



United States Mission to the OSCE

On the Russian Federation's Malign Activities and Interference in the OSCE Region

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Katherine Brucker
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 25, 2024

The United States remains deeply concerned about Russia's ongoing and intensified malign activities across the OSCE area, including through proxies. These malign actions include sabotage, acts of violence, provocations at Allied borders, instrumentalization of irregular migration, malicious cyber activities, electronic interference, disinformation campaigns, attempted assassinations, as well as economic coercion.

Russia's goals are to intimidate us, to distract us from the Kremlin's war against Ukraine, and to destabilize countries standing against Putin's war of choice. We condemn Russia's hostile behavior and are taking action, individually and together, to address it.

I would like to give you an example of Russia's malign activity from a Microsoft Threat Analysis Center report from April. Microsoft tracks a Russia-affiliated influence actor known as Storm-1516 which launders anti-Ukrainian narratives into the United States. Here's how Microsoft says the group does this.

Storm-1516 typically begins by providing a false story online, purportedly from a "whistleblower" or "citizen journalist." This disinformation—usually published in English, Russian, French, Arabic, or Finnish—is then amplified by other seemingly unaffiliated international networks. After the narrative has circulated online for days or weeks, U.S. - and presumably other - audiences then repeat and repost this disinformation, likely unaware of its original source.

Microsoft assesses the most prolific disinformation actors are backed by or affiliated with the Russian Presidential Administration. Microsoft also believes this reflects the increasingly centralized nature of Russian influence campaigns.

In another example, a February 2024 study by the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab reported on how two Moscow-based companies – the Social Design Agency and the Company Group Structura – established over fifty Internet domains to impersonate legitimate media sites. At the direction of the Kremlin, these companies spread fake news stories in Germany, France, Italy, the UK, Ukraine,

Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and the United States. In March, the U.S. Department of the Treasury sanctioned Social Design Agency and its founder, as well as company Structura and its CEO for these activities.

Madam Chair, these malign campaigns are not isolated incidents. They are part of a wider, deliberate Kremlin strategy to undermine national and international solidarity in support of Ukraine. But it is not going to work. It won't work because we see it for what it is and we're acting against it. We will counter Russian hybrid threats, individually and in concert with our partners. As we have repeatedly proven, Russia will not deter us from standing with Ukraine.

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