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GEC Counter-Disinformation Dispatches

The Global Engagement Center (GEC) is a U.S. government interagency organization housed at the Department of State that has the Congressionally-mandated [mission](#) of leading U.S. government efforts to counter foreign state and non-state propaganda and disinformation aimed at undermining the United States, its allies, and partner nations.

The GEC publishes GEC Counter-Disinformation Dispatches, which summarize lessons learned about disinformation and how to counter it based on the experiences of frontline counter-disinformation practitioners, for the benefit of those newly engaged in this issue in the USG and foreign governments, NGOs, academia, and interested media. They are intended to be “evergreen” products, containing lasting lessons.

They have been translated into Russian, Spanish, French, and Arabic.

Eight Dispatches have been issued so far. They are:

- #1: [A Counter-Disinformation System That Works](#), January 8, 2020
 - How Lithuanian NGOs use algorithms, volunteer researchers (elves), and strong media contacts to monitor, research, and debunk disinformation before it spreads widely
- #2: [Three Ways to Counter Disinformation](#), February 11, 2020
 - The superiority of a counter-brand vs. a counter-allegation approach
 - The importance of highlighting absurd, highly objectionable false claims
 - Change the frame, create moral outrage, the need for expert spokespersons
 - Target mass audiences; don’t try to convince “true believers”
 - Exposing leads to success
- #3: [The Myth that Debunking Doesn’t Work](#), March 25, 2020
 - The faulty social science finding that hampered counter-disinformation efforts starting in 2007
- #4: [What Works in Debunking](#), April 14, 2020
 - Tips on debunking, the importance of discrediting, telling stories, recognizing the power of associations; how truth best competes with lies

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- #5: [The Coronavirus and Disinformation: Russia Remains True to Form](#), May 27, 2020
 - False Russian and Chinese claims that the coronavirus is a U.S. biological weapons follow 70 years of false claims of U.S. biowarfare
- #6: [Using Pseudo-Academic Online Journals to Amplify Fringe Voices](#), September 28, 2020
 - How the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) uses a pseudo-academic online journal, the *Strategic Culture Foundation*, to amplify the views of fringe voices in the West
- #7: [Building an International Disinformation Network](#), November 10, 2020
 - How the SVR-directed *Strategic Culture Foundation* partnered with *Global Research*, a far-left website in Canada, and *The 4th Media*, an obscure website in Beijing, to begin to build an international disinformation system in the early 2010s.
- #8: [What Can We Learn from the Active Measures Working Group?](#), December 1, 2020
 - The U.S. government's interagency Active Measures Working Group is widely credited with causing the Soviets to stop crude, overt, anti-American disinformation in the late 1980s. The Dispatch examines the factors for its success, with an eye to lessons that may be useful today.

GEC Counter-Disinformation Dispatches currently in preparation are:

- #9: Secret Disinformation and Agents of Influence
 - Documentary evidence from KGB archives on how the KGB tried to influence the decisions of foreign governments in the early 1980s provides unimpeachable information on this little-known aspect of disinformation. KGB-controlled messengers tried to convince foreign leaders that if they pursued policies opposed by the Soviet Union, this would create “nightmare scenarios” for them. There is no reason to believe the same methods are not used today.

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- #10: The Extraordinary Scope and Breadth of Russian Propaganda and Disinformation
 - A comprehensive analysis of how Russia likely segments target audiences and devises themes for each of them, based on an in-depth analysis by the strategic communication department of the armed forces of a NATO country, which can serve as a template for other governments or organizations interested in conducting similar analyses for their countries.

Future GEC Counter-Disinformation Dispatches may include (subject to change):

- #11: Exacerbating Conflicts and Using Phony Social Media Personas
- #12: Kompromat and Directed Information: Hack and Leak Operations
- #13: Russia Efforts to Rewrite History
- #14: The Use of Horror, Smears, Fabrications, and Scapegoating
- #15: Conspiracy Theories and How to Counter Them
- #16: Using Conciliation as a Weapon
- #17: Disinformation when Caught Red-handed: MH17, Skripal, and Navalny
- #18: Is Disinformation Effective? How the Russians see this Question
- #19: Summary and Guide