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## ELECTION CYCLES FOLLOWED BY A LARGE AMOUNT OF DISINFORMATION

### DFC INFO

In the second [episode](#) of the podcast series, launched in cooperation with the Agency, DFC analyst Marko Banović assessed that every election cycle in Montenegro is accompanied by a large amount of disinformation and fake news that destabilize and polarize society. He said that disinformation is present among political subjects of any orientation, regardless of which part of the political-ideological spectrum we are talking about. However, Banović pointed out that in our country right wing organizations are quite well organized in spreading disinformation campaigns. *They do it very well, very efficiently and impressively. That leaves a mark,* Banović said. He added that an increasing number of portals are being used for propaganda purposes.

## MINISTER KRIVOKAPIĆ DID NOT SPREAD FALSE NEWS

### DISINFORMATION

On August 12, the portal *Pogled.me* published disinformation in a text entitled *Ranja spreads fake news: Krivokapić "hero" of social networks*, where it is stated that the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro, Ranko Krivokapić, announced the help of the Croatian government in extinguishing the fire that engulfed Boka bay in those days. The text further states that Ranko Krivokapić spread false information that Croatia would help Montenegro and that the minister thanked the Croats for nothing for the special fire-fighting seaplane, because it did not even appear in the

end. This topic caused numerous protests by representatives of the Parliament and political parties, but also by the general public due to contradictory information coming from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior of Montenegro, as well as the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Croatia. In a situation where Montenegro was fighting huge fires, it was necessary for authorities and competent institutions to be more transparent, and for journalists to check all information before publication. However, the portal *Pogled.me* denied the initial allegations and [published](#) a correction of the text.

# CYBER-ATTACKS ON MONTENEGRO

## DFC INFO

On August 22, the complete information technology infrastructure of the Government of Montenegro was the target of hackers, which is why it was not possible to access official websites and emails. The Ministry of Public Administration announced that the hackers (Kuban Ransomware criminal group) failed in their plan to obtain important state data, but also that it was a ransomware attack aimed at obtaining financial benefits based on conditioning the data owner in decrypting the encrypted data. New powerful cyber-attacks on the complete information structure of the Government of Montenegro followed again on August 26. The prime minister in the technical mandate, Dritan Abazović, assessed that the attacks were politically motivated, and the National Security Agency of Montenegro announced that Russian services were behind this cyber-attack, with the assessment that it was a hybrid war. The Agency confirmed that the attack had been prepared for a long period and that it had not been carried out anywhere else so far. DFC [wrote](#) about Russian cyber operations in Montenegro, which were particularly pronounced during 2016 and 2017, ➔



# DFC AT THE BLED STRATEGIC FORUM

➔ in the *Russia's Role in the Balkans: The Case of Montenegro*. On the day of parliamentary elections on October 16, 2016, Montenegro faced frequent DDoS attacks, which targeted websites of state institutions, pro-NATO and pro-EU political parties, civil society websites, and election observers. More intense DDos attacks than the attacks on the elections took place in January, February and June 2017, in the final phase of Montenegro's accession to NATO, threatening the web services of the Government and state institutions, as well as some pro-government media. Three cybersecurity companies – *FireEye*, *Trend Micro* and *ESET* – concluded that the attacks came from APT28. American intelligence indicates that the group is linked to the Russian military intelligence service GRU and funded by the Kremlin.

## DFC INFO

Representatives of the DFC team attended the 17th Bled Strategic Forum, which was held in the city of the same name under the slogan "The Rule of Power or the Power of Rules". From August 29 to 30, the participants of the Bled Strategic Forum tried to answer questions about the future of the multilateral order and its role in the European Union. Global crises (climatic, economic, food, energy) and the emergence of new crisis hotspots, but above all, Russian aggression against Ukraine and changes in the international order, have shown that the international system that was formed around the UN after the end of the Second World War must be reconfigured. Among the speakers were Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and European Commission President Ursula

von der Leyen, as well as numerous other leaders of European countries, high representatives of the European Union and ministers of foreign affairs of European countries. At the panel "Communication for Cohesion: Proactive Strategies to defeat Disinformation", the publication *Information War and the Fight for Truth*, in which DFC took part, was promoted and deals with the issue of tactics and effects of foreign disinformation in the Western Balkans. The Bled Strategic Forum (BSF) is a project of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia. It is jointly organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia and the Center for the European Future. It is one of the largest annual international conferences in Europe, which has been held in Bled since 2006.

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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