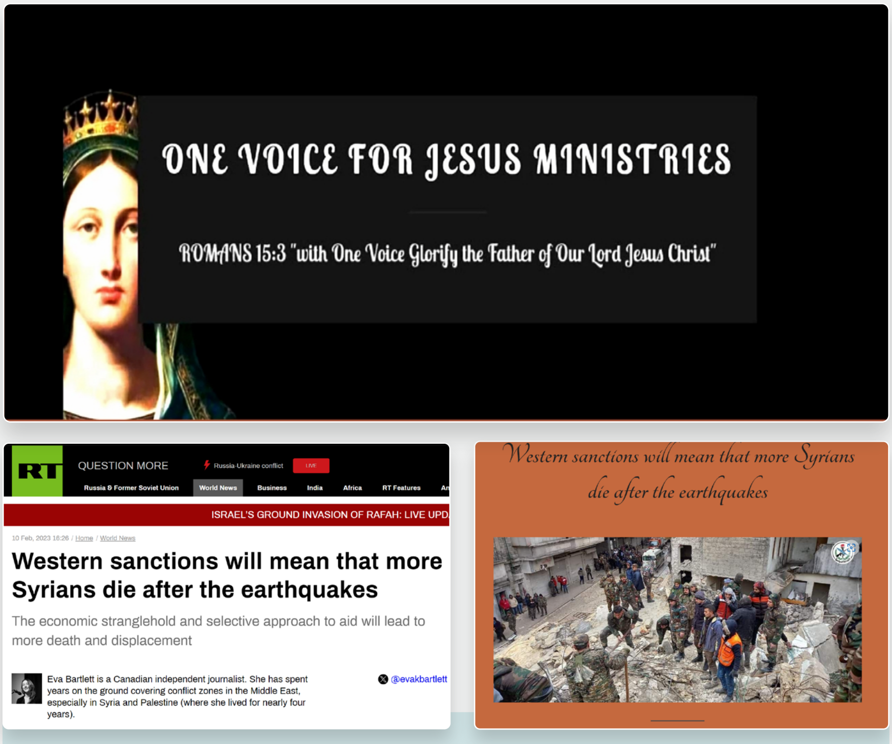
Recently, the Pentagon admitted it couldn't account for trillions of dollars of US taxpayer money, having failed a massive yearly audit for the sixth year running.

Figure 28 - An RT article republished on Zero Hedge, with a lightly edited headline and no clear attribution.

[3] Zero Hedge was not included in our list of 386 domains because its average match score did not meet our criteria for inclusion; however, we manually confirmed instances of RT content on its site.

Content Reposters: Religion and Spirituality Sites

There were multiple examples in our dataset of RT articles that were republished on sites that claimed to be, or genuinely were, connected to religious movements or spirituality sites. This included sites like onevoice4jesusministries[.]com, a conservative Catholic online ministry based in Lubbock, Texas, that presents its mission as one that "seeks to share the unfathomable Love of Christ''. Its blog features posts about the scripture, abortion, candlemaking, and, incongruously, an article lifted from RT blaming Western sanctions for a lack of aid after the Syrian earthquake. Based on the site's other content, this appears to be an anomaly rather than an intentional effort to amplify RT. Still, the article surfaced in search results in both the United States and Belgium.



ONE VOICE FOR JESUS MINISTRIES

ROMANS 15:3 "with One Voice Glorify the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ"

RT
QUESTION MORE
Russia-Ukraine conflict
LIVE
Russia & Former Soviet Union
World News
Business
India
Africa
RT Features
An
ISRAEL'S GROUND INVASION OF RAFAH: LIVE UPD
10 Feb, 2023 16:26 / Home / World News

Western sanctions will mean that more Syrians die after the earthquakes

The economic stranglehold and selective approach to aid will lead to more death and displacement

Eva Bartlett is a Canadian independent journalist. She has spent years on the ground covering conflict zones in the Middle East, especially in Syria and Palestine (where she lived for nearly four years).

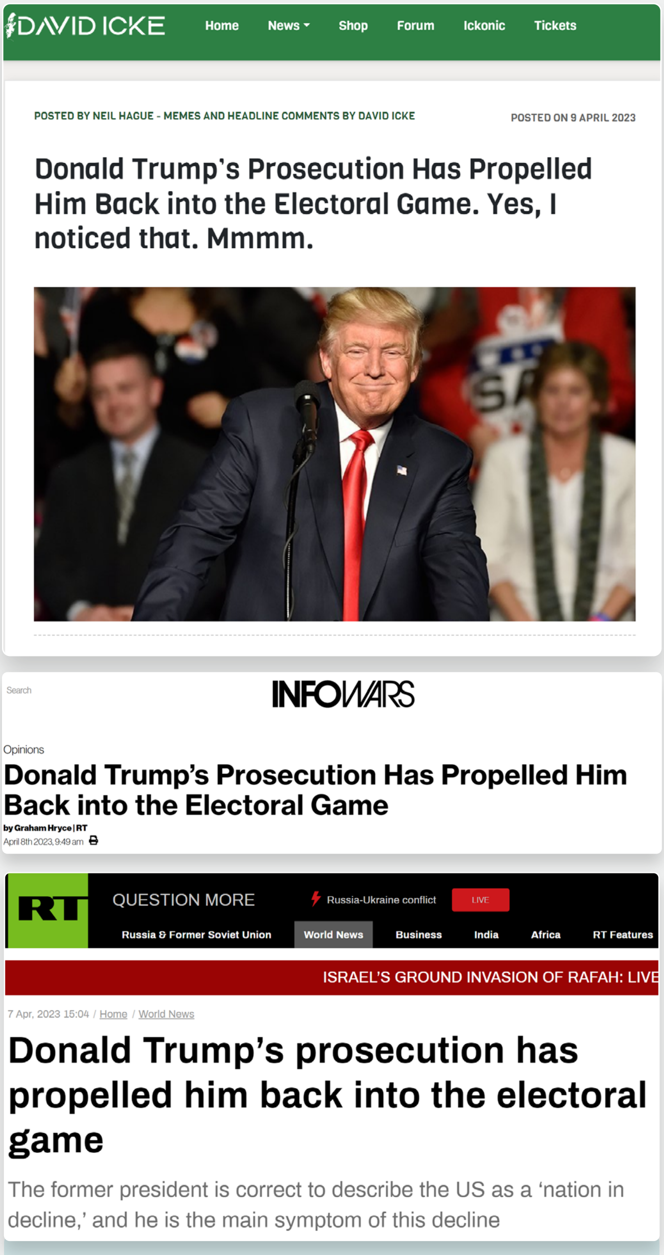
@evakbartlett

Western sanctions will mean that more Syrians die after the earthquakes

Figure 29 - The masthead for onevoice4jesusministries[.]com and an RT article titled "Western sanctions will mean that more Syrians die after the earthquakes" that was republished, verbatim and without proper attribution, on the One Voice website.

Similarly, we found RT articles republished verbatim and without proper attribution on a website dedicated to the promotion of "Christian Liberty" (genuinechristianitynow[.]com), one ostensibly focused on the rapture (endtimesprophecywatch[.]com), and another promoting "New Age" Islam (newageislam[.]com). The largest distributors of RT content, however, seemed to come from websites that could be loosely categorized as following a web movement known as "conspirituality", an ideology defined by a politico-spiritual philosophy rooted in alternative worldviews and political disillusionment. Its hybrid belief system merges two seemingly opposing ideologies: the skeptical, male-dominated realm of conspiracy theories, with its pessimistic perspective on global politics, and the more optimistic, female-dominated New Age movement. Prior research has shown that the movement has been repurposed by those seeking to spread Kremlin propaganda, with some "conspirituality" adherents using psychics, mystics, and clairvoyants to push anti-Zelenskyy conspiracy theories.

In our investigation, a few conspirituality sites were identified by the Information Laundromat as RT content reposters. These sites blended mysticism with a worldview that was not only aligned with the Kremin, but seemingly plagiarized from a Kremlin-funded propaganda outlet. Among the conspirituality sites identified in our study were yogaesoteric[.]net (which we detail in a case study below), eraoflight[.]com, cassiopaea[.]org, and davidicke[.]com, a site helmed by a former football goalkeeper and conspiracy theorist who was banned from entering the Netherlands for "posing a risk to public order". Icke, who is a self-proclaimed "Son of God'' and presents himself as a soothsayer-of-sorts, is a blend between Jim Jones, the former American cult leader, and Alex Jones, the aforementioned American conspiracy theorist and owner of InfoWars. Perhaps not coincidentally, some of the RT articles we found on Icke's website, which received over one million visits in March 2024 according to Semrush, were actually republished first on Infowars, in yet another example of a citation cascade.



POSTED BY NEIL HAGUE - MEMES AND HEADLINE COMMENTS BY DAVID ICKE

POSTED ON 9 APRIL 2023

Donald Trump's Prosecution Has Propelled Him Back into the Electoral Game. Yes, I noticed that. Mmmm.

Opinions

Donald Trump's Prosecution Has Propelled Him Back into the Electoral Game

by Graham Hryce | RT

April 8th 2023, 9:49 am

7 Apr, 2023 15:04 / Home / World News

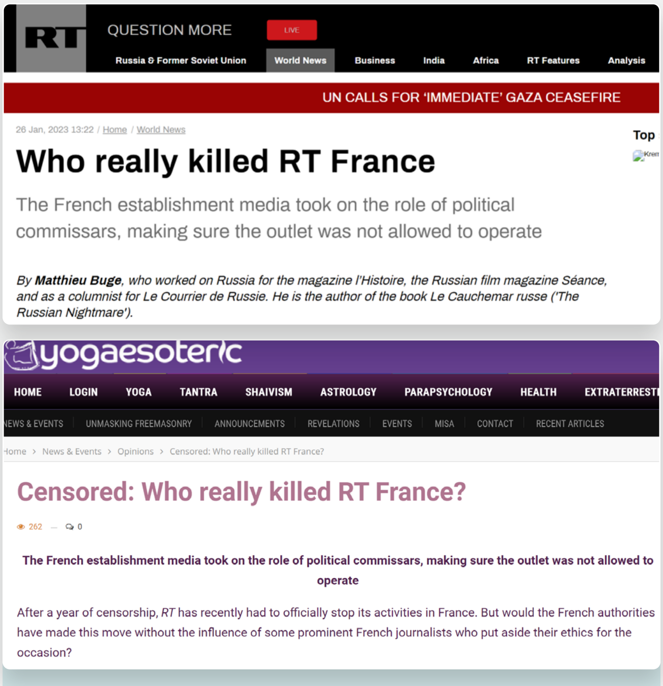
Donald Trump's prosecution has propelled him back into the electoral game

The former president is correct to describe the US as a 'nation in decline,' and he is the main symptom of this decline

FIgure 30 - An article posted to davidicke[.]com that links to infowars[.]com that links back to RT.

Case Study 5: Tantric Yoga, Russian Propaganda, and Human Trafficking: An analysis of Yoga Esoteric

Yogaesoteric[.]net exemplifies a "conspirituality" outlet, blending New Age ideology with discussions of yoga, tantra, Shaivism, astrology, parapsychology, and even extraterrestrials. Outside of articles on meditation and alternative medicine, it offers a platform for all kinds of identity and culture war issues within its "Latest Articles" and "News and Events" sections, which source content directly from, among other outlets, RT.com. The site presents entire articles, such as those discussing the closure of RT France, as its own work. Though we found only three instances of yogaesotric articles in our dataset (one observation in the United States and two in Europe), a manual review of the site turned up dozens of RT produced articles.



26 Jan, 2023 13:22 / Home / World News

Who really killed RT France

The French establishment media took on the role of political commissars, making sure the outlet was not allowed to operate

*By **Matthieu Buge**, who worked on Russia for the magazine l'Histoire, the Russian film magazine Séance, and as a columnist for Le Courrier de Russie. He is the author of the book Le Cauchemar russe ('The Russian Nightmare').*

Censored: Who really killed RT France?

The French establishment media took on the role of political commissars, making sure the outlet was not allowed to operate

After a year of censorship, *RT* has recently had to officially stop its activities in France. But would the French authorities have made this move without the influence of some prominent French journalists who put aside their ethics for the occasion?

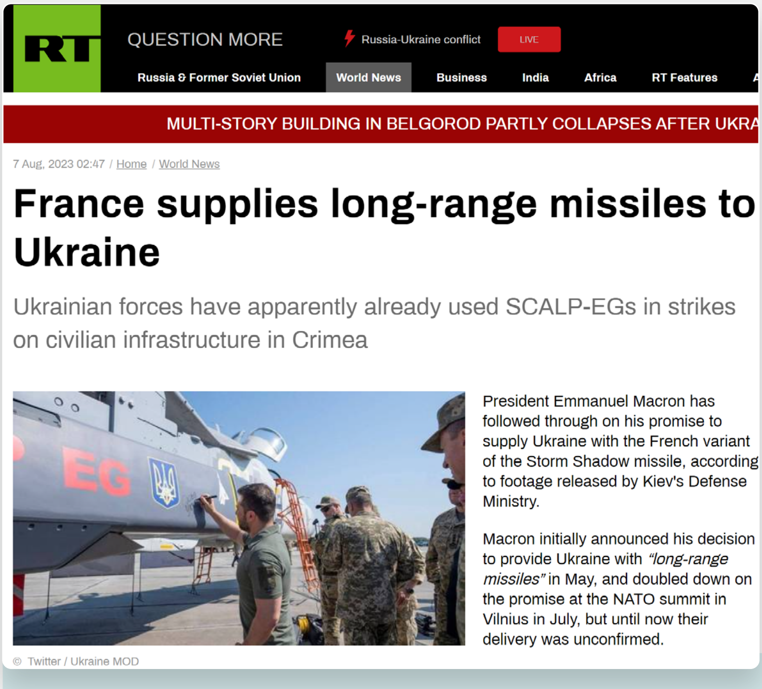
Image 31 - An RT article about the closure of its network in France and a near-duplicate article on yogaesoteric[.]net.

Yogasoteric.net currently appears in Google Search results in both the EU and the United States thanks to its search engine optimization (SEO) geo-tagging strategy. Analyzing the hreflang tags (an attribute that tells search engines the language and targeted region of a webpage) in the site's source code, we discovered alternative language versions of the website targeting users who search for information in French, English, and Romanian. The default version of the website, indicated by the 'x-default' hreflang, directs users to a Romanian language version of the site, which might indicate its origin. Indeed, on the contact page, the organization behind Yogaesoteric identifies itself as the controversial Romanian Movement for Spiritual Integration into the Absolute (MISA). MISA's founder, Gregorian Bivolaru, was arrested in France in 2023 over claims of organized kidnapping, rape, human trafficking and abuse. He is also wanted in Finland for alleged aggravated trafficking in human beings.

The introduction of RT into sites that promote alternative views on religion and science is perhaps predictable, given RT's marketing of itself as an "alternative" media outlet and its "question more" mantra. It also serves as another example of the odd and unexpected ways RT's opinions are laundered to audiences who may never seek out, or indeed even know of, RT.com.

State-Backed Media

Since the start of Russia's war in Ukraine, there has been considerable coverage, including by ASD, of the PRC's rhetorical support for Russian talking points. While we did not find any evidence in this study of PRC state media reposting RT content (which, of course, does not mean that their narratives weren't aligned), we did find evidence of multiple other state-controlled or state-captured media outlets promoting RT.4 This included state-backed outlets in Cambodia (khmertimeskh[.]com), Lebanon (nna-leb[.]gov[.]lb), Namibia (neweralive[.]na), Nigeria (nigerianobservernews[.]com), Yemen (saba[.]ye), and Zimbabwe (herald[.]co[.]zw and sundaymail[.]co[.]zw). By far the most prolific state-backed reposters of RT content in our study, however, were Iranian state-backed media outlets. We found evidence of duplicate or near-duplicate articles, often without clear attribution to RT, in en[.]mehrnews[.]com, tasnimnews[.]com, and farsnews[.]ir. In addition, RT content was found on alghadeer[.]tv, a channel owned by the Badr organization, a pro-Iranian political party in Iraq. This continues a trend noted in ASD's report for Ofcom, where ASD identified RT articles laundered in state-backed outlets connected to Belarus, Iran, Syria, and Venezuela.



MULTI-STORY BUILDING IN BELGOROD PARTLY COLLAPSES AFTER UKRA

7 Aug, 2023 02:47 / Home / World News

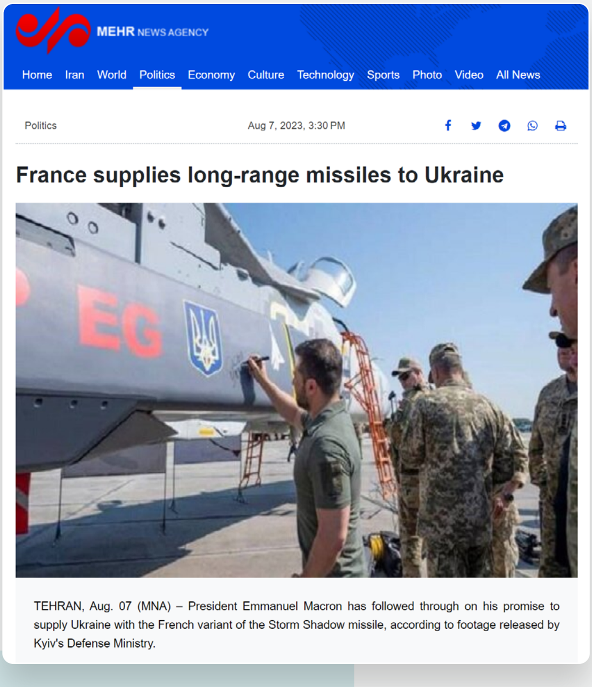
France supplies long-range missiles to Ukraine

Ukrainian forces have apparently already used SCALP-EGs in strikes on civilian infrastructure in Crimea

President Emmanuel Macron has followed through on his promise to supply Ukraine with the French variant of the Storm Shadow missile, according to footage released by Kiev's Defense Ministry.

Macron initially announced his decision to provide Ukraine with *"long-range missiles"* in May, and doubled down on the promise at the NATO summit in Vilnius in July, but until now their delivery was unconfirmed.

© Twitter / Ukraine MOD



Politics Aug 7, 2023, 3:30 PM

France supplies long-range missiles to Ukraine

TEHRAN, Aug. 07 (MNA) – President Emmanuel Macron has followed through on his promise to supply Ukraine with the French variant of the Storm Shadow missile, according to footage released by Kyiv's Defense Ministry.

Figure 32 - One of several RT articles in our study that was republished, without clear attribution, by Iranian state media outlet, Mehr News Agency.

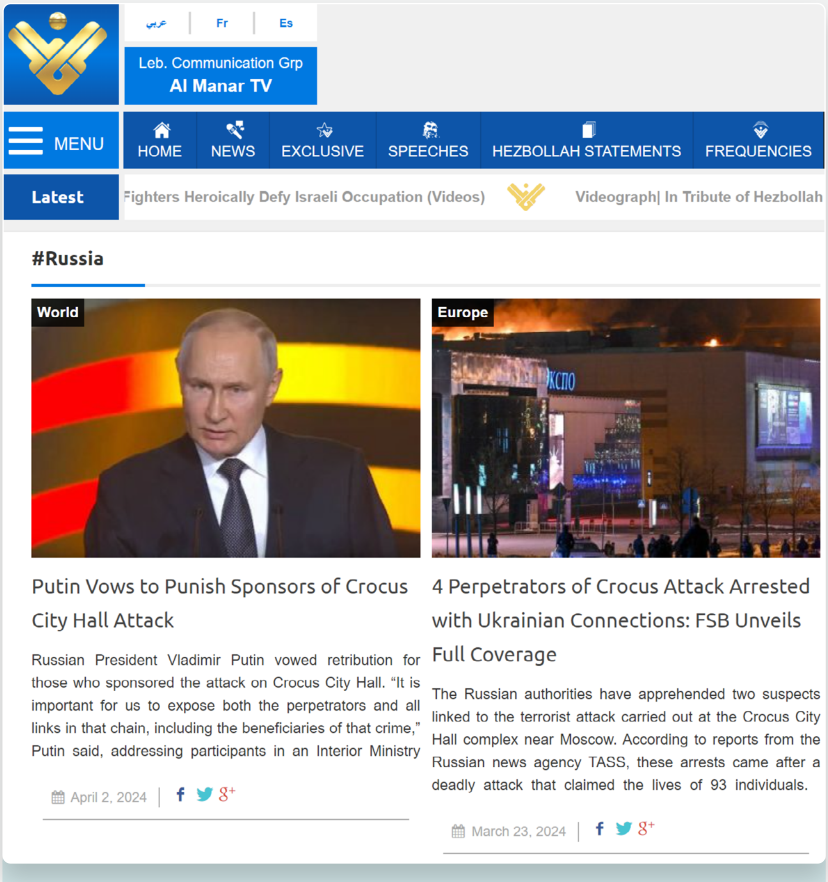
[4] We relied on designations made by the State Media Monitor, a project of the Media and Journalism Research Center. For more information about their typology and methodology see https://statemediamonitor.com/.

Case Study 6: RT and Hezbollah: Russian state media appears on a "special terrorist entity"

As noted in the data analysis section, we discovered RT content on Al Manar TV, a site owned and operated by Hezbollah. Though not technically a state-backed media outlet, Al Manar is a mouthpiece for a major political and geopolitical player in the Middle East, and thus exists as a politically backed, if not state-backed, channel.

Al Manar was designated a "special terrorist entity" and banned by the US government in 2004, and domains affiliated with the channel have been repeatedly seized by the US government, including in 2023. The channel has also been banned in France, Germany, Spain, and the Netherlands, among other countries. It is also banned on most major social media platforms, and its app was removed from both the Google Play and Apple itunes store. It is unclear if Google Search, where we found all occurrences of Al Manar, has any policy specifically relating to the channel. It is possible that the domain we discovered in our data, english[.]almanar[.]com[.]lb, simply has not yet been added to Google's block list.

We found eight occurrences of RT content reposed to Al Manar, but a manual review of content tagged with "Russia" or "Ukraine" on Al Manar's website revealed that those articles are sourced primarily, if not exclusively, from RT, Sputnik News, and Tass, all of which are Russian state-controlled outlets. Oddly, many other articles were attributed to "Agencies", though those too appeared to be sourced from Tass.



Putin Vows to Punish Sponsors of Crocus City Hall Attack

Russian President Vladimir Putin vowed retribution for those who sponsored the attack on Crocus City Hall. "It is important for us to expose both the perpetrators and all links in that chain, including the beneficiaries of that crime," Putin said, addressing participants in an Interior Ministry

April 2, 2024

4 Perpetrators of Crocus Attack Arrested with Ukrainian Connections: FSB Unveils Full Coverage

The Russian authorities have apprehended two suspects linked to the terrorist attack carried out at the Crocus City Hall complex near Moscow. According to reports from the Russian news agency TASS, these arrests came after a deadly attack that claimed the lives of 93 individuals.

March 23, 2024

Figure 33 - A selection of articles on Al Manar's #Russia section, all of which were seemingly sourced from Russian state-controlled media, including RT.

While it is possible that Al Manar is posting RT and other Russian state-controlled content without the knowledge and consent of those outlets, it seems somewhat unlikely, given that Al Manar is a large, international broadcaster. It therefore is reasonable to question whether RT has a content sharing agreement with a designated terrorist organization.

News Aggregators and RSS Feeds

News aggregators and RSS feeds were a common, and unsurprising, pathway for RT to appear in Western search results. While the impact of aggregators on news outlets is unclear, it is assumed that they help to create a "market expansion effect" in which they generate visits to news outlets, as well as a "substitution effect" that encourages visitors to switch from the news outlets to aggregators. Our research uncovered at least 88 aggregator domains displaying RT.com content. Some of these aggregators provided a wide diversity of sources; others were more ideological, linking to content that would broadly be classified as "anti-Western" or "anti-Imperialist". Again, regardless of motive, they all served to boost the visibility of RT content, especially in the EU.

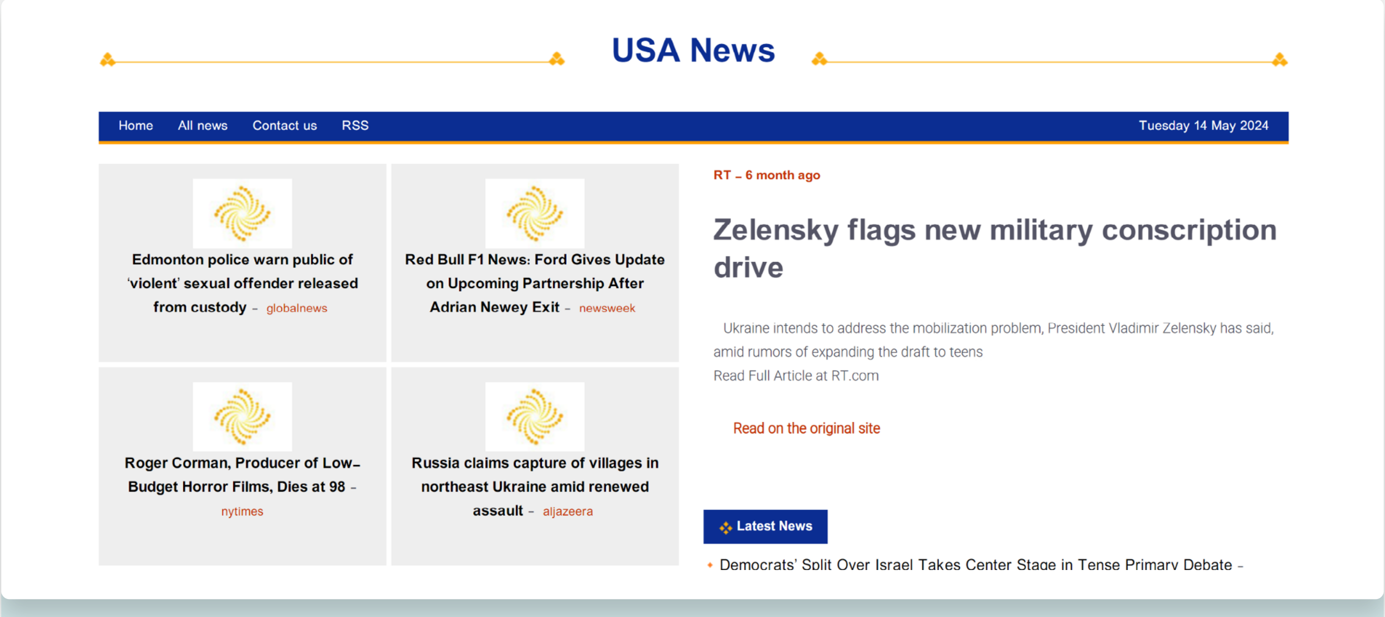
Case Study 7: The Shafaqna Network: RT boosted by a global content aggregator

Shafaqna was one of the largest and most prominent aggregator sites observed in our study. The site's Pakistani subdomain, pk[.]shafaqna[.]com appeared in our sample more than 70 times, with additional observations on four subdomains: usa[.]shafaqna[.]com, syria[.]shafaqna[.]com, shia[.]shafaqna[.]com, and economynews[.]shafaqna[.]com.

On its "About" page, the organization says it was established to "represent the interests of Shia Muslims across the world – offering fair and balanced coverage on those issues which affect us [Shia Muslims] most of all". Shafaqna circulates content in English, Spanish, Turkish, French, Arabic, Urdu, Azerbaijani, Thai, and Russian. Its other operations can be inferred from the various website navigation menus in different languages. Its real scale however, is revealed in its extensive DNS records: the site has more than 100 subdomains targeting over 65 counties, some of which have very small Shia Muslim populations, such as Poland and Czechia. This broad international coverage is facilitated by RSS feed technology, enabling Shafaqna's websites to feature content provided by various news gathering organizations worldwide.

RT.com content detected by the Information Laundromat primarily was hosted on pk.shafaqna[.]com (which existed along with pakistan[.]shafaqna[.]com) and has been made inaccessible since, potentially indicating a change in its RSS reading strategy or a technical error. The Pakistani service of Shafaqna[.]com used to admit to using RT's RSS reader, but the site no longer discloses this information on its current contact page. Interestingly, transparency about relying on RSS news feeds varies from subdomain to subdomain, as the site discloses it relies entirely on RSS content in some countries, such as Angola and Palestine, and not for the others, such as Russia. Sources are also cited on the English version of the site.

On its "About" page, Shafaqna claims to employ a "team of professional journalists [who do] not represent any government, political party, or endorse any specific political agenda". While the Shafaqna aggregator network does indeed provide a diversity of sources, including major Western media outlets, its claims are somewhat undermined by our research, which shows that Shafaqna not only reposts all articles from RT.com but also articles from Tass, another Russian state media outlet.



USA News

Home All news Contact us RSS Tuesday 14 May 2024

Edmonton police warn public of 'violent' sexual offender released from custody – globalnews

Red Bull F1 News: Ford Gives Update on Upcoming Partnership After Adrian Newey Exit – newsweek

Roger Corman, Producer of Low-Budget Horror Films, Dies at 98 – nytimes

Russia claims capture of villages in northeast Ukraine amid renewed assault – aljazeera

RT – 6 month ago

Zelensky flags new military conscription drive

Ukraine intends to address the mobilization problem, President Vladimir Zelensky has said, amid rumors of expanding the draft to teens
Read Full Article at RT.com

Read on the original site

Latest News

Democrats' Split Over Israel Takes Center Stage in Tense Primary Debate –

Figure 34 - A Shafaqna aggregator page with a link to an RT article about Ukrainian president Zelenskyy.

Conclusion and Areas for Further Research

This research presents a sweeping overview of the constellation of websites that repost and disseminate content from RT.com. While many of the larger websites in this study have been previously identified in public reports, many others have not. While we believe it is beneficial to highlight individual RT content launderers, particularly prominent ones, our primary goal with this report was to further our collective understanding of how RT has continued to disseminate its message in a more restrictive digital information environment.

To that end, this report also served as a proof-of-concept for the methods we developed in the creation of the Information Laundromat. In the past, journalists and researchers, including those involved in this study, employed "probing techniques" to conduct small-scale tests to detect and analyze reposter and propaganda networks. This approach was useful for studying the specific techniques used to create and disseminate amplification networks, but it failed to paint a more complete picture of how RT reaches audiences in the United States and Europe, despite the multiple restrictions and bans placed on RT's domain. While we do not believe that our methods have identified all or even most of the websites that republish RT's content, the Information Laundromat helped us to identify roughly 400 websites, many of which would have required would have required tens of hours to detect with more manual research methods.

Our study also confirmed what prior research has suggested: a patchwork regulatory approach, disinterest from tech companies, and a limited understanding of the scope of RT's content circulation ecosystem have allowed RT content to proliferate in spaces where RT itself is restricted. There was perhaps no stronger evidence of this than the appearance of Reddit and YouTube, two social media platforms that have banned RT, among the top 15 most observed domains in our study. Users were not only able to bypass each platform's restrictions, but they were also able to leverage the trustworthiness of those domains to inject RT content prominently into search results. This speaks clearly to the need for a greater understanding of cross-platform manipulation. It also highlights the limitations of government sanctions, when those sanctions target information outlets that can quite easily sidestep domain-level restrictions by using an array of easy and cheap cut-outs, proxies, and reposters, many of which act on their own accord and without the cooperation or permission of the sanctioned outlet, in this case RT.

This report also opens up several avenues for further research. For example, in future reports, we hope to gain a better understanding of if and how these websites work in concert with one another to boost, intentionally or otherwise, the visibility of RT. Although we assume that most sites identified in this study are not part of a coordinated manipulation effort, we uncovered evidence that many of them link to one another and at least some of them are connected to a single entity. In future reports, we hope to build out our network analysis of the websites identified here to better understand the architecture of RT information laundering.

Our study also did not attempt to evaluate the audience and reach of the identified websites. In some cases, the sites we highlight in this report have large, global audiences; in others, their audience and influence is likely negligible. Although site visits are an imperfect metric to evaluate influence, future research will focus on gaining a better understanding of the size and makeup of the audiences reached through RT reposter and mirror sites.

Future research is also needed to better understand why websites repost Russian propaganda. For some, we assume ideological motivations. For others, it is assumed that their motivations are financial, though a cursory investigation of the monetization mechanisms on many identified domains found that less than half had any way of generating revenue, and fewer still seemed capable, based on web traffic, of earning a sizable profit from their efforts. In our effort to combat the untransparent spread of RT content (and the practice of information laundering more generally), it is essential to better understand the motives behind those engaged in the practice.

Finally, this research focuses on just one of the many tentacles of Russia's global information apparatus. Though RT's English-language outlet is important, it is not RT's only, or arguably its most influential, brand. That distinction likely lies with RT en Español or RT Arabic, whose audiences on certain social media platforms dwarf that of RT's flagship outlet. RT's non-English-language outlets also reach audiences in countries and regions where reposter networks have received less scrutiny, highlighting the need to expand our research beyond the transatlantic space.

In addition, RT is not the Russian government's only global media outlet. From Sputnik News (and its roughly 30 regional and language specific outlets) to Tass, the Kremlin has many other outlets at its disposal, many of which are also being laundered. The Kremlin also operates pro-Kremlin think tanks, Russian intelligence-linked sites, and Russian embassy accounts on a variety of social media platforms. To fully understand and appreciate the scope of the Russian propaganda nesting doll, it is therefore necessary to peel back additional layers, which we intend to do in future reports.

Author bios

Bret Schafer is a senior fellow at the Alliance for Securing Democracy (ASD), a program at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, and he leads ASD's information manipulation team. Bret is the creator and manager of Hamilton 2.0, an online open-source dashboard tracking the outputs of Russian, Chinese, and Iranian state media outlets, diplomats, and government officials. As an expert in computational propaganda, state-backed information operations, and tech regulation, he has spoken at conferences around the globe and advised numerous governments and international organizations. Prior to joining ASD, Bret spent more than 10 years in the television and film industry.

Peter Benzoni is an investigative data and research analyst on the information manipulation team at the Alliance for Securing Democracy (ASD) at the German Marshall Fund, where he manages ASD's data-driven tools, develops new methodologies to combat information threats, and conducts open-source investigations. Peter most recently was a data analyst with Atlas Public Policy, where he was involved in the development of many of ASD's tools—most notably, the Hamilton dashboard.

Richard Rogers is professor of New Media and Digital Culture at the University of Amsterdam and director of the Digital Methods Initiative. He is the author of Information Politics on the Web and Digital Methods (both MIT Press) as well as Doing Digital Methods (Sage). He is the editor (with Sabine Niederer) of The Politics of Social Media Manipulation and The Propagation of Misinformation in Social Media: A Cross-platform Analysis, both published by Amsterdam University Press.

Kamila Koronska is a research officer in the study of misinformation at the University of Amsterdam. She researches online information, state-sponsored propaganda, and the influence of malicious actors on mainstream media using OSINT and digital methods. In her work, Kamila draws on her experience from various disciplines, including digital marketing, financial technology and journalism.

Kevin D. Reyes is a senior OSINT specialist at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, where he leads methodology for open-source investigations and researches online hate, extremism, conspiracy theories, and disinformation. Prior to joining ISD, Reyes investigated illicit trade and transnational criminal networks as an OSINT consultant, often working with Fortune 500 firms and federal law enforcement agencies. Reyes also teaches in the OSINT Reporting Lab at the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism.

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Appendix

The domains listed in table below were identified by the Information Laundromat as having possibly republished RT content and subsequently met our thresholds for inclusion. Some but not all accounts were manually confirmed by researchers. Five accounts were manually removed after it was determined they were not relevant. However, the nature of this data collection and filtering process inherently allows for the possibility of inaccuracies. Filtering thresholds are designed to reduce noise in the data—namely, false positives and negatives. Nevertheless, these thresholds are not perfect and can sometimes lead to the exclusion of relevant domains or the inclusion of unrelated ones. These findings are a starting point for further investigation rather than definitive conclusions. Each domain requires individual examination to confirm its involvement in reposting RT content.

Domain	Average Score	Median Score	# Unique Urls
azerbaycan24.com	89.8	93.1	574
en.pressbee.net	83.0	81.6	537
thepressunited.com	96.1	100.0	340
reddit.com	79.2	85.2	292
ground.news	91.6	97.0	133
archive.li	89.8	100.0	127
novabbs.com	65.0	67.3	81
pk.shafaqna.com	87.5	85.2	71
facebook.com	59.4	65.9	65
bignewsnetwork.com	89.7	100.0	61
worldandwe.com	93.4	99.2	58
m.facebook.com	69.2	73.0	47
m.youtube.com	90.9	94.7	41
note.com	61.3	68.0	41
t.me	56.7	64.1	37
sott.net	83.6	85.5	35
thedefenderngr.com	62.8	68.2	34
geopolitics.co	61.4	67.1	34
irishsun.com	90.0	88.9	33
dzen.ru	61.3	68.5	32
qatarnewsapp.com	81.8	86.6	31
kazan2024-en.rt.com	74.3	79.2	31
rumble.com	79.9	80.0	27
dailytelegraph.co.nz	83.8	84.0	26
globalvillagespace.com	91.9	94.7	25
freedomizerradio.com	77.7	75.8	25
oblongmedia.net	70.8	75.6	24
theinteldrop.org	82.2	83.4	23
lebanonnewsapp.com	87.9	86.0	22
uaenewsapp.com	79.3	87.9	19
kolozeg.org	72.3	76.1	19
khmertimeskh.com	90.5	90.1	18
m.dailyhunt.me	84.5	86.3	18
8kun.top	67.5	74.3	18
transcend.org	67.4	65.2	17
nexusnewsfeed.com	70.3	77.5	16
tntradio.live	81.0	82.2	15
issuu.com	60.5	66.8	15
gab.com	62.5	63.9	15
exceptionalinsights.group	88.2	91.2	14
infowars.com	75.0	77.4	14
world-news-ua.com	62.5	67.8	14
shoah.org.uk	84.2	85.2	13

Domain	Average Score	Median Score	# Unique Urls
listennotes.com	71.2	84.0	13
nothingnewunder-thesun2016.com	61.9	67.0	13
theburningplatform.com	61.8	72.2	12
theislander.eu	69.0	67.5	12
straightlinelogic.com	85.8	87.9	11
qoshe.com	68.7	84.0	11
thehopper.news	86.1	83.8	11
archive.ph	94.2	98.1	10
orinocotribune.com	73.6	79.2	10
nuclear-news.net	77.4	77.2	10
hdnewslive.com	73.3	73.5	10
newsrescue.com	93.6	100.0	9
chinaworldleader.quora.com	90.2	90.6	9
sololaki.ru	85.2	87.5	9
swentr.site	81.0	85.2	9
pinterest.com	81.4	84.3	9
freedomsphoenix.com	79.6	76.3	9
news.kitchen0.com	77.2	75.0	9
dissenter.com	54.3	66.0	9
mtv.com.lb	98.1	100.0	8
en.mehrnews.com	84.4	93.5	8
english.almanar.com.lb	80.0	87.0	8
usauncensored.quora.com	85.9	85.6	8
pressenza.com	85.4	84.4	8
tasnimnews.com	71.3	83.2	8
medium.com	66.2	80.3	8
eacnews.asia	78.9	76.3	8
dissentwatch.com	82.4	76.3	8
qresear.ch	61.0	73.9	8
hiram1555.com	74.9	73.1	8
muckrack.com	67.2	72.7	8
english.alahednews.com.lb	68.2	67.3	8
webryhibikan.seesaa.net	52.6	66.4	8
news.novabbs.org	63.9	64.9	8
diasporabr.com.br	59.9	64.9	8
english.10mehr.com	64.0	61.0	8
latitudes.nu	89.7	92.6	7
troib.com	90.6	90.8	7
nord.news	90.5	86.6	7
bitchute.com	77.9	80.8	7
21cir.com	74.2	75.3	7
pravda-en.com	75.9	73.4	7
libya360.wordpress.com	62.6	69.0	7
herald.co.zw	61.0	66.3	7
moderndiplomacy.eu	56.1	65.8	7
diaspora-fr.org	53.8	64.7	7
kigalidailynews.com	95.5	100.0	6
zqxjkv0.wordpress.com	90.1	94.1	6
alethonews.com	80.3	84.6	6
userinterface.us	86.0	82.6	6
vtforeignpolicy.com	79.8	80.8	6
islamtimes.org	73.2	77.8	6
johnccarleton.org	71.6	76.2	6
lookupbest.com	75.8	75.6	6
therussianbear.quora.com	73.8	72.4	6
newcoldwar.org	66.1	69.7	6
buypainpills.net	71.1	67.0	6

Domain	Average Score	Median Score	# Unique Urls
nzissues.com	67.0	67.0	6
tacktaka.blog.fc2.com	67.6	65.9	6
trade2win.com	56.2	63.3	6
palestinechronicle.com	61.2	59.8	6
forums.hardwarezone.com.sg	64.4	50.4	6
freerepublic.com	98.1	100.0	5
ivoox.com	97.7	100.0	5
russiaukrainenews.com	85.5	100.0	5
capitalethiopia.com	91.5	97.9	5
news.projectmatilda.com	95.3	96.5	5
mekenterprisesblog.com	92.4	92.3	5
news-war.com	87.4	87.1	5
endtimesprophecywatch.com	84.6	84.5	5
theukrainecrisis.quora.com	81.5	84.4	5
taghribnews.com	78.6	80.3	5
beforeitsnews.com	73.1	80.3	5
veteranstoday.com	77.9	78.8	5
jellyfish.news	77.3	77.9	5
sgtalk.net	70.0	76.7	5
russiancouncil.ru	66.8	75.6	5
rightedition.com	68.9	75.5	5
nairaland.com	76.4	73.9	5
yourdemocracy.net.au	69.5	72.6	5
eclinik.net	54.9	72.5	5
justthenews.com	56.6	71.7	5
uberfuzz.com	68.5	71.2	5
yourdemocracy.net	68.7	69.3	5
theautomaticearth.com	68.7	68.4	5
billerexchange.com	63.5	65.8	5
davidress.com	59.0	64.5	5
forum.krstarica.com	65.7	64.3	5
geetmark.com	100.0	100.0	4
defenddemocracy.press	98.1	100.0	4
rifnote.com	93.7	95.0	4
astutenews.com	91.0	90.6	4
hiddify5.starvp.ir	87.2	87.2	4
voicemedia.global	83.7	84.7	4
24lor.info	83.7	84.0	4
thesanfranciscotelegraph.com	85.0	81.5	4
ovalcircle.info	83.4	81.0	4
id.quora.com	78.5	78.5	4
earthnewspaper.com	62.8	75.4	4
nasdaq.com	66.5	73.2	4
bidd.org.rs	70.3	70.1	4
russiadefence.net	60.6	68.8	4
zerohedge.com	59.7	68.2	4
45.63.30.15	66.4	66.5	4
zbcnews.co.zw	74.3	66.2	4
vilaghelyzete.substack.com	65.5	65.6	4
unz.com	57.2	64.0	4
news.myconfinedspace.com	60.3	62.7	4
nrc.no	57.9	61.9	4
saidit.net	58.4	60.0	4
behindthenews.co.za	62.0	59.1	4
occupypeace.com	100.0	100.0	3
snapwire.com	96.3	100.0	3

Domain	Average Score	Median Score	# Unique Urls
malaysiasun.com	93.0	100.0	3
ordonews.com	96.2	96.2	3
alemihaber.com	94.2	95.7	3
lipstickalley.com	91.3	92.6	3
godlikeproductions.com	93.6	90.5	3
tagteam.harvard.edu	91.7	90.5	3
daily-sun.com	85.9	89.3	3
detv.us	88.3	88.1	3
theworldhistoryofwar.quora.com	87.8	86.8	3
gospanews.net	83.8	86.4	3
newonnews.com	85.4	85.2	3
eriinfo.com	84.6	83.8	3
yogaesoteric.net	84.8	83.1	3
greatgameindia.com	83.2	81.8	3
politicalcrapper.com	81.0	77.5	3
angloinfo.com	77.1	77.0	3
en.alghadeertv.iq	75.8	76.8	3
sgtreport.com	77.9	76.7	3
upge.wn.com	72.1	74.5	3
aninews.in	73.3	74.0	3
reliefweb.int	62.1	72.9	3
farsnews.ir	75.0	72.5	3
kaldata.com	72.7	71.3	3
dehai.org	56.8	71.2	3
snipershide.com	63.3	69.4	3
sources.com	56.1	68.8	3
vietnam.vn	61.5	68.1	3
connexions.org	54.4	67.8	3
malaysia-chronicle.com	60.6	67.5	3
bastyon.com	51.8	67.5	3
alterlinks.ca	66.3	67.2	3
ltaaa.cn	54.5	66.0	3
mekong.hatenablog.com	65.5	65.8	3
newssourcecenter.com	64.7	65.8	3
sotwe.com	62.7	65.2	3
diasp.eu	49.9	64.9	3
soundcloud.com	64.0	63.5	3
welcomeqatar.com	61.9	62.8	3
183.89.207.204:853	51.4	62.7	3
csnbbs.com	61.5	61.5	3
m.economictimes.com	54.9	61.4	3
groups.google.com	70.3	61.2	3
whatdoesitmean.com	50.5	61.2	3
inventsolitude.sblo.jp	43.6	60.8	3
news.imperium.plus	100.0	100.0	2
rutube.ru	100.0	100.0	2
manstuffnews.com	100.0	100.0	2
politicalforum.com	100.0	100.0	2
miin.cc	100.0	100.0	2
armenpress.am	100.0	100.0	2
everythingchina.quora.com	98.9	98.9	2
iotwreport.com	95.7	95.7	2
victimsofamericanhegemony.quora.com	95.1	95.1	2
afaqnews.net	92.9	92.9	2
nna-leb.gov.lb	92.8	92.8	2
news.alayham.com	92.2	92.2	2

Domain	Average Score	Median Score	# Unique Urls
usa.shafaqna.com	90.4	90.4	2
australiannationalreview.com	88.6	88.6	2
cityfalcon.ai	88.6	88.6	2
higherdensity.wordpress.com	88.2	88.2	2
ooduarere.com	87.3	87.3	2
vtforeignpolicy.wordpress.com	86.9	86.9	2
ar.pinterest.com	86.8	86.8	2
polmax.space	85.2	85.2	2
lemmy.world	85.1	85.1	2
visionnewspapers.com	84.9	84.9	2
insider-news.press	84.8	84.8	2
realdefense.news	84.7	84.7	2
anewswire.com	84.5	84.5	2
mideastdiscourse.com	84.4	84.4	2
jewworldorder.org	82.7	82.7	2
news.nestia.com	81.0	81.0	2
hotcopper.com.au	80.9	80.9	2
ullekhnp.com	80.8	80.8	2
councilpacificaffairs.org	80.6	80.6	2
lifeforcenetwork.news	80.3	80.3	2
intlecity.com	80.0	80.0	2
libertarianhub.com	79.7	79.7	2
baha.com	79.4	79.4	2
geopolitic.ro	78.1	78.1	2
thorsteinn.substack.com	77.4	77.4	2
wirralinittogether.blog	77.3	77.3	2
freetheright.com	77.1	77.1	2
interventionist.us	76.8	76.8	2
teletrader.com	75.9	75.9	2
zoominfo.com	75.7	75.7	2
informationclearinghouse.info	75.5	75.5	2
ru24.net	74.7	74.7	2
newsmag.info	74.4	74.4	2
voxnews.al	74.2	74.2	2
t.co	74.0	74.0	2
news.getdailybrief.com	73.9	73.9	2
blurt.blog	72.9	72.9	2
cubasupport.ie	72.6	72.6	2
lewrockwell.com	72.2	72.2	2
subsim.com	71.9	71.9	2
rubyuaissues.quora.com	71.5	71.5	2
indianeconomicobserver.com	71.5	71.5	2
flashback.org	71.0	71.0	2
report.az	70.0	70.0	2
ldiena.lt	100.0	100.0	1
feedreader.com	100.0	100.0	1
lemon8-app.com	100.0	100.0	1
westnewspoint.com	100.0	100.0	1
bbs.wenxuecity.com	100.0	100.0	1
icenews.is	100.0	100.0	1
sports.yahoo.com	100.0	100.0	1
smarthernews.com	100.0	100.0	1
lk.linkedin.com	100.0	100.0	1
citizensjournal.us	100.0	100.0	1
stateofthenation.co	100.0	100.0	1
balticword.com	100.0	100.0	1

Domain	Average Score	Median Score	# Unique Urls
sur.ly	100.0	100.0	1
xn--y9aia2dlywse.xn--y9a3aq	100.0	100.0	1
thepeoplesvoice.org	100.0	100.0	1
kbin.social	100.0	100.0	1
sundaymail.co.zw	100.0	100.0	1
nonvacci.com	100.0	100.0	1
latestmalaysia.com	100.0	100.0	1
dateline.ng	100.0	100.0	1
alb-spirit.com	100.0	100.0	1
unitedworldint.com	100.0	100.0	1
investorvillage.com	100.0	100.0	1
aliveadvisor.com	100.0	100.0	1
thecitizen.co.tz	100.0	100.0	1
n1info.ba	100.0	100.0	1
img1.wsimg.com	100.0	100.0	1
democraticunderground.com	100.0	100.0	1
comparisonofchinatheusa.quora.com	100.0	100.0	1
syria.shafaqna.com	100.0	100.0	1
usmessageboard.com	100.0	100.0	1
canadainrealtime.quora.com	98.4	98.4	1
thecaspiantimes.com	98.1	98.1	1
en.aravot.am	98.0	98.0	1
mena.quora.com	97.8	97.8	1
parstoday.ir	97.8	97.8	1
memecreator.org	97.8	97.8	1
paulcraigroberts.org	97.7	97.7	1
newstral.com	96.6	96.6	1
regtrends.com	96.3	96.3	1
unschooling.com	96.1	96.1	1
tsarizm.com	96.0	96.0	1
archive.vn	95.9	95.9	1
howafrica.com	95.0	95.0	1
danieljimperato.com	94.9	94.9	1
investmentwatchblog.com	94.7	94.7	1
utvnetwork.in	94.4	94.4	1
viewsnow.co.in	94.4	94.4	1
orientjournal.ru	93.8	93.8	1
arabobserver.com	93.8	93.8	1
endtime.com	93.8	93.8	1
en.reseauinternational.net	93.6	93.6	1
saba.ye	93.5	93.5	1
shia.shafaqna.com	93.5	93.5	1
just-international.org	93.1	93.1	1
mlm2.listserve.net	92.3	92.3	1
unitedkingdom.quora.com	91.8	91.8	1
thecanadianreport.ca	91.8	91.8	1
moanything.quora.com	91.6	91.6	1
americasbestpics.com	91.2	91.2	1
africainsider.org	91.1	91.1	1
ghanaweb.live	91.1	91.1	1
talkglobalpolitics.com	90.7	90.7	1
matzav.com	90.5	90.5	1
directus.gr	90.4	90.4	1
politiko.al	90.4	90.4	1
onevoice4jesusministries.com	89.6	89.6	1
us.minutemencoffee.com	89.5	89.5	1

Domain	Average Score	Median Score	# Unique Urls
spotonalabama.com	89.4	89.4	1
czechfreepress.info	89.4	89.4	1
rietveldequipment.com	89.1	89.1	1
badblue.com	88.9	88.9	1
stormfront.org	88.9	88.9	1
hw.infowars.com	88.9	88.9	1
weibo.com	88.6	88.6	1
readean.com	88.6	88.6	1
m.en.freshnewsasia.com	88.5	88.5	1
informationplex.com	88.4	88.4	1
techtip360.com	88.4	88.4	1
newsdoge.us	88.2	88.2	1
thetruthseeker.co.uk	88.1	88.1	1
2lt.com.au	87.9	87.9	1
serialpolitics.quora.com	87.8	87.8	1
scottritterextra.com	87.6	87.6	1
palestinetoday.quora.com	87.3	87.3	1
oecd.ai	87.3	87.3	1
genuinechristianitynow.com	87.2	87.2	1
ondiplomacywarfare.quora.com	86.3	86.3	1
majalahforexmalaysia.com	86.2	86.2	1
trademyproducts.net	86.1	86.1	1
newsare.net	85.7	85.7	1
famousbio.net	85.7	85.7	1
syria360.wordpress.com	85.3	85.3	1
solaretour.com	85.2	85.2	1
wawaforum.com	85.2	85.2	1
freedom969.com	85.1	85.1	1
en.trend.az	84.8	84.8	1
exit-cuckoos-nest.blogspot.com	84.7	84.7	1
newszona.ru	84.4	84.4	1
newssniffer.co.uk	84.4	84.4	1
economynews.shafaqna.com	84.4	84.4	1
autospyders.com	84.3	84.3	1
radiomoldova.md	84.2	84.2	1
informationclearinghouse.blog	84.2	84.2	1
voltrixmedia.com	84.0	84.0	1
ar15.com	84.0	84.0	1
johnsonwkchoi.com	84.0	84.0	1
45.89.97.6	83.8	83.8	1
ac.news	83.8	83.8	1
thecurrencyswap2023.quora.com	83.8	83.8	1
keshtopatsspace.quora.com	83.7	83.7	1
gladlink.net	83.6	83.6	1
primal.net	83.5	83.5	1
protonmail24435.lt.ace-mlnb.com	83.3	83.3	1
crapskeys.com	83.2	83.2	1
rtnews.live	83.0	83.0	1
thetartan.org	82.9	82.9	1
greatawakening.win	82.4	82.4	1
faciaf7y.londonderrynh.gov	82.2	82.2	1
sundaytimes.lk	82.1	82.1	1
indopacific.quora.com	81.8	81.8	1
voaafrica.com	81.8	81.8	1
indiandefensenews.in	81.7	81.7	1

Domain	Average Score	Median Score	# Unique Urls
doesntfitthewesternmediasnarrative.quora.com	81.1	81.1	1
newsmax.com	81.0	81.0	1
zwartifydesign.com	80.9	80.9	1
agrdailynews.com	80.9	80.9	1
botasot.al	80.5	80.5	1
healthliving101.com	80.0	80.0	1
lunaticoutpost.com	80.0	80.0	1
johnnyandthehurricanes.com	80.0	80.0	1
en.usm.media	60.0	60.0	1