

The Epstein files, the Iran war, or the Greenland crisis: how Russian disinformation exploits major international events

01

Introduction and Key Findings

This report compiles the results of monitoring conducted between January 1 and March 31, 2026, as part of the [ATAFIMI](#) project, which aims to identify and analyze incidents of information manipulation and interference (FIMI) originating from Russia in various countries and languages. The monitoring covers the following participating countries: Spain, Ukraine, Lithuania, Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela.

Key findings

- This monitoring period stands out for disinformation built around existing narratives but framed within current international events such as the declassification of the Epstein files, the situation in the Middle East, the Winter Olympic Games, or the capture of Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela.
- The amplified messages aimed both to damage the international image of Ukrainians and their government and to promote a positive portrayal of Russia.
- Content has emerged that, beyond promoting criticism of Ukraine, sought to humiliate and parody Ukrainian figures generated with artificial intelligence.
- In addition to responses to breaking news or active crises and the use of AI-generated content, already highlighted in the previous report, other notable tactics include audience segmentation to produce targeted content and the goal of denigrating the adversary.

02

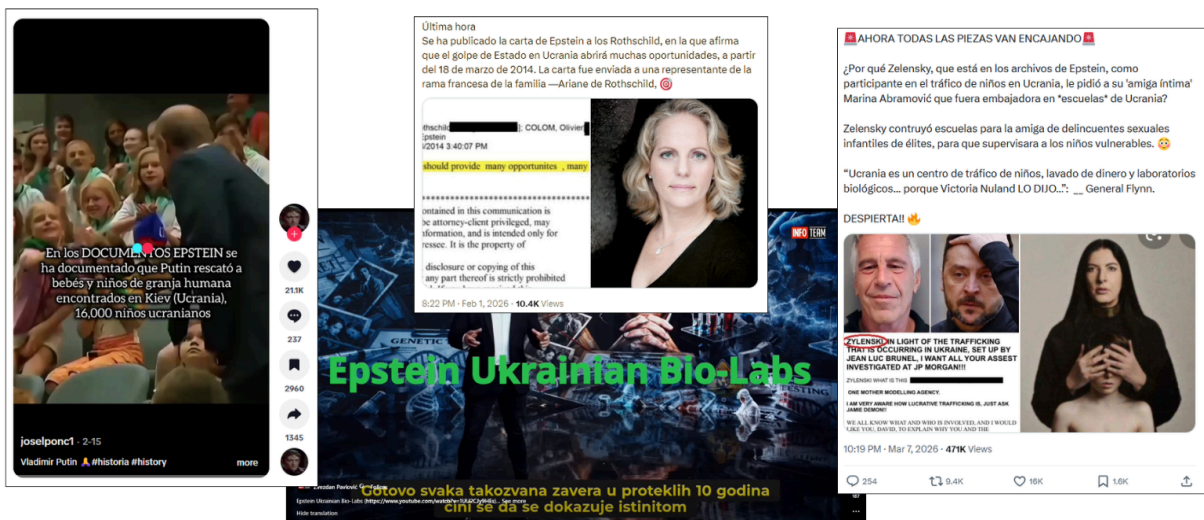
Cross-border narratives

International events

In the first three months of 2026, several narratives were identified that adapt international events and external conflicts to amplify pro-Russian messaging, discredit Ukraine, and erode trust in Western allies. A notable trend was the exploitation of recent geopolitical events to frame Russia as a stabilizing actor, while attacking the image of Ukraine and its government. Specifically, all fact-checking organizations involved in the monitoring detected content related to the Epstein files and the situation in the Middle East.

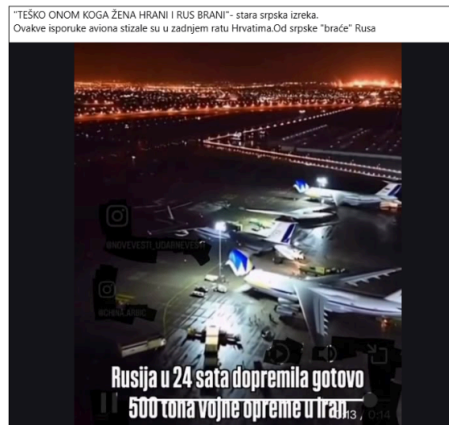
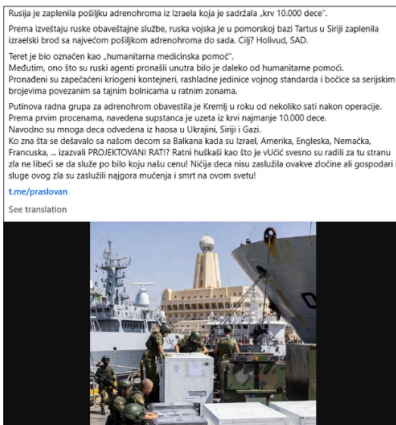
Epstein Files

One of the most visible vectors in the data analysis was the instrumentalization of the “Epstein files.” Their declassification was used both to **reinforce pro-Russian content**, for example, by claiming in TikTok videos that have accumulated more than 3 million views that Vladimir Putin had **“rescued”** Ukrainian children, or that Russia is promoting investigations into Bill Gates over alleged links to hidden power networks, and **to recycle and strengthen pre-existing narratives against Ukraine**. Among these, false claims resurfaced about alleged biolaboratories in Ukraine, supposedly **“confirmed”** by the Epstein files. The name of Zelensky also appeared, with accusations that he was involved in child trafficking networks, as well as content **linking** Epstein and the Rothschild family to the Maidan in Ukraine, reinforcing the narrative of the 2014 uprising as a Western-backed coup. Additionally, synthetic content circulated linking, for example, a supposed image of **Zelensky with Epstein**, which was detected in **Spain, Serbia, Georgia, and Lithuania**.



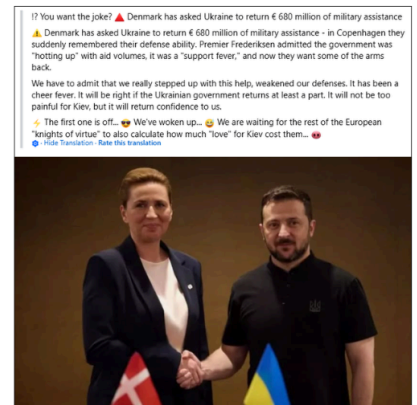
U.S. and Israeli attacks on Iran

The situation in the Middle East following U.S. and Israeli attacks on Iran was also exploited to fuel anti-American, anti-Israeli, and pro-Russian narratives. Some content portrayed Russia as [a strategic ally of Iran](#) against the West, while other pieces relied on conspiracy messaging, such as claims detected in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Spain alleging that Russia [had seized](#) a shipment of adrenochrome on an Israeli ship bound for Hollywood, to demonize Western actors and glorify the country led by Putin.



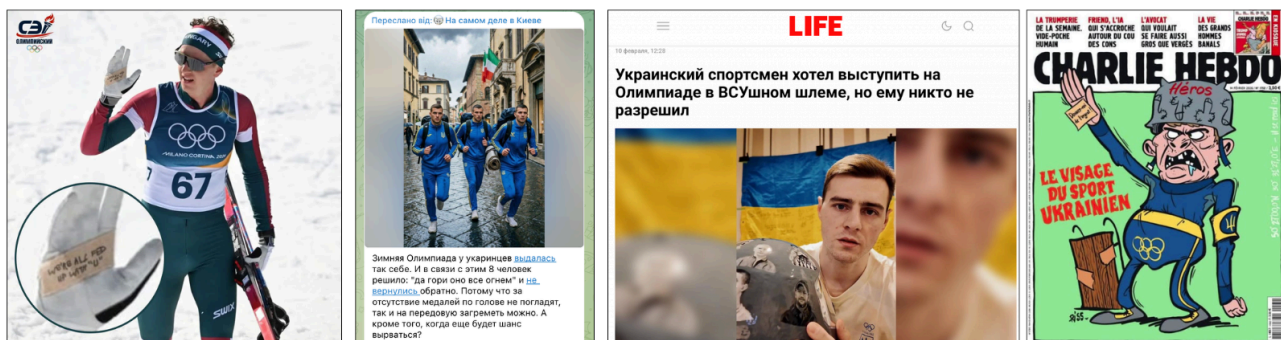
Trump and Greenland

To a lesser extent, U.S. interest in Greenland was also incorporated into these narratives, generally to ridicule Western allies and portray Ukraine as a burden on its partners. This content combined debunked claims about tensions between Denmark, the United States, Germany, and Ukraine with messages aimed at [questioning](#) European support for Kyiv or [NATO's capacity](#). For example, a [false quote](#) attributed to Zelensky circulated, suggesting that the most effective way to respond to Russia would be for Denmark to sell Greenland and send all the money to Ukraine, presenting this as the best response to Russian aggression.



Winter Olympic Games

The Winter Olympic Games held in February 2026 were used as a vehicle to promote disinformation, adapting pre-existing narratives about Ukraine to the context of international sport. Content detected in several countries instrumentalized the Ukrainian delegation, portraying it, for example, as **marginalized or rejected**, through false claims that its athletes were [deliberately isolated](#) from other participants, or that a Hungarian athlete [displayed](#) a hostile message against Ukraine during the competition. Manipulated content also circulated [seeking to link](#) a Ukrainian athlete with terrorist symbolism, as well as a [fake cover](#) of Charlie Hebdo allegedly mocking the Ukrainian Olympic team. Framed within the narrative that the Ukrainian government continues the war at the expense of its citizens, claims spread across different countries that several athletes [had fled](#) instead of returning to Ukraine.



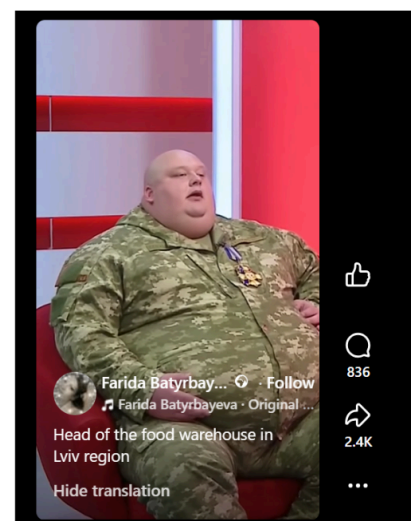
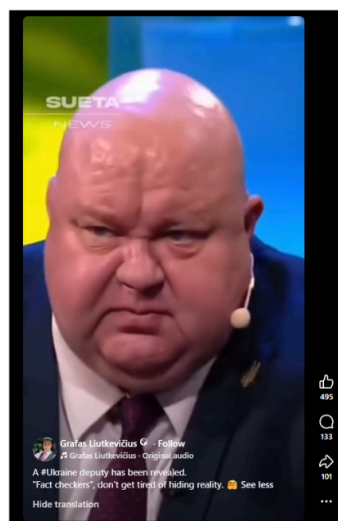
Capture of Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela

The first major international event of the year was also exploited to generate information chaos. For example, [the same false image](#) of the president being detained was detected in Lithuania, Spain, Georgia, Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mexico, and Serbia. Narratives surrounding the fall of Nicolás Maduro circulated widely, with manipulated images and videos used to construct polarizing stories: from content claiming to show Venezuela's first lady, Cilia Flores, with visible injuries as [evidence of abuse](#), to generated or decontextualized images depicting Maduro [being transported through New York in a cage](#), or AI-generated videos [described](#) as [Venezuelans crying](#) over his arrest. Some of these pieces were promoted or amplified by the same ecosystems that spread pro-Russian narratives.

Ridiculing Ukrainians

A tactic that has gained traction and been detected in multiple countries involves discrediting Ukrainian officials or military personnel through mockery. Unlike earlier approaches focused on fear or victimization, this content uses satirical disinformation generated with AI. Examples include videos of a supposed Ukrainian official [speaking Russian](#) while advocating for the use of Ukrainian, or an overweight soldier [discussing](#) food shortages.

Accounts such as [@ua_telemarahvon on TikTok](#), with more than 10,000 followers, upload these mockery videos, which are then reposted on other platforms and have been detected in countries such as Lithuania and Georgia. This tactic aims to undermine the credibility of Ukrainian representatives through ridicule rather than direct attacks.

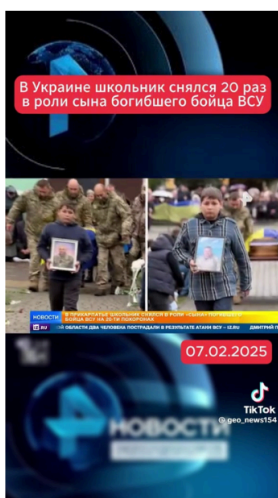


Recurring narratives

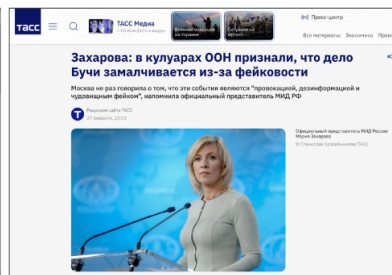
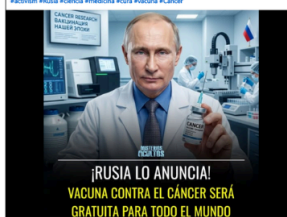
Recurring narratives widely detected across different languages and regions persist. One of the most repeated remains personal attacks against Zelensky through false accusations of corruption, hidden loyalties, or conflicts of interest, including claims that [he acquired shares](#) in AstraZeneca using European Union funds (detected in Spain, Lithuania, and Serbia), or that [he holds](#) Israeli citizenship (detected in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Spain, and Argentina). Narratives portraying Ukraine as a producer of staged propaganda also

continue, for example, falsely [accusing victims, ceremonies](#), or documented crimes such as the Bucha massacre of being staged, allegedly based on supposed UN reports.

In Spanish, content portraying Russia positively has resurfaced. Specifically, messages detected in Mexico and Colombia about a [supposed free Russian cancer vaccine](#) garnered more than 27,000 likes. Although presented as positive information, these posts often include the idea that if such treatment does not reach the global population, it would be [due to Western interests](#).



efectos secundarios. El país asegura que, si supera todas las pruebas, se administrará de forma gratuita a pacientes de todo el planeta. Sin embargo, surge la gran duda: ¿realmente llegará a la gente? La información proviene de un artículo publicado en el sitio web de la revista 'The Economist' en un artículo titulado '¿Rusia anuncia una vacuna contra el cáncer?'. La pregunta ya no es solo científica, sino de intereses económicos, regulatorios y políticos.



Ukrainian weapons

The narrative about the alleged diversion of Western weapons sent to Ukraine into other hands has expanded. This narrative not only seeks to question military support for Kyiv, but also to influence audiences in third countries by claiming that these weapons end up on illicit markets or in the hands of organized crime, including false claims about their presence in [Gulf countries](#) or among [Mexican cartels](#).

04

Country by country trends

Europe

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The persistence of highly targeted content for local audiences stands out. Specifically, at least three [debunked hoaxes](#) detected in the country were spread by RT Balkan, including claims about an alleged [“looting” of Serbian Orthodox Church](#) property following the registration of the Zenica cathedral as state property, as well as the manipulation of a photograph of human remains to falsely attribute them to [Serbian victims in Kravica](#). These contents reflect an interest by Russian media in exploiting historical events and identity disputes to fuel polarization in the Bosnian context.

Serbia

A [Facebook post](#) from a Serbian profile claiming that Russia had delivered 500 tons of weapons to Iran exceeded 2,300 likes. In addition, two pieces of content related to Hungary were detected, possibly amplified in a context of geographical proximity and electoral sensitivity in the region, including false claims such as [“Orban declared war on Ukraine”](#) and [“The Hungarian army is moving toward the Ukrainian border.”](#) the latter receiving 1,900 likes in a reel.

Georgia

Viral Facebook posts were detected amplifying disinformation about Ukraine through corruption narratives and synthetic content. In total, 35,600 [users reacted](#) on the platform to a hoax claiming that Ukraine’s National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU) [had confiscated](#) a golden wheelchair during a raid on Yulia Tymoshenko’s home. Additionally, [three AI-generated videos](#) showing supposed Ukrainian soldiers were reposted more than 3,390 times and reached 9,300 likes.

Lithuania

Although a video of a supposed overweight Ukrainian soldier replicated by several accounts stands out, narratives aimed at pitting Ukraine against its European allies are also identified. For example, the [false claim](#) that “Denmark has asked Ukraine to repay 680 million euros in military aid.”

[Manipulated content](#) also circulated in which politician Alice Weidel calls Volodymyr Zelensky a “charlatan” and accuses him of betraying his nation, as well as [disinformation](#) claiming that Ukrainian grain contaminated with mold and larvae caused an outbreak of skin disease in livestock in France.

Ukraine

During this period, deepfakes and fabricated videos proliferated, impersonating the appearance and branding of international media outlets to spread disinformation, a tactic associated with the Russian interference campaign Storm-1516. These contents, presented as pieces from Euronews, Deutsche Welle, AFP, USA Today, or Al Jazeera, featured invented “news” aiming to portray Ukrainians as a [public safety threat](#), with false reports about [looting in Dubai](#), [attacks](#) in Spain, [thefts](#) during the Milan Olympic Games, activists [arrested](#) in Europe, or even claims that Iran had attacked the United States and Israel with [missiles delivered by Ukraine](#). This last content also aligns with the narrative that Ukraine resells Western weapons or [other donations](#), which in this case are allegedly later used by Iran.

Spain

At the beginning of the period, content stood out related to the narrative that Zelensky [misuses](#) resources provided by Western partners, preceded by [several posts](#) related to the Winter Olympic Games. However, in Spain it is also observed how pro-Russian disinformation actors exploited a case of high national and international media attention to promote narratives portraying the government as prioritizing immigrants over a Spanish citizen. The case of Noelia Castillo, a young Spanish woman who received euthanasia on March 26, was also instrumentalized, spreading [the hoax](#) that she had been “raped by a group of immigrants.”

Latin America

Argentina

Content related to the narrative linking Ukraine to child trafficking was amplified during this period. For example, [a post on X](#) about the alleged establishment of a baby trafficking network in Ukraine had more than 3,000 reposts and 45,000 impressions. On the other hand, a consortium of different media outlets published an investigation into leaked documents revealing [a Russian campaign](#) aimed at influencing media in Argentina and discrediting Javier Milei’s government.

Colombia

Disinformation content stands out that seeks to build a positive image of Russia as an international ally, in contrast with a negative portrayal of Western actors. These narratives present Vladimir Putin as an actor who denounces Western hypocrisy or opposes its actions, including [false claims](#) such as that NATO would be at the gates of Moscow if Russia acted like Israel in Gaza, or that Russia would respond to Israeli provocations with a [nuclear threat](#). In this same line of portraying Russia as an actor intervening to correct abuses, there are also claims that it [allegedly requested](#) an investigation into the COVID-19 vaccine monopoly attributed to Bill Gates following his appearance in the so-called Epstein files. [A video](#) specifically targeted at Colombian audiences circulated widely, with more than 11,000 likes, in which Putin is supposedly shown congratulating Colombia for strengthening ties with Russia in security and energy.

Mexico

A [notable piece of content](#) claimed that Mexican police had seized a Ukrainian “Baba Yaga” drone used by cartels, aiming to discredit Ukraine by associating it with organized crime. Content related to Nicolás Maduro’s capture was especially viral in the country. Content also appeared instrumentalizing the Epstein files for pro-Putin and anti-Zelensky narratives: nearly half a million views on [an X post](#) falsely claiming that Zelensky, allegedly implicated in these documents, was linked to child trafficking in Ukraine, while on TikTok [a video](#) with more than 21,000 likes claims that these documents prove Putin rescued 16,000 Ukrainian children from Kyiv.

Venezuela

During the period analyzed, one of the most significant changes in Venezuela is not the emergence of new narratives, but a structural transformation in how pro-Russian disinformation circulates. Following the events of January 3, 2026 related to Nicolás Maduro’s capture, a significant decline in activity is observed among accounts and channels that previously amplified Russia-aligned content. Several Telegram channels deleted their post history or removed a large portion of their content, while X accounts that spread memes, satire, and messages about the war in Ukraine stopped covering the topic or redirected their activity to other issues.

The amplification of pro-Russian narratives in the context of the Ukraine conflict is now concentrated almost exclusively in state-run or government-affiliated Venezuelan media, rather than in informal, anonymous, or decentralized networks. This shift suggests that the more diffuse layer that previously enabled broader reach and flexibility has been reduced, giving way to a more institutionalized and controlled environment. This change indicates that the dissemination of pro-Russian content in Venezuela depends on coordinated structures and responds to variations in the political context and in the risk calculations of the actors involved.

Information about the project

This report is part of the ATAFIMI project. Through the creation of a pioneering technological tool for the study of FIMI (Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference) and cross-border disinformation campaigns, the system centralizes and serves as a repository for disinformation content detected in the participating countries. The use of a common methodology allows the identification of cross-border disinformation campaigns, as well as the narratives that circulate simultaneously in Europe and Latin America.

The following organizations take part in the project: Fundación Maldita.es (Spain), StopFake (Ukraine), Delfi (Lithuania), Myth Detector (Georgia), Zašto ne (Bosnia and Herzegovina), RaskRIKavanje and FakeNews Tragač (Serbia), Chequeado (Argentina), La Silla Vacía (Colombia), Verificado.mx (Mexico), and Cazadores de Fake News (Venezuela).

