

DIS!NFO

BRIEF



April 2022

THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S 2021 REPORT

DFC INFO

The State Department's 2021 Country [Report](#) on Human Rights Practices for Montenegro refers to data of the Digital Forensic Center (DFC) on Serbian media reports that in an extremely sensationalist and inciting manner, often violating journalistic ethics and the human moral code, lead to dangerous prejudices against Montenegro,

its citizens, and institutions. Unresolved attacks on journalists, political interference in the work of the Public Service, biased media reporting, media content emphasizing ethnic divisions, and disinformation from the Serbian media are the main features of the media environment in Montenegro according to this report.

THE NARRATIVE ABOUT THE ENDANGERMENT OF SERBS CAME TO THE FORE AGAIN

NARRATIVE

After Prime Minister-designate Dritan Abazović proposed the formation of the new Government of Montenegro, the narrative about the endangerment of Serbs came to the fore again in the Serbian media. Serbian tabloids [Informer](#) and [Alo](#) published articles (*Can it be worse for Serbs?! Take a look at the list of ministers proposed by Dritan Abazović!, ABAZOVIĆ PROPOSED A NEW GOVERNMENT Can it be worse for Serbs?!*) in which it is

stated that it is not known which solution is worse for the Serbs. Even before the government's vote, Serbian media has written that those solutions will not be good for Serbs and placed a narrative that Serbs in Montenegro are discriminated against and endangered. The DFC's analysis of Serbian media coverage of Montenegro on a monthly and annual basis shows that this narrative is among the five key narratives from year to year.

ABAZOVIC DID NOT PROPOSE A BAN ON INAPPROPRIATE MEDIA

DISINFORMATION

The Serbian portal [Alo](#) published an [article](#) titled *ABAZOVIĆ INTRODUCES A DICTATORSHIP IN MONTENEGRO: He proposes a ban on „inappropriate media“* by which it tried to disinform and deceive the public. Namely, the [Alo](#) portal transmitted Abazović's statements from the [panel](#) *Disinformation Network: Stolen Democracy*, organized by the Center for Democratic Transition (CDT), where Abazović spoke about the need to strengthen the penal policy for certain media outlets that place, inter alia, disinformation. However, this portal tried to deceive the public through the controversial title, because Abazović did not propose shutting down and banning media that are not suitable.

THE MEDIA WILL NOT GET HELP FROM MILO ĐUKANOVIĆ, BUT FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF MONTENEGRO

DISINFORMATION

The government of Zdravko Krivokapić has decided to take on the obligations of the three largest broadcasters – *TV Vijesti*, *TV Nova M*, and *TV Prva* owed to the Broadcasting Center for 2022, in the amount of 200,000 euros. However, the Serbian tabloids *Republika* and *Alo* used this news to spread disinformation. The mentioned portals presented the decision of the Government of Montenegro as giving money to Dragan Šolak by the President of Montenegro Milo Đukanović. Some of the headlines on the *Alo* and *Republika* portals were *MILO GAVE 200,000 EUROS TO SHOLAK! Authorities in Podgorica are helping tycoon television!* It was disinformation.

BOSKOVIC DID NOT ASK FOR SENDING THE MONTENEGRIN ARMY TO THE EASTERN FRONT

DISINFORMATION

Former Minister of Defense of Montenegro Predrag Bošković criticized Zdravko Krivokapić and the 42nd Government of Montenegro, adding that they are continuously obstructing the obligations arising from NATO membership. The pro-Serbian and pro-Russian portal *IN4S* used Boskovic's comment to disinform the public. With the sensationalist and deceptive [title](#), *We haven't sent the army yet!: Boskovic wants to go to the "eastern front"?* that portal tried to insinuate that Boskovic was asking for the Montenegrin Army to be sent to the war in Ukraine.

IN4S CONTINUES TO PLACE RUSSIAN NARRATIVES

NARRATIVE

The *IN4S* portal continuously spreads pro-Russian narratives and disinformation coming from Moscow. One of the key narratives is that Ukraine is killing civilians and that the Ukrainian army is responsible for crimes committed on its territory. *IN4S* recently published [news](#) that fits into that narrative. Citing a statement from an Italian journalist, *IN4S* reported that civilians in Mariupol were killed by Ukrainian Nazi snipers. However, these claims are not substantiated by any evidence. The DFC has already [written](#) about the narratives published by the *IN4S* portal about the war in Ukraine and the suffering of civilians, which are precisely and consistently harmonized with Moscow's views.

FACTS VS. FICTION: RUSSIAN DISINFORMATION ACTIVITIES IN THE BALKAN

DFC INFO

The Atlantic Council of Montenegro organized an [online discussion](#) on the topic of Russian disinformation activities in the Balkans. The panel was attended by Ivana Stradner, advisor to the Foundation for the Defense of Democracy and associate of the American Enterprise Institute, and journalist Biljana Jovicevic, while the panel was moderated by Milan Jovanovic from the Digital Forensic Center. Ivana Stradner said that Russia has not lost the information war and pointed out the specificity of Russia's understanding of hybrid warfare, which implies a combination of information operations and kinetic use of force, which, according to her, was clearly shown in the example of Ukraine. Speaking about the Western Balkans, she pointed out that Russia does not aim to occupy the region militarily but to occupy its information space. In order to prevent that, Stradner emphasizes the importance of detecting such influence, but also the existence of the will, as well as partner support in its suppression.

From the point of view of the journalistic profession, Biljana Jovičević spoke about the network of Russian media proxies in Montenegro and the region. She believes that Russia's aggression against Ukraine has shown the actual editorial policy of some of the most influential media in Montenegro, which are controlled by Serbian capital, and which operate in such a small market for political reasons. Jovičević said that Russian influence has been indirectly spread through the Serbian media, whose editorial policy was adjusted to the Russian narrative. Among them, in her opinion, the *IN4S* portal is at the forefront as a typical Russian-Serbian outlet. Milan Jovanovic emphasized that, although there is no officially registered Russian media in Montenegro, Russian propaganda is almost equally strong, and that, after Russia invaded Ukraine, the activities of certain media in Montenegro intensified. Those media are synchronized with the views of the Russian and Serbian media.

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Disinfo Brief provides a monthly overview of the key disinformation, narratives, and propaganda developments that the DFC team researched and debunked to raise awareness of the issue and its extent.



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