

ANALYTICAL NOTE

The Russian “Radioactive Contamination” Disinformation Campaign Following the Explosion Near Kyiv

Product profile	Details
Product type	Analytical note (open document for publication)
Subject	Russian information operation on Telegram surrounding the explosion in Vyshneve (Kyiv oblast); the “uranium munitions” and “radiological threat” narrative; its structure, reach, and coordination.
Date	10 July 2026
Monitoring period	6–9 July 2026
Methodology	Collection of Telegram messages by topic keywords, comparison against a reference text of the “injection,” clustering by content, and analysis of relay cascades.
Data sources	Public Telegram channels. 403 screened; the final analysis covered the “uranium” core of 32 channels. Combined sample from two collection passes.

Introduction

This note analyses a Russian information operation on Telegram that unfolded around the explosion in the city of Vyshneve (Kyiv oblast) on 6 July 2026. Its purpose is to establish the structure, reach, and degree of coordination of a campaign that pushed false narratives about “uranium munitions” and a “radiological threat,” and to assess its effectiveness during the period in question.

The actual event

On 6 July 2026, a Russian strike on the city of Vyshneve caused an explosion at an ammunition depot, followed by a powerful detonation. According to a statement by the President of Ukraine, the depot belonged to one of the defense-industry companies of Ukroboronprom; a criminal investigation was opened. The explosions destroyed roughly 13 hectares of residential development, levelled several streets, and damaged 280 residential buildings — 253 private houses and 27 apartment blocks.¹

How Russia sought to exploit the event

Russian outlets used the real tragedy as a factual pretext for a disinformation overlay. In place of the fact — “an ammunition depot exploded” — a fabricated version was pushed: that the depot allegedly held “uranium munitions for Abrams,” and that the city therefore faced a “radioactive cloud.” This is a common pattern of Russian information operations and disinformation campaigns: a factually accurate core of an event is overgrown with false details that cannot be quickly refuted; and such operations, as in this case, are designed to heighten fear among the civilian population.

The main and adjacent narratives

- **Main narrative:** “The Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) stored uranium munitions amid residential housing; the explosion poses a radiation threat” (originator — Mash).

¹<https://t.me/MinDevUA/16260>

- **Adjacent lines:** “the authorities are concealing what was stored at the depot” (Medved / Медведь); “the Vizar military plant has been destroyed” (TASS / ТАСС); “NATO munitions carry radiation, as in Yugoslavia” (PolitNavigator / ПолітНавігатор).

All lines serve a common goal: to shift the blame for civilian casualties from the Russian strike onto the Ukrainian authorities and the West, embedding the event in a broader anti-NATO and “radiological” frame. Alongside the uranium campaign, over the same period the same channels also amplified peripheral topics unrelated to radiation (see the separate section).

Monitoring period and sample size

Monitoring of Telegram channels covered **6–9 July 2026** — from the first detected “injection” to the fading of the active phase.

Volume of material processed:

- **403 channels screened** through the search (the entire ecosystem reachable by tracing forwards and copies from the first detected message, within the depth limits set by the analysts);
- **95 messages on topic collected** from 56 channels;
- **39 channels analyzed at the preliminary stage** (49 posts across 14 clusters). Of these, the “uranium” core comprised **32 channels, 10 clusters, 38 posts**. Four clusters proved to be adjacent and only weakly connected to the core narratives, and so were not used as the basis for further analysis, conclusions, or recommendations.

Reconciling the figures: “channel” and “post” are different units. A single channel may republish across several clusters, so the number of posts (49) exceeds the number of channels (39). Likewise, the 38 uranium posts were made by 32 channels.

Terminology

The terms used in this document and their meanings:

- **Cluster** — a group of messages from different channels that match in content (a verbatim copy or a paraphrase) and belong to a single wave of spread of one narrative.
- **Originator (within the sample)** — the earliest message in a cluster by time. This is the source within the observed set of channels, not necessarily the true original source (which may lie outside the sample).
- **Relay** — a channel that reposts or paraphrases the originator’s message.
- **Nodal relay** — a channel appearing in several clusters, linking separate narrative lines.
- **Level** — a channel’s place in the chain of spread: originator → first wave → later waves.
- **Wave** — a time echelon of spread: the 1st wave is up to 30 minutes after the originator; later waves range from half an hour to days.
- **Unattributed copy-paste** — verbatim reproduction of text without a reference to the source; a marker of organized rather than organic spread.
- **“Uranium” core** — the set of clusters bringing together channels about the explosion / uranium / radiation.

Methodology

Messages were collected from Telegram by keywords and expressions relevant to the topic and compared against a reference text of the “injection.” Messages close in content were grouped into clusters; in each, the originator was

identified (by time) and a timeline of spread was built, recording reach (views) at each level. The method has a limit: the search is conducted within the observed set of channels, so the “first recorded” source may not be the true original source across the whole Russian segment of Telegram.

Waves and reach: how the “injection” spread

This section explains how the message “flew apart” across channels. The mechanism is identical throughout and passes through three tiers — from the originator to the late relays:

- **Originator.** One large channel publishes the injection. In the main cluster this is Mash: 541,000 views straight away — it alone provided almost all the reach.
- **First wave (first minutes).** Within 5–7 minutes the message is copied verbatim by several smaller channels (Kartina Dnya / Картина дня, IA Krasnaya Vesna / ИА Красная Весна). They add few views but ensure rapid diffusion.
- **Later waves (hours).** Dozens of channels then join over the following hours, picking up both the main and the adjacent narratives. They create a “long tail” — the topic’s presence in feeds throughout 6–9 July.

The table below shows how many posts and how many views each wave produced across the entire uranium campaign — that is, how reach was distributed over time:

Wave of spread	Posts	Reach	Share
Originators	10	751,918	75%
1st wave (≤30 min)	7	25,343	2%
Amplification (0.5–3 h)	14	216,202	21%
Later pickup (3–24 h)	6	14,788	2%
TOTAL	37	≈1,008,475	100%

What this shows. **Three-quarters of all reach (75%) come from the originators** — a few large channels at the very start. The amplification wave (0.5–3 h) engages the most posts (14) but yields far fewer views — its role lies not in volume but in *multiplying the message across many feeds*, creating the impression that “everyone is writing about this.” The later pickup adds a “long tail” of presence. In total, the “uranium” core gathered **over one million views**.

Narratives and clusters of the “uranium” core

The uranium campaign is not a single message but **ten linked narrative lines** around the explosion, ranging from a specific uranium injection to the generalization “NATO = radiation.” Each line corresponds to a separate cluster (labelled C1–C10, in descending order of reach):

Cluster	Narrative	Originator	Wave 1 (≤30 min)	Later (>30 min)	Reach
C1	“Uranium munitions” — base injection	Mash	2	0	542,080
C2	“Vizar plant destroyed”	TASS	2	2	201,447
C3	“Authorities don’t know / concealing”	Medved	2	7	116,034
C4	“APFSDS U-238 at the plant”	Bolshoy Transfer	0	2	55,312
C5	“NATO summit agenda”	Na Samom Dele v Kharkove	1	1	27,485
C6	“Depot detonation at night”	Svezhesti	0	2	25,448

Cluster	Narrative	Originator	Wave 1 (≤30 min)	Later (>30 min)	Reach
C7	"NATO munitions = radiation"	PolitNavigator	0	1	22,711
C8	"Target destroyed"	Frontovaya Ptichka	0	1	11,702
C9	"Missile destroyed uranium depot"	Rossiia Novosti Vazhno	0	3	4,684
C10	"Big blast in Vyshneve"	Rossiia Novosti Vazhno	0	1	1,348
	TOTAL (uranium core)	32 channels			≈1,008,475

Explanation of columns: "Wave 1" — how many channels picked up the narrative in the first 30 minutes after the originator; "Later (>30 min)" — how many picked it up afterwards (combining amplification 0.5–3 h and later pickup 3–24 h from the distribution table above). A "0" means that, in this interval, no channel other than the originator republished the narrative.

Assessment of the coordination mechanism

We analyzed the links between channels for evidence of common administration and coordination. Four measurable indicators were used: the presence of a forwarding tag; the degree of textual match; the time lag between posts; and the recurrence of the same pairs of channels across different events.

An important limit of the method comes first: **automated posting is hard to distinguish from common administration**. When two channels publish identical text almost simultaneously, this is equally well explained by their being run by one person/team and by their being connected to a shared auto-posting service. From Telegram's data alone these two cases are indistinguishable, so below we cannot determine whether auto-posting or common administration took place — or common administration in the form of previously configured auto-posting.

What the analysis showed for each indicator:

- **Forwarding (forwards).** A portion of relays carry a forwarding tag — a technical repost, the most transparent type of link.
- **Verbatim copying without attribution.** This dominates the sample — 34 of 48 republications (71%) are verbatim copies without a source tag, with lags from minutes to tens of minutes. This is the strongest available signal: such behavior **likely** indicates organized spread on a common cue (a "playbook") rather than each channel's independent reaction.
- **Simultaneity of the same pairs.** This is the very indicator that would distinguish common control from mere copying — had the same two or three channels systematically published identical text within minutes across many different events. But no such thing was found in this sample: the pairs of channels overlap mostly once, and there are no stable synchronous "ties."

Overall conclusion: the spread of the narratives is organized and inorganic; at the same time, the data are insufficient to identify constellations of channels sharing common administrators.

Assessment of the disinformation campaign

Reach

Over one million views for the "uranium" core (32 channels) across 6–9 July. The bulk of reach is concentrated on a few large originators (Mash 542k, TASS 201k, Medved 116k).

Coordination

The high share of copy-paste (71%) points to organized, inorganic spread. However, evidence of a single control center is lacking — this is more a network operating on a common cue than something demonstrably run from a single point.

Multi-tiered reach

The campaign spread beyond the purely Russian-language segment: it drew in Transnistrian, Belarusian, Armenian-language, and regional Ukrainian (“Na Samom Dele v...”) segments. This indicates a broader, echeloned reach into audiences.

Effectiveness during the period

Over 6–9 July the Russian narrative **dominated the Russian-language Telegram segment almost unimpeded**. The Ukrainian side responded late and in an uncoordinated way: the General Staff and the Logistics Forces Command denied that the site belonged to the AFU, and the President announced a criminal investigation. Yet these rebuttals did not present a coherent, clear picture, and lacked the format of rapid, coordinated communication and breadth of reach. Ukraine’s response did not manage to override the Russian campaign within the active phase, and Russian narratives consequently penetrated beyond the Russian segment of Telegram. The absence of a rapid Ukrainian counter-narrative in the first hours **very likely** allowed the Russian version to embed itself substantially in the audience and, **likely**, to be reused later.

Conclusions and recommendations

1. **Rapid communication (the first hours).** The most critical finding: there was no immediate Ukrainian rebuttal in a strong format and on channels comparable in influence to those spreading the “injection.” For instance, instead of clear and unified communication, state bodies informed the public separately and in turn: first the Armed Forces of Ukraine (denying any link to the depot that exploded), then the President (on instructing law enforcement and intelligence to establish what had happened), while the concern named by the President — Ukroboronprom — did not communicate at all. The authorities should develop a mechanism for responding within the first 1–2 hours of such events. The content of the messaging was also unable to compete with the Russian narratives, and at times was plainly mistaken. For example, the President’s statement about tasking intelligence to establish what had been at Vyshneve could be read as a need to establish the facts from international partners as to what exactly had been stored there.
2. **Priority monitoring targets:** Mash, TASS, Medved (originators); Fond Strategicheskoy Kultury, PolitNavigator, IA Krasnaya Vesna (nodal relays).
3. **Separation in the counter-product:** clearly distinguish the real event (the depot explosion) from the disinformation frame (uranium/radiation).
4. **For attributing a center:** accumulate observations of the already-identified channel pairs across other topics — to confirm or refute common control.

Caveat. Assessments rest on an open Telegram sample limited to the monitoring set; the “first recorded” source may not coincide with the true original source. Reach figures are estimates (views at the time of collection). Conclusions on coordination are probabilistic and do not constitute technical attribution.

Appendix A. List of channels in the “uranium” core

The “uranium” core channels by role and by the clusters (C1–C10) in which they appeared. Originators are in bold. Channels from the peripheral clusters (PC) are not included here.

Channel (original)	Role	Clusters	Main line
Mash	Originator	C1	Uranium munitions
TASS (ТАСС)	Originator	C2	Vizar plant
Medved (Медведь)	Originator (C3) / late relay (C10)	C3, C10	Authorities concealing
Bolshoy Transfer (Большой трансфер)	Originator	C4	APFSDS U-238
Rossiya Novosti Vazhno (Россия Новости Важно)	Originator (C9, C10)	C9, C10	Missile / detonation
Na Samom Dele v Kharkove (На самом деле в Харькове)	Originator	C5	NATO summit
Svezhesti (Свежести)	Originator	C6	Night detonation
PolitNavigator (ПолитНавигатор)	Originator	C7	NATO = radiation
Frontovaya Ptichka (Фронтовая птичка)	Originator (C8) / late relay (C3)	C3, C8	Target destroyed
IA Krasnaya Vesna (ИА Красная Весна)	Relay	C1	1st wave
Kartina Dnya (Картина дня)	Fast relay	C1	1st wave
ZACHISTKA (ЗАЧИСТКА)	Fast relay (C3) / late relay (C8)	C3, C8	Relay
Sobstvenny Korrespondent (Собственный корреспондент)	Relay	C3	Relay
Na Samom Dele v Kiyeve (На самом деле в Киеве)	Fast relay (C5) / amplifier (C6)	C5, C6	Relay
Na Samom Dele v Dnepre (На самом деле в Днепре)	Amplifier (C3) / late relay (C5)	C3, C5	Relay
Na Samom Dele v Odesse (На самом деле в Одессе)	Regional (UA)	C3	Relay
Na Samom Dele v Luganske (На самом деле в Луганске)	Regional (UA)	C9	Relay
Odesa Za Pobedu! (Одесса За Победу!)	Regional (UA)	C4	Relay
MOYA ARMENIYA (МОЯ АРМЕНИЯ)	Armenian-language	C6	Relay
Parallel (Параллель)	Armenian-language	C4	Relay
BelVPO (БелВПО)	Belarusian	C3	Relay
VOZMEZDIE (ВОЗМЕЗДИЕ)	Relay	C3	Relay
ZAPOROZHSKY FRONT (ЗАПОРОЖСКИЙ ФРОНТ)	Relay	C3	Relay
Stepnoy Veter (Степной ветер)	Late relay	C3	Relay
Vecherniy Tiraspol (Вечерний Тирасполь)	Late relay (Transnistrian)	C3	“Authorities concealing”
KOMANDA NOVOSTEY (КОМАНДА НОВОСТЕЙ)	Relay	C2	Relay
KRYMINFORUM (КРЫМИНФОРУМ)	Fast relay	C2	1st wave
Tolko Po Delu! (Только по делу!)	Fast relay	C2	1st wave
Newsach/Dvach (Ньюсач/Двач)	Relay	C2	Relay
RASSHCHEPILO (РАСЩЕПИЛО)	Relay	C9	Relay
KREML PUTIN (КРЕМЛЬ ПУТИН)	Relay	C9	Relay

Channel (original)	Role	Clusters	Main line
Rusky Demiurg (Русский Демиург)	Late relay	C3	Relay

The Transnistrian channel Vecherniy Tiraspol is assigned to cluster C3 ("the authorities are concealing what was stored," 8 July) on substantive grounds. Its text is an independent restatement of the C3 line in its own words — its textual similarity to the cluster is about 40%, below the 90% threshold that automatic clustering uses to merge near-identical copies. It was therefore added to C3 by analytical judgment rather than by automatic text-matching, which groups verbatim copies rather than thematically related paraphrases.

Appendix B. Examples of the spreading messages

Texts of the originator messages of all ten “uranium” clusters (translated from the Russian originals).

“Uranium” core (C1–C10)

Cluster C1 — base injection (Mash, 6 Jul, ≈541k)

“600 people evacuated from a Kyiv suburb — the AFU stored uranium munitions for Abrams amid a residential district; the depot was struck overnight by Russian forces. The city may be blanketed by a cloud of radioactive dust...”

Cluster C2 — the Vizar plant (TASS, 8 Jul, ≈201k)

“The Vizar military plant near Kyiv has been completely destroyed by the explosion at the ammunition depot in Vyshneve, said former Verkhovna Rada deputy Mosiychuk...”*

Cluster C3 — “authorities concealing” (Medved, 7 Jul, ≈116k)

“Ukrainian military and officials do not know who stored the shells on the outskirts of Kyiv. The firefighters are searching, the police are searching... but they cannot find who stored the missiles...”

Cluster C4 — “APFSDS U-238 at the plant” (Bolshoy Transfer, 8 Jul, ≈55k)

“At the plant in Vyshneve near Kyiv there were APFSDS U-238 rounds — Armor-Piercing Fin-Stabilized Discarding Sabot sub-calibre shells with a depleted-uranium core. Residents were told not to go outside or open windows. Evacuation is under way...”

Cluster C5 — “NATO summit agenda” (Na Samom Dele v Kharkove, 8 Jul, ≈27k)

“On today’s NATO summit agenda — numerous arms deals. Kyiv, which systematically demands munitions and equipment from its allies...” (the line links the explosion to Western arms supplies)

Cluster C6 — “night detonation of the depot” (Svezhesti, 6 Jul, ≈25k)

“Tonight, Geran-type UAVs, Iskander tactical-missile crews, Kalibr cruise missiles and Tsirkon hypersonic missiles struck AFU facilities and depots and Ukraine’s military industry in Kyiv...”

Cluster C7 — the “NATO = radiation” synthesis (PolitNavigator, 8 Jul, ≈23k)

“The NATO munitions that exploded near Kyiv pose a radiation threat. The depot held uranium shells — like those NATO used against Yugoslavia...”

Cluster C8 — “target destroyed” (Frontovaya Ptichka, 8 Jul, ≈12k)

“In Vyshneve, Kyiv oblast, the designated targets have been destroyed. It is claimed that the plant held APFSDS U-238 rounds — sub-calibre shells with a depleted-uranium core. Evacuation is under way...”

Cluster C9 — “missile destroyed a uranium depot” (Rossiya|Novosti|Vazhno, 8 Jul, ≈5k)

“A Russian missile destroyed a depleted-uranium depot near Kyiv. Russian forces struck the ammunition depot in the Kyiv suburb of Vyshneve, where sub-calibre shells were stored...”

Cluster C10 — “big blast in Vyshneve” (Rossiya | Novosti | Vazhno, 9 Jul, ≈1k)

“Quite a blast! In Vyshneve, Kyiv oblast, more than 90 houses were destroyed and nearly 300 more damaged...” (a line carrying conspiratorial elements about the causes of the explosion)

* The designations of persons are given as in the original source.