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Disinformation Alerts – Serbian Media Monitoring is a monthly report on the news related to disinformation and misinformation targeting Kosovo, published by media in Serbia

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KOSOVO DISINFORMATION ALERTS

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INTRODUCTION

Kosovo Disinformation Alerts: Serbian Media Monitoring aims to counter disinformation through monitoring on a monthly basis of the preselected media outlets originating in Serbia. The preselected media are Tanjug, Informer, Novosti, Kurir, B92, Politika and Naša Borba that are known for producing news with disinformation content that is not limited only to Kosovo.

During January 2020, Tanjug has published 45, Informer 31, Novosti 44, Kurir 11, B92 49, Politika 50, and Naša Borba 20 articles that were related to Kosovo.

A careful review shows that the monitored news published during this period by Tanjug and B92 did not contain any serious disinformation content. However, other preselected media outlets did have quite a large number of news and articles with disinformation content on Kosovo. Against this backdrop, KIPRED is focused on the deconstruction of the most blatant disinformation provided by the above listed Serbian media, which will be discussed in the following section.

The aim of the disinformation generated during this monitoring period by the preselected Serbian Media in relation to Kosovo indicates that it is focused on denying war crimes committed by Serbian armed forces during the 1998-1999 conflict, discrediting the leadership and security institutions of Kosovo as well as the provided Western assistance, projecting Kosovo and Montenegro as rogue states, and interpreting the EU supported regional cross-border cooperation between Kosovo, Montenegro and Albania, as a support provided by Montenegro for the creation of a phantom “Greater Albania.

DECONSTRUCTION OF THE MOST BLATANT DETECTED DISINFORMATION

Disinformation Alert 1

1. **Headline:** *Što si uradio 1999, to si uradio! Prošlo je tvoje vreme: Vučić odbrusio Vilijamu Vokeru, opet je došao na Kosovo (You did what you did in 1999! Your time has gone: Vučić brushed to Walker, he came to Kosovo again), Kurir, January 14, 2020.*¹

Kurir quotes the statement of the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, in a press conference held in Belgrade, in which he commented on the visit to Prishtina of the former OSCE Head of Mission in Kosovo, Ambassador William Walker, "Today, Serbia is not a handful of oats that you can fake, like you did in 1999. You did what you did in 1999, William, it is not your time anymore," Vučić said, in an answer to one from the press questions. He ironically noted that Walker, as he once admitted that his aim is to form an independent Kosovo, has now left for Prishtina, because it is the time to form a Greater Albania, but he stressed that this will not happen. "There is nothing, William, of your turf business."

Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

In an attempt of denial of the war crimes committed by Serbian armed forces in Kosovo, President Vučić has accused the retired U.S. Ambassador William Walker, the former head of the Kosovo Verification Mission in Kosovo,² for providing false evidence on the killing of 45 Albanian civilians in the village of Rečak by the Serbian armed forces on January 15th, 1999³. After visiting the crime scene, Ambassador Walker called this act of Serbian forces a "crime against humanity," which alarmed international community, and after the refusal of Serbia to accept the Rambouillet

¹ Što si uradio 1999, to si uradio! Prošlo je tvoje vreme: Vučić odbrusio Vilijamu Vokeru, opet je došao na Kosovo [You did what you did in 1999! Your time has gone: Vucic brushed to Walker, he came to Kosovo again], Kurir, January 14th, 2020, <https://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/3392783/sto-si-uradio-1999-to-si-uradio-proslo-je-tvoje-vreme-vucic-odbrusio-vilijamu-vokeru-opet-je-dosao-na-kosovo>

² For further information see: OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission/OSCE Task Force for Kosovo (closed), <https://www.osce.org/kvm-closed>

³ For further information see the interview of Ambassador Walker given to PBS Frontline: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/interviews/walker.html>

Accords,⁴ led to NATO military intervention in Kosovo. Furthermore, through an attempt to discredit the personality of Amb. Walker, President Vučić accused him that he is trying to form a “Greater Albania”, which is a non-sense allegation.

Disinformation Alert 2

Headline: *Istina o Račku je odavno isplivala ali se na nju niko ne obazire (The truth on Racak has surfaced long ago, but no one is paying attention to it), **Politika, January 15th, 2020***⁵

Among other things, this article claims that “The Račak case was fabricated at a time when the Rambouillet talks were in crisis. The goal of Walker and of the West was to acquire support of the world public opinion, and of the still undecided Western governments, for aggression against Yugoslavia, which began on March 24th, without a UN Security Council decision. In contrast, three forensic teams – Yugoslav, Belarusian and Finnish – found only gunshot wounds from a distance on the bodies of the victims in the village of Račak, and they also found gunpowder particles on the hands of those killed”.

Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

The Head of Finish Investigation Team, Dr. Helena Ranta, who was in charge of the investigation of the massacre of Rečak committed by Serbian forces on January 15th, 1999, when 45 villagers were killed, once after the investigation was completed and forensic showed that 45 victims were unarmed civilians, called this act as a “crime against humanity”⁶, that proves the falseness and disinformation provided with the aim of denying the war crimes committed by Serbia in Kosovo.

⁴ Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosovo (Rambouillet Accords), <https://peacemaker.un.org/kosovo-rambouilletagreement99>

⁵ <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/445858/Истина-о-Рачку-је-одавно-испливала-али-се-%D0>

⁶ Chris Bird, Recak report finds Serbs guilty, Guardian, March 18, 1999, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/mar/18/4>

Disinformation Alert 3

Headline: *Zločinci na platnom spisku NATO (Criminals in NATO's payment lists), Novosti, January 27th, 2020⁷.*

Among other things, this article claims: "KFOR, which has the mandate of NATO forces and of the United Nations, violates several Security Council resolutions. The occupation of Kosovo and the creation of a quasi-state provision are indeed blatant denial of Yugoslav sovereignty. However, the Balkans are just a single step in a broader process involving control of the Central Asia, as well as of the region around the Caspian Sea, and of the huge reserves of oil and gas. We also know that Kosovo soil is very rich in ore reserves. What is particularly concerning is that the US has created a mafia community. The self-proclaimed Prime Minister of Kosovo is a mafioso, connected with the biggest criminals in Western Europe."

Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

This article does not provide any evidence on which are the United Nations Security Council resolutions that KFOR has violated, then, it considers NATO led Mission in Kosovo as an occupation, regardless of the fact that its presence was mandated by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999),⁸ and it does not provide even a single evidence on its allegations that the leadership of Kosovo is connected to the biggest criminals in Western Europe.

Disinformation 4

Headline: *Galijašević: Olivera su ubili Albanci, NATO želi nestabilno Kosovo (Galijasevic: Albanians have killed Oliver, NATO wants unstable Kosovo), Novosti, January 17th, 2020⁹*

⁷ Zločinci na platnom spisku NATO (Criminals in NATO's payment lists), Novosti, January 27th, 2020, https://www.novosti.rs/dodatni_sadrzaj/clanci.119.html:844007-Zlocinci-na-platnom-spisku-NATO

⁸ UNSC Resolution 1244 (1999), <https://peacemaker.un.org/kosovo-resolution1244>

⁹ Galijašević: Olivera su ubili Albanci [Albanians have killed Oliver], Novosti, January 17th, 2020, <https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/politika/aktuelno.289.html:842081-Galijasevic-Olivera-su-ubili-Albanci-NATO-zeli-nestabilno-Kosovo>

The article says that “It is clear to whom Oliver Ivanović was a problem. He was arrested by Albanians. The story that he was acceptable and that he worked on the union of Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo, so that that was the problem – that is a non-sense. Ivanović was arrested by Albanians, charged with the worst crimes, and held in prison for more than three years. He eventually proved his innocence before the Court of Appeal. And what Albanians did afterwards, a few months after that, they killed him – Galijašević is categorical”

Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

The late Kosovo-Serbian politician Oliver Ivanović was arrested and prosecuted by the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX).¹⁰ Furthermore, the Special Prosecution of Kosovo has sued six people for involvement in the murder of Oliver Ivanović, who were part of the criminal organisations led by Milan Radojčić¹¹, who is at large in Serbia.

Disinformation Alert 5

Headline: *Otkriven opasan plan ekstremista iz Milove stranke: Ubacuju ROSU među narod da izazovu nered na dočeku Srpskenovegodine? (A dangerous plan of the extremists from Milo's [Milo Đukanović] Party revealed: They place ROSA among the people for causing riots on the Serbian New Year's Eve?), Novosti, January 5th, 2020¹².*

Among other things, the article says: “An extreme wing of the ruling Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro [Political Party of the Prime-Minister Milo Djukanovic], aided by individuals from security structures, have prepared a plan to provoke a riot on January 13th,

¹⁰ See EULEX Press Release, Verdict on O.I. Case, Pronounced, January 21st, 2016, <https://www.eulex-kosovo.eu/?page=2%2C10%2C378&fbclid=IwAR02RyBoH3Oxoqvw37P4RhqhUj-RJHKwtel-zBsD7oghSzEZd2X4sSvxmPw>

¹¹ [Chief Prosecutor] Hoxha: Arrested Serbs worked under orders from Milan Radojčić's criminal group, October 16th, 2019, N1, News, <http://rs.n1info.com/English/NEWS/a535042/Hoxha-Special-Prosecution-ordered-police-operation-in-north-Kosovo.html>

¹² Otkriven opasan plan ekstremista iz Milove stranke: Ubacuju ROSU među narod da izazovu nered na dočeku Srpske nove godine? Novosti, January 5th, 2020, <https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/politika/aktuelno.289.html:839959-Otkriven-opasan-plan-ekstremista-iz-Milove-stranke-Ubacuju-ROSU-medju-narod-da-izazovu-nerede-na-docek-Srpske-nove-godine>

during the New Year's Eve, and then blame organizers from the Serbian House”, and that “This information, as Novosti informally learns, reached the Montenegrin police, and it has already been spread among Montenegrin operatives. The essence of the dangerous action, allegedly charged by Zoran Lazović, the Director of the Police Directorate and President Milo Djukanović's special assignment officer, is in the placement of former terrorist gangs from Kosovo, now hidden within the so-called ROSU [Kosovo Police Special Forces] unit in the territory of Montenegro on the eve of the festivities, with the aim of causing conflicts during the celebration that could escalate.

Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

This disinformation targets both, Montenegro and Kosovo authorities and institutions, as “rogue” ones that aim to repress the Serbian population which is living in its own territories. First of all, the Agreement on Police Cooperation between Kosovo and Montenegro of 26th of March, 2014, does not envisage any possibility for each of the parties for using the other contractual part's police forces in its own territory.¹³ Secondly, labelling the members of ROSU forces as former terrorist gangs from Kosovo, is a total non-sense, given that the ROSU forces were created by CIVPOL in 2002, and were developed under the auspices of UNMIK and EULEX¹⁴, and that the Kosovo Liberation Army was never categorized as a terrorist organization by any international organization or any Western State.

¹³ For further information see: Marrëveshje në mes Qeverisë së Republikës së Kosovës dhe Qeverisë të Malit të Zi për bashkëpunim policor [Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Kosovo and the Government of Montenegro on Police Cooperation], March 26th, 2014 https://mpb.rks-gov.net/Documents/Mali_e_Zi_160516.pdf

¹⁴ For further information on the development of Kosovo's Security Sector see: Jelle Janssens, State Building in Kosovo: A Plural Policing Perspective, Maklu Publishers, 2015.

Disinformation Alert 5

Headline: Zapad finansira: Milo Đukanović pomaže projekat „Velika Albanija“ [The West is financing: Milo Đukanović is assisting the “Greater Albania” Project], **Naša Borba**, January 15th, 2020¹⁵

The article says that “In addition to Montenegro, self-proclaimed Kosovo and Albania have concluded contracts between them, and there is also a joint agreement on regional and cross-border co-operation between all three entities. Recent treaties between Montenegro, Kosovo and Albania also prove that contracts are not a million-dollar “dead letter” on paper and that relations are “flourishing”. With the support of the European Union and IPA Cross-border Co-operation Funds – Montenegro-Kosovo (2014-2020), two three-day training sessions on project cycle management for potential applicants have been organized and are part of the technical support of the IPA Cross-border Co-operation Programs Montenegro-Albania and Montenegro-Kosovo, funded by the European Union.

Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

The article spreads fears for the creation of “Greater Albania” by justifying it with the EU supported IPA Cross Border Co-operation Funds Montenegro–Kosovo, which hardly deserves any comment.

However, for the sake of the argument, it has to be stressed that the general objective of the IPA Cross-border Co-operation Programs Montenegro–Kosovo is to improve the standard and quality of living of the people, through “Promoting employment, labour mobility and social and cultural inclusion across the border; Protecting the environment, promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management; and Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage”¹⁶.

¹⁵ Zapad Finansira: Milo Đukanović pomaže projekat “VelikaAlbanija”, Naša Borba, January 15th, 2020, <https://nasaborba.com/zapad-finansira-milo-djukanovic-pomaze-projekat-velika-albanija/>

¹⁶ For further details see: Program Facts, IPA II, Cross-border Co-operation Programs Montenegro-Kosovo, <https://cbc-mne-kos.org/programme/programme-facts/>