



Baltic Engagement
Centre for Combating
Information Disorders

HOT REPORT

HOW RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA FABRICATED A DRONE ATTACK NARRATIVE OF “THE BALTICS OPENED THE SKIES TO UKRAINIAN DRONES”

APRIL 2026



Co-funded by
the European Union

THIS REPORT IS A DELIVERABLE 3.1 FOR THE EU-FUNDED PROJECT WITH THE ID 101226242,
COORDINATED BY RE:BALTICA.

THIS REPORT IS BASED ON AN INVESTIGATION BY
RE:BALTICA: “HOW RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA CREATED THE
TALE OF BALTICS OPENING THE SKIES TO UKRAINIAN
DRONES”.

WHAT'S HOT?

Following a Ukrainian drone strike on targets in Russia, a coordinated disinformation campaign rapidly emerged claiming that Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia had deliberately opened their airspace to enable attacks on Russia. The claim, amplified across Telegram, Russian state media, and social platforms, falsely framed the Baltic states as direct participants in the war. Baltic governments denied the accusations, with Latvia formally protesting and identifying the narrative as part of a coordinated information operation.

What Do We See?

- **Coordinated narrative seeding:** The claim originated in pro-Kremlin Telegram channels, including “Baltic Antifascists,” which framed the drone incidents as evidence of Baltic involvement.
- **Escalation through amplification:** The narrative was significantly amplified after being picked up by the large Telegram channel MASH, which falsely stated that Baltic states had “officially opened” their airspace.
- **State media reinforcement:** Russian television channels, including Rossiya 1 and Solovyov Live, repeated and legitimised the claim, presenting it as breaking news.
- **Visual manipulation:** Maps showing alleged drone flight paths were circulated to provide “evidence” and reinforce the narrative visually.
- **Multi-platform spread:** The story spread beyond Telegram and television into broader media ecosystems and social media platforms, including TikTok.
- **Cross-border uptake:** The narrative was echoed by political actors in Estonia and by pro-Kremlin figures, extending its reach beyond Russia’s information space.

Why Does It Work?

- **Speed and timing:** Disinformation was deployed quickly after the incident, shaping early interpretations before verified information could spread.

- **Layered amplification:** The narrative moved from fringe Telegram channels to major media, increasing credibility at each stage.
- **Use of partial facts:** Real events (drone crashes) were reinterpreted to support false conclusions.
- **Emotional escalation:** Framing the situation as a “casus belli” heightened perceptions of imminent conflict.
- **Visual persuasion:** Maps and graphics made speculative claims appear factual and authoritative.

Risk Assessment: HIGH

- **Escalation narratives:** The claim framed NATO member states as direct aggressors, increasing tensions and risk perceptions.
- **Information warfare pattern:** The coordinated spread across platforms and languages indicates a structured influence operation.
- **Domestic destabilisation:** The narrative was picked up locally, showing vulnerability within Baltic information spaces.
- **International impact:** The campaign aimed to shape global perceptions and justify potential Russian responses.

How to Respond?

For policymakers and institutions

- Rapidly identify and publicly counter coordinated disinformation campaigns with clear, evidence-based communication.
- Strengthen cross-border cooperation to respond to narratives targeting multiple countries simultaneously.
- Monitor Telegram and emerging platforms as key sources of early-stage disinformation.

For media and analysts

- Trace the origin and spread of narratives to expose coordination patterns.
- Avoid amplifying unverified claims without context, especially during fast-moving events.
- Use visual verification to counter manipulated maps and imagery.

For the public

- Be cautious of early reports during breaking events, especially those shared via anonymous or foreign channels.

- Question narratives that assign blame without evidence or escalate incidents into geopolitical conflict.
- Rely on official sources and trusted media for verified information.

FURTHER READING

- [RHandbook Against Disinformation: Recognise and Resist](#)
- [How Russian propaganda created the tale of Baltic's opening the skies to Ukrainian drones](#)

What is BECID?

BECID – the Baltic Engagement Centre for Combating Information Disorders – brings together expertise in fact-checking, media literacy, and journalism across the Baltics. We conduct fact-checks in collaboration with Delfi/Delfi Meedia, monitor disinformation narratives and campaigns under the leadership of investigative journalism organisation Re:Baltica, and promote media literacy through the Baltic Centre for Media Literacy (BCME). We also develop methodologies to effectively counter disinformation. Learn more: becid.ut.ee

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