

DIS!NFO

BRIEF



January 2023

WASHINGTON AND THE ALLIES ARE NOT DEMONSTRATING FORCE IN KOLAŠIN

NARRATIVE

Portal *Informer* published an [article](#) with the sensational headline *NATO EXERCISES IN KOLAŠIN! The Alliance is Conducting MANOEUVRES in MONTENEGRO, Washington, and Allies DEMONSTRATING FORCE with Operation “Joint Challenge 23!”* which reports on the international winter military exercise *Joint challenge* that is conducted in Kolašin. The text itself contains nothing disputable, the statement of the Ministry of Defence of Montenegro and the statement of lieutenant colonel Miloš Garčević from the opening ceremony. This topic was also covered by the Serbian portal *Politika*, publishing the [article](#) *NATO Teaches Montenegrins to Fight with the Austrians in the Mountains – As the young kids from Mojkovac would say in 1916*. The Serbian media *Informer* and *Politika* tried to spread the narrative with sensationalist headlines and information manipulation that Washington and its allies are demonstrating force on Montenegro, that NATO is aggressive, and that it is teaching Montenegrins to fight. This is not the first time for media in Serbia to promote narratives and disinformation regarding Montenegrin membership in NATO and military exercises that are held in Montenegro. Media in Serbia act according to the same or similar matrix as it did in previous years. Thus, Serbian portals reported about the planned military exercise on Sinjajevina mountain in October 2020 with sensationalist and tendentious content which DFC [wrote](#) about. Although the texts mostly conveyed facts and statements of activists or officials of Montenegro, the clickbait headlines suggested a state of wartime tension, which can also be seen in the latest example of the military exercise in Kolašin. In such situations, the media in Serbia often resort to pathos intending to move the readers.

MAPPING AND ANALYSIS OF EFFORTS TO COUNTER INFORMATION POLLUTION IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA REGION

DFC INFO

Contamination of the information space affects the capability of the citizens to make decisions. Disinformation, misinformation, and malinformation, together with the increase of hate speech and propaganda, especially online, encourage social divisions and create distrust in public institutions. To raise awareness on this topic and understand the contamination of the information space as a global phenomenon, UNDP has made a [publication](#) *Mapping and Analysis of Efforts to Counter Information Pollution in Europe and Central Asia Region*. The core of these reports consists of data compiled through 47 interviews with individuals and organizations involved in the fight against disinformation, together with the interview of DFC’s analyst Milan Jovanović. The publication emphasizes that the COVID-19 pandemic has been an important driver that has allowed disinformation and conspiracy theories to thrive throughout the

region. Moreover, election campaigns were recognized as one of the main flashpoints of disinformation. These campaigns targeted not just political opponents, but also journalists and civil society leaders. This Mapping and Analysis has found that internet and social media usage correspond with the rise of access to alternative news sources in some European and Central Asian countries. Accordingly, the manipulation of public opinion through social media has also been identified as an upward trend.

TRAINING *HOW TO CREATE A SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN*

DFC TRAINING

Digital Forensic Center organized a two-day training on *How to Create a Successful Campaign* for the young members of political parties in Montenegro on January 21-22, 2023. The goal of the training was for the participants to answer the questions, such as: *What are the campaigns;* and *How do they initiate change,* as well as *How to create a successful campaign* with a theoretical explanation and practical application of some of the tools such as focus group targeting and campaign canvas. Nataša Niškanović, a certified master trainer in media literacy, carried out the training. The participants were representatives of youth from Democratic Montenegro, Social Democratic Party of Montenegro, Forza, Citizens' Initiative May 21, URA Movement, Europe Now Movement, and Democratic Party of Socialists. During the first day of training, the participants had an opportunity to learn more about creating campaigns, useful tools, and target audience mapping. On the second day of the training, participants applied their newly acquired knowledge by creating campaigns that make positive social changes, which they successfully presented at the end of the training. The *How to create a successful campaign* training was an extremely useful opportunity to further inform me about how (dis)information is promoted through media narratives, as well as to acquire theoretical knowledge and practical skills for creating and successfully implementing a campaign in just 15 steps. Also, this type of training is an excellent opportunity to meet and engage in dialogue with young colleagues from other political parties, said participant Luka Vukotić, representative of the URA Civic Movement. Lavdim Kroma, a representative of the Democratic Party of Socialists, also has positive impressions about the training: I think that a training like this is great because it concerns all of us who entered the world of politics. It is great because through the theory we move on to the practical creation of a campaign, which teaches us the problems of creating a campaign. The team and the environment provide an additional incentive for training.

CAMPAIGN OF THE *ADRIA* PORTAL FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF KOSOVO'S INDEPENDENCE RECOGNITION

NARRATIVE

The *Adria* portal, whose owner Bratislav Stojilković has been banned from entering Montenegro upon the request of the Agency for national security (ANB) for trying to affect the elections, is campaigning, through its articles, for the Montenegrin Government to withdraw Kosovo's independence recognition. In the interviews with interlocutors from Serbia, one of the key questions of the *Adria* portal is: *Do you expect that in the future Montenegro will withdraw the recognition of so-called Kosovo's independence?* The President of the Serbian-Greek movement Christos [Alexopoulos](#), the President of the Serbian Parliament Vladimir [Orlić](#), the President of the Association of Albanians in Serbia Demo [Beriša](#), and the Minister of Defense of Serbia Miloš [Vučević](#) in their statements for the *Adria* portal agree that *if the people of Montenegro were to choose, the shameful decision on the recognition of Kosovo's independence would be withdrawn* with the hope that this

will happen in the foreseeable future because *it is not natural that Montenegro, where Stefan Nemanja was born, recognizes as an independent territory where Nemanja's descendants built so many churches and monasteries.* In their answers, they point out that even today it is inexplicable why this recognition happened at all because 85 percent of citizens were against such a decision. At a time when Serbia and Kosovo are negotiating, when the European Union and Washington are trying to resolve the problem in Belgrade-Pristina relations, and when possible mutual recognition is discussed, the *Adria* portal is trying to influence public opinion in Montenegro on the issue of Kosovo. In addition, through questions and answers a narrative is promoted that has filled the media columns in Serbia in the last few years - that Serbs in Montenegro are endangered and discriminated against.

RTCG DID NOT BROADCAST THE WEDDING OF MP MOMO KOPRIVICA

DISINFORMATION

Social networks with an unlimited and fast flow of information present a significant channel for spreading disinformation and fake news. One of the latest examples of this in Montenegro is the disinformation that the parliamentary channel of Radio Television of Montenegro (RTCG) broadcast a video of the wedding of the Democratic Montenegro MP in the Parliament of Montenegro, Momo Koprivica. The disinformation spread on social networks Facebook and Twitter, together with an authentic photo - a screenshot from RTCG showing MP Koprivica with his wife during their wedding. However, the parliamentary channel did not broadcast MP Koprivica's wedding. Photos from the wedding were shown during the Meet the MPs (*Upoznajte parlamentarce*) TV show in the section where MP Koprivica spoke about his private life.

EUROPEAN UNION DOES NOT INTRODUCE VISAS FOR CITIZENS OF MONTENEGRO

DISINFORMATION

The *Voice of Montenegro* portal [announced](#) on January 14, 2023, the news about the alleged decision of the European Union to introduce a visa regime for citizens of Montenegro, followed by a sensational headline *Exclusive: European Union Introduces Visas for Citizens of Montenegro!?* The text of the article states that the Council of Europe will adopt a decision on suspending the issuance of visa facilitation for Montenegrin citizens in early February, after which such a visa regime will soon be implemented. It further states that the decision will be announced by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia Tanja Fajon, who was in Montenegro on January 15, 2023, which turned out to be incorrect. Fajon openly warned

that Montenegro, if no Constitutional Court judges are elected, risks halting negotiations but did not mention the introduction of visas for Montenegrin citizens. Also, *Raskrinkavanje.me* asked the Delegation of the European Union whether the information in the text that the European Union intends to introduce mandatory visas for citizens of Montenegro is true or is a matter of disinformation, to which they replied: *The publication you mention in your question is not true.*



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