

**Centre for
Information
Resilience**

Eyes on Russia

Report 8

18 May 2022



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Background

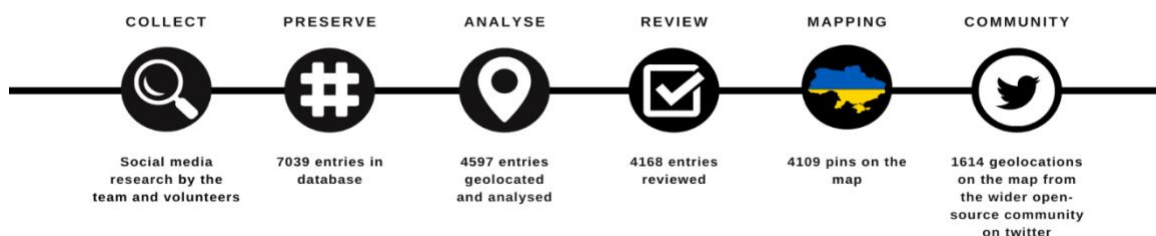
The Centre for Information Resilience’s “Eyes on Russia” Project maps, documents and verifies significant incidents related to Russian aggression toward Ukraine. Each week, CIR investigators collate, geolocate, and verify information appearing on social media and claims made by parties to the conflict. Our latest findings can always be found on this [Twitter thread](#).

CIR contextualizes these details amid the discourse and developments of the week. The footage and imagery is added to the [Russia-Ukraine Monitor Map](#), which policymakers, journalists, and other OSINT researchers can use to track the conflict. As part of this effort, CIR publishes weekly written summaries of its research, detailing verified troop and equipment analysis, influence operation narratives, and broader updates. This is the eighth of such regular reports. The first report can be read [here](#).

The Centre for Information Resilience (CIR) is an independent, non-profit social enterprise dedicated to exposing human rights abuses, countering disinformation, and combating online behaviour harmful to women and minorities.

We believe, at a time of heightened tension, that journalists and policymakers should have easy access to verified information. The Eyes on Russia Project will aim to empower its audiences with analysis and facts on which they can rely.

If you require further information, please do get in touch at hello@info-res.org.



1. Executive Summary

- Since 4 May, Russian forces have continued their so-called second phase of the war in Ukraine.
- Russian forces have faced widespread opposition by Ukrainian forces in their attempts of fully capturing South-Eastern Ukraine.
 - Amongst others, Russian attacks have focused on the port city of Odesa.
- As part of Ukrainian opposition, Russia has incurred significant military losses. Notably on 12 May, a Russian built pontoon bridge was destroyed, resulting in significant damage to a number of Russian armoured vehicles.
- In the information sphere, CIR analysts have observed a variety of narratives, chiefly amongst them the claim that Poland may invade Ukraine. This allegation attempts to position Russia as a liberator of Ukraine, with assistance from Belarus.
 - The full CIR explainer on this narrative can be found [here](#).
- Additionally, Kremlin aligned pages and personas on social media have continued to promote the claim that Russia is fighting Nazis in Ukraine. This narrative was particularly prominent on 9 May, celebrated by Russia as Victory Day.
- Narratives have also targeted the Eurovision song contest. According to Kremlin aligned networks, the support for Ukraine in the competition was Europe's way to support Nazism on the global stage.
- CIR analysts have also observed a noted increase in claims that portray the military aid to Ukraine as a form of money laundering by the West.
 - This comes as narratives have proliferated on Kremlin aligned pages, promoting threats to Finland and Sweden following their joining of NATO.
- CIR analysts have continued to geolocate civilian infrastructure damage and casualties by Russian forces. For more see the examples below.

2. Noted Narratives

Since 4 May, CIR has continued to observe the promotion of Kremlin-based conspiracy theories across social media platforms, with an attempt to spread disinformation online about the legitimacy and rationale behind its ongoing invasion and occupation of Ukraine.

Developments in the disinformation sphere have included the following:

- **Poland May Invade Ukraine:**

On 6 May, Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov warned that Poland's rhetoric towards Russia poses a significant threat to the Kremlin.¹

Additionally, Peskov claimed that Poland may pose a future threat to Ukraine's territorial integrity. These comments were further supported by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko.

President Lukashenko claimed that in the future Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine may find themselves in a war against Poland, to restore and maintain Ukraine's territorial integrity.²

CIR's full explainer on the topic can be accessed [here](#).

¹ <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/russia-ukraine-war/kremlin-spokesman-slams-polands-rhetoric-against-russia/2580902>

² <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/russia-ukraine-war/kremlin-spokesman-slams-polands-rhetoric-against-russia/2580902>

- **Russia is Continuing its Fight Against Nazism:**

On 9 May, celebrated in Russia as victory day against Nazi Germany, Indian newspapers featured advertisements about Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine.

The advertisements advocated for Russia's war in Ukraine. Particularly, it emphasized Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a continuation of its efforts to fight Nazism which began in World War II.

This narrative comes on the heels of the Kremlin's emphasis that it was forced to begin a war in Ukraine to fight against the rise in Nazism.

This narrative has been recycled by Kremlin aligned media and social media pages since the beginning of its invasion of Ukraine.

These figures often attempt to use the claim that Ukraine is full of Nazis in justification of Russian attacks on civilian populations.

According to these narratives, Russian actions are meant to liberate Ukraine from Nazi ideology. A false allegation that has been repeatedly debunked.



Figure 1: A screenshot from Indian Express taken on 10 May, showing an advertisement about Victory Day.³

- EuroNaziVision.

False claims about demilitarizing and de-nazifying Ukraine have become normalized in Russia's discourse about the war.

Kremlin sources commonly use this narrative to undermine Ukraine before international audiences and condemn displays of support from foreign countries to Ukraine.

³<https://vajiramandravi.s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/media/2022/5/9/57/50/09-05-2022-VAJIRAMRAVI-INDIANEXPRESS.pdf>

Last week, Ukraine’s Eurovision victory triggered messaging from pro-Kremlin social media accounts against Kalush’s Orchestra performance and against the Eurovision contest itself.⁴

Disinformation targeting the song writing competition included claims concerning international representatives using Eurovision to publicly show support for Nazism (see *figure 2*, below), framing the contest as a platform to spread Nazi propaganda.⁵

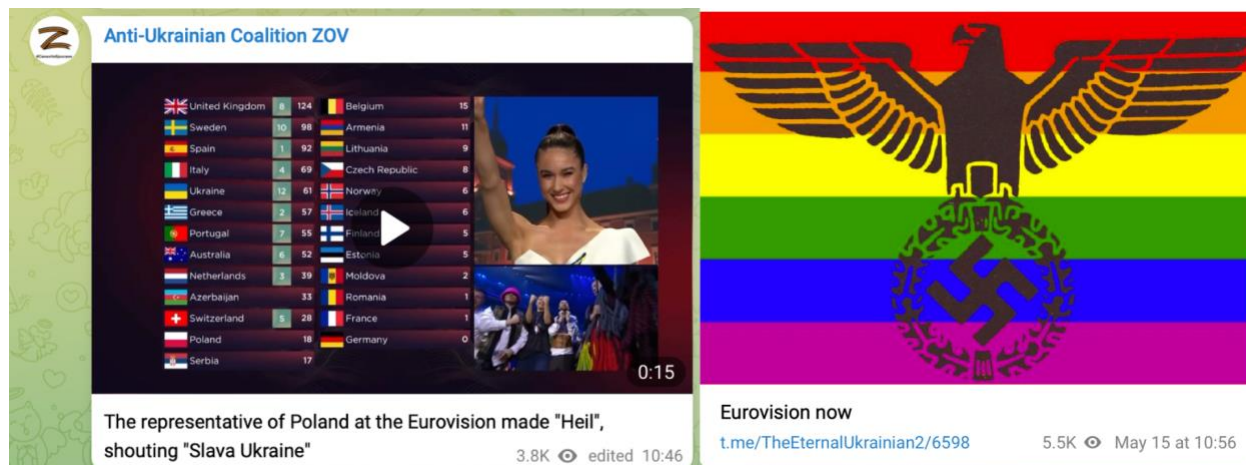


Figure 2: A screenshot from a Telegram account taken on 16 May, showing an account claiming Nazism in Eurovision⁶.

Some social media users⁷ coined the term ‘EuroNaziVision’⁸ to post on Twitter about the contest.

While others used Eurovision to share content from Russia’s offensive in Azovstal (e.g.; “Nazis celebrating their Eurovision victory from Azovtal’s catacombs”).⁹

⁴ <https://t.me/TheEternalUkrainian2/6598>

⁵ <https://twitter.com/provocadiarreas/status/1525891170454360065?s=20&t=n6YCo8kmKPwfZ3soULnbiA>.

⁶ <https://t.me/TheEternalUkrainian2/6598>

⁷ https://twitter.com/search?q=euronazivision&src=typed_query

⁸ <https://twitter.com/DAVID51/status/1525901786065915905?s=20&t=T9LoAzKB6vT17kLhE7lyUw>

⁹ https://twitter.com/Cr_07_Amax/status/1525627424372924417?s=20&t=suuiOjFXHckx15gXMyuyMQ

- **Russian Employed Fact-Checking**

In recent weeks CIR analysts have reported on the proliferation of the War on Fakes, a Russian affiliated outlet that spreads disinformation through ‘fact-checking.’¹⁰

The report, written by lead CIR investigator Benjamin Strick, detailed the use of the website by Russian government officials to deny massacres of Ukrainian civilians.

Particularly, War on Fakes spread doubt about the Russian massacres in Bucha.

The full report can be accessed [here](#).

DFR Lab has recently detailed this as a new strategy that has been employed by the Russian government in its attempt to manipulate the information environment.

Russian aligned accounts on social media platforms do this through the use of a network of so-called ‘fact checking’ accounts.¹¹

¹⁰ <https://waronfakes.com/>

¹¹ <https://medium.com/dfrlab/how-russia-employs-fake-fact-checking-in-its-disinformation-arsenal-b1790d5f5442>



Figure 3: A screenshot from a Russian aligned Telegram channel named 'Anti-Fake Osnova'.¹²¹³

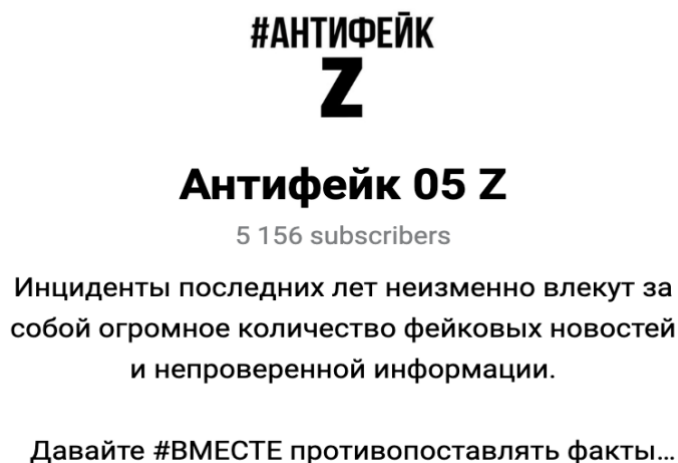


Figure 4: A screenshot from a Russian aligned Telegram channel named 'Anti-Fake Z'.¹⁴¹⁵

¹² <https://t.me/antifakeosnova/741>

¹³ <https://medium.com/dfirlab/how-russia-employs-fake-fact-checking-in-its-disinformation-arsenal-b1790d5f5442>

¹⁴ <https://medium.com/dfirlab/how-russia-employs-fake-fact-checking-in-its-disinformation-arsenal-b1790d5f5442>

¹⁵ <https://t.me/antifake05>

- **Foreign aid to Ukraine is a money-laundering scheme.**

CIR has observed an increase in narratives trying to frame the international military and economic aid to Ukraine as a fraud scheme¹⁶ for the benefit of the global political elite.¹⁷

These false claims have gained popularity in social media bubbles that endorse anti-establishment conspiracy theories, especially in the UK and the US.¹⁸

Within these bubbles, accounts use news, memes,¹⁹ and data²⁰ from unreliable sources portraying the economic aid provided by the UK and the US to Ukraine as a cover for a money-laundering scam funded by taxpayers' money.²¹

These claims also intend to justify that Ukraine should not receive financial or military aid due to the country's and Zelensky's alleged track record of corruption.²²

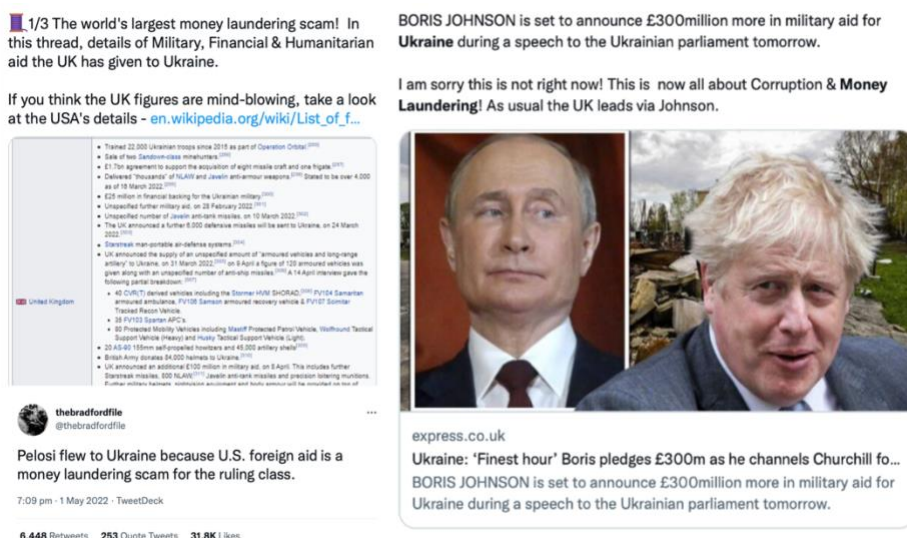


Figure 5: Screenshots taken between 9 and 14 May framing the economic aid to Ukraine as a money laundering scheme.²³

¹⁶ <https://twitter.com/Chicago1Ray/status/1520758041188130817?s=20&t=CWm9PVYMzb94ovy-dgBpOA>

¹⁷ <https://twitter.com/thebradfordfile/status/1520827747744075776?s=20&t=fJP6RNvhe82isVQgVTS9AA>

¹⁸ <https://twitter.com/Victoria0Star/status/1520424088451395584?s=20&t=FnTs35t9krtyRxeLwMTaVQ>

¹⁹ https://twitter.com/dbcinchina/status/1524456902180151298?s=20&t=6c1dNmFh_ED0ikNTYz7pbg

²⁰ <https://twitter.com/MartinRides/status/1518619938155552768?s=20&t=TOUXt3iada2M7-LTJZ366g>

²¹ https://twitter.com/dbcinchina/status/1524456902180151298?s=20&t=6c1dNmFh_ED0ikNTYz7pbg

²² <https://twitter.com/Victoria0Star/status/1520424088451395584?s=20&t=MT9Q62ty52V5uEM4bTWL1A>

²³ <https://twitter.com/MartinRides/status/1518619938155552768>

This narrative has also gained popularity in the Spanish information environment.

On 15 May, a piece written by Sputnik Mundo's contributor Javier Jiménez claiming that the West is profiting from selling weapons to Ukraine,²⁴ risking destabilizing other regions in the world, was amplified by Spanish Telegram²⁵ and Twitter accounts.²⁶

- **Finland and Sweden joining NATO will bring the world to the edge of nuclear war.**

Following the application by Sweden and Finland to join NATO, CIR analysts have observed an increase in fear-mongering narratives, claiming that both Nordic countries are actively provoking²⁷ Russia and encouraging a nuclear war with the West.²⁸

This allows for an insinuation that the morally corrupt Western countries will allow for a nuclear war that might allegedly happen if Finland and Sweden become part of NATO.

On 17 May, Russia's state-controlled television channel Pervyy Kanal shared a threatening message²⁹ anticipating the use of tactical nuclear weapons if NATO bases were built in Sweden and Finland.³⁰

²⁴ <https://mundo.sputniknews.com/20220514/un-negocio-jugoso-que-esta-detras-de-la-falta-de-trazabilidad-de-las-armas-suministradas-a-kiev-1125455578.html>

²⁵ <https://t.me/DAVIDru/1977>

²⁶ https://twitter.com/DAVID_5/status/1525893972811456512?s=20&t=Wn2src1GiF0wZ04t8Piog

²⁷ <https://twitter.com/KareemRifai/status/1525531162705334275?s=20&t=G34w-fiUYN8GAoepohgVgQ>

²⁸ <https://twitter.com/apocalypseos/status/1525790701216075776?s=20&t=FtyFJ1HugYu38GNjOQCSKQ>

²⁹ <https://twitter.com/BBCSteveR/status/1525876571948691456?s=20&t=G34w-fiUYN8GAoepohgVgQ>

³⁰ <https://twitter.com/alexstubb/status/1526167784253800448?s=20&t=km8rO3UkW1DTWLxWnacBjw>



Figure 6: A screenshot taken on 17 May from a post by BBC journalist Steve Rosenberg sharing Pervyy Kanal’s warnings³¹.

3. Military Movements

Since the launch of the Russian invasion, CIR has moved from tracking troop movements in Russia and Belarus to coverage of, *inter alia*, attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, weapons and equipment used by Russia, and Russian losses. Ukrainian troop movements are not reported as they are not the aggressor country and highlighting their positions may assist their adversary.

As the Russian military redeploys across the country, since 4 May numerous reports have suggested that Russia is incurring heavy military losses.

³¹<https://twitter.com/BBCSteveR/status/1525876571948691456>

On 12 May, reports claimed that Russian armoured vehicles and military equipment were destroyed in the village of Bilohorivka as the military was attempting to construct a pontoon bridge over the Siverskyi Donets River.³²

This comes as Ukrainian forces continue to resist Russia's occupation of South-Eastern Ukraine.

In addition, Russian forces have been continuously targeting the port city of Odesa through bombing and air raids. These efforts have caused widescale civilian casualties and damage to the civilian and commercial infrastructure.

Russian attacks on Odesa have also come in the form of a blockade on the port city, as the Kremlin attempts to gain control over the region as part of the second stage of its invasion of Ukraine.³³

Below are some notable examples that were verified and geolocated by CIR's investigators:

- On 8 May, satellite imagery showed Russian military assembling anti-aircraft missile systems in the north of the occupied Crimea.
- On 8 May, satellite imagery showed multiple Russian artillery firing positions between Zarichne and Kreminna.
- On 10 May, drone footage showed Russian military losses in the Donbass region because of a Ukrainian missile strike.
- On 11 May, drone footage showed Russian military firing positions in Pytomnyk.
- On 12 May, drone footage showed the destruction of a Russian Pontoon Bridge in Bilohorivka, Luhansk Oblast.

³²<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/12/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-78-of-the-invasion>.

³³<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/10/zelenskiy-calls-for-end-to-blockade-of-odesa-port-to-prevent-global-food-crisis>.

Civilian Casualties and Infrastructure Damage

Attacks on civilians, civilian buildings, and other infrastructure have continued to take place by Russian forces ([please see CIR map](#)).

Below are some notable examples that were verified and geolocated by CIR's investigators:

- On 3 May, footage from Gorky Park in Kharkiv showed mass-scale destruction following Russian bombing.
- On 4 May, satellite imagery showed the widescale destruction of Azovsteel following continuous Russian shelling.
- On 10 May, footage from Donetsk showed mass fires in residential neighbourhoods because of shelling in the region.
- On 14 May, footage from Shandryholove, Donetsk Oblast, showed that civilians buildings were destroyed as a result of shelling.

Russian Military Losses and Movements



Figure 7: Drone footage from 12 May, showing destruction of a Russian Pontoon Bridge; geolocated to 48.934914, 38.244419.



Figure 8: Drone Footage from 11 May showing a Russian firing position; geolocated to 50.182655, 36.263394.



Figure 9: Drone footage from 10 May, showing Russian military losses after Ukrainian shelling attacks; geolocated to 48.142757, 37.797822.



Figure 10: Satellite imagery from 8 May, showing multiple Russian artillery firing positions between Zarichne and Kreminna; geolocated to 49.02863, 38.01997.



Figure 11: Satellite imagery from 8 May, showing Russian military assembling anti-aircraft missile systems in the north of occupied Crimea; geolocated to 46.08303126, 33.79574889.

Civilian Infrastructure Damage



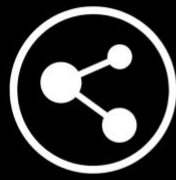
Figure 12: Footage from 14 May, showing civilian infrastructure destruction in Shandryholove, Donetsk Oblast; geolocated to 49.102042, 37.715111.



Figure 13: Footage from 10 May, showing fires in Donetsk following shelling; geolocated to 47.950315, 37.69169.



Figure 14: Satellite imagery from 4 May, showing satellite imagery of widescale destruction in Azovsteel factory; geolocated to 47.100167, 37.580312.



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