

More than 80% of Russian-originated tweets on US COVID vaccines are negative. Here is the story of Putin's disinformation campaign

An official with the State Department's Global Engagement Center, which monitors foreign disinformation efforts, identified four publications that he said have served as fronts for Russian intelligence.

The websites played up the vaccines' risk of side effects, questioned their efficacy, and said the U.S. had rushed the Pfizer vaccine through the approval process, among other false or misleading claims.

Though the outlets' readership is small, U.S. officials say they inject false narratives that can be amplified by other Russian and international media.

"We can say these outlets are directly linked to Russian intelligence services," the Global Engagement Center official said of the sites behind the disinformation campaign. "They're all foreign-owned, based outside of the United States. They vary a lot in their reach, their tone, their audience, but they're all part of the Russian propaganda and disinformation ecosystem."

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The forthcoming German Marshall Fund report... analyzed more than 35,000 Russian, Chinese and Iranian government and state media tweets on vaccine themes from early November to early February. "Russia provided by far the most negative coverage of Western vaccines." it states, "with a remarkable 86% of surveyed Russian tweets mentioning Pfizer and 76% mentioning Moderna coded as negative."

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