



Disinformation as a Threat to the BWC

*Ninth Session on the Working Group of the
Strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention
18 August 2026*



GPWMD.CounterDisinfo@gmail.com



GPWMDcounterdisinfo.com

Agenda

- ◆ Welcome & About the Global Partnership Counter WMD Disinformation Initiative
- ◆ The Matryoshka War: A flagship concept on the global architecture of biological disinformation
- ◆ Matryoshka case studies
- ◆ Disinformation hotspot mapping
- ◆ Tools for building resilience to disinformation
- ◆ Addressing disinformation at the BWC



Canada 

GP Counter WMD Disinfo Initiative

To identify, understand and counter state-sponsored and state-adjacent disinformation about WMD across all CBRN areas to preserve and facilitate global non-proliferation progress



Canada 

FOUR PILLARS OF WORK

DETECT

ANALYZE & ANTICIPATE

UNDERSTAND IMPACT & POLICY APPROACHES

RAISE AWARENESS & BUILD CAPACITY



Resources for Delegates



WHAT'S NEW

DISINFO DECODED

ANALYSIS

FOR DELEGATES

BWC MEETINGS

CWC MEETINGS

NUCLEAR MEETINGS

EDUCATIONAL TOOLS

BWC 2024

BWC 2025

BWC 2026

ABOUT

LATEST RESEARCH



Protected: Disinfo Tactics Binge
July 21, 2024

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BWC Briefing Note: August 2026
July 10, 2024

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Statement by the GP Countering WMD Disinfo Initiative
July 4, 2024

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Ebola Disinformation Narratives
June 12, 2024

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May 14, 2024

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BWC Meetings

BWC Briefing Note: August 2026

Biological Weapons, Delegates

Left unchallenged, false narratives can erode trust between States Parties, weaken confidence in transparency and cooperation measures, and complicate efforts to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention.

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NGO STATEMENT TO BWC MEETING OF STATES PARTIES

Biological Weapons, Delegates

Read the NGO Statement to the BWC Meeting of States Parties addressing disinformation campaigns that threaten international disarmament efforts.

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BWC BRIEFING NOTE | DECEMBER 2025

Biological Weapons, Delegates

Understand the disinformation challenges facing the Biological Weapons Convention in the BWC Primer from December 2025.

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Building Resilience to False Narratives

Biological Weapons, Delegates

COUNTERING BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS DISINFORMATION Building Resilience to False Narratives: A Primer for the BWC Sixth Working Group, August 2025 Current

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Biological Weapons Disinformation Primer

Biological Weapons, Delegates

Biological Weapons Convention Fifth Working Group on the Strengthening of the Convention and Meeting of States Parties Briefing Note

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COUNTERING BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS DISINFORMATION

BWC BRIEFING NOTE | August 2026

Erosion of information integrity is a pressing concern for the BWC. Since 2022, false narratives alleging the misuse of biological laboratories in Ukraine and other partner countries have remained a persistent focus, while their geographic scope has broadened to regions including Africa, the Asia-Pacific and the Middle East. These narratives increasingly reflect regional specificities, circulate through proxy channels and multilingual media ecosystems, and frame peaceful bioscience cooperation as politically motivated, neocolonial or selectively enforced.

Left unchallenged, such claims can erode trust between States Parties, weaken confidence in transparency and cooperation measures, and complicate efforts to strengthen the Convention. The Global Partnership's Counter WMD Disinformation Initiative supports efforts to identify, counter and build resilience against these narratives, helping to protect the integrity of the global norm against biological weapons.

NEW REPORT: THE MATRYOSHKA WAR

Biological disinformation has become part of the geopolitical contestation around global health security, in which laboratories, sample-sharing, genomic surveillance, outbreak response, cooperative threat reduction and technical assistance are reframed as threats. The foundational "biolab" narrative alleges that peaceful biological cooperation conceals covert military activity. Its ambiguity is central to its usefulness: it can be adapted to almost any laboratory, outbreak, foreign partner or biosurveillance programme, allowing very different local cases to be drawn into the same geopolitical storyworld.

The Matryoshka model explains how these narratives travel and gain force. At the multilateral layer, allegations enter formal settings such as the BWC as questions of compliance, transparency or verification, giving them procedural weight. At the state and media layer, technical-sounding claims are produced, translated and circulated through official, state-aligned and proxy channels. At the local layer, these claims connect with existing concerns about sovereignty, equity, foreign influence, military involvement or access to biological resources. Each layer reinforces the others: local anxieties are repackaged as international "evidence", state actors cite them to validate the broader biolab narrative, and the narrative is then redeployed in new regional contexts. The result is a durable feedback loop that can distort assessments of compliance, weaponise public health cooperation and complicate efforts to sustain trust in the BWC.



The Global Architecture of Biological Disinformation 2026



Scan the
QR to
access the
report

<https://gpwmdcounterdisinfo.com>

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THE MATRYOSHKA WAR



The Global Architecture of Biological Disinformation 2026



THE MATRYOSHKA MODEL OF NARRATIVE PRODUCTION AND AMPLIFICATION

MULTILATERAL LEGITIMISATION

1

SETS THE PRECEDENT.
PROVIDES THE AMBIGUITY.

STATE PRODUCTION & STRATEGIC FRAMING

2

ADDS AUTHORITY.
MAKES IT CONSUMABLE.

LOCAL ACTORS & INTERPRETIVE FLEXIBILITY

3

GENERATES BELIEF.
CREATES LOCAL TRUTH.

CYCLICAL REINFORCEMENT

4





DISINFO DECODED ▾

ANALYSIS ▾

FOR DELEGATES ▾

EDUCATIONAL TOOLS ▾

ABOUT 🔍



// INTELLIGENCE BRIEF //
THE MATRYOSHKA WAR — THE GLOBAL ARCHITECTURE OF BIOLOGICAL DISINFORMATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

KEY TAKE AWAYS

↓ DOWNLOAD REPORT

// FILTER BY REGION

● ALL REGIONS (10)

● AFRICA (5)

● ASIA-PACIFIC (3)

● LATIN AMERICA (2)



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AFRICA · 1/5
Kenema Gov. Hospital, Sierra Leone

AFRICA · 2/5
INRB-Goma Lab, D.R. Congo

AFRICA · 3/5
KEMRI, Kenya

AFRICA · 4/5
Guinea

AFRICA · 5/5
Nigeria

◆ SELECT A CASE STUDY TO VIEW DETAILS



DISINFO DECODED ▾ ANALYSIS ▾ FOR DELEGATES ▾ EDUCATIONAL TOOLS ▾ ABOUT 🔍

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● ASIA-PACIFIC OVERVIEW

ASIA-PAC · 1/3
NAMRU-2, Jakarta, Indonesia

ASIA-PAC · 2/3
RADDL, Tarlac City, Philippines

ASIA-PAC · 3/3
AFRIMS Lab, Thailand

♦ CROSS-CASE SYNTHESIS
ASEAN in the Matryoshka System



♦ SELECT A CASE STUDY TO VIEW DETAILS



// INTELLIGENCE BRIEF //

THE MATRYOSHKA WAR – THE GLOBAL ARCHITECTURE OF BIOLOGICAL DISINFORMATION

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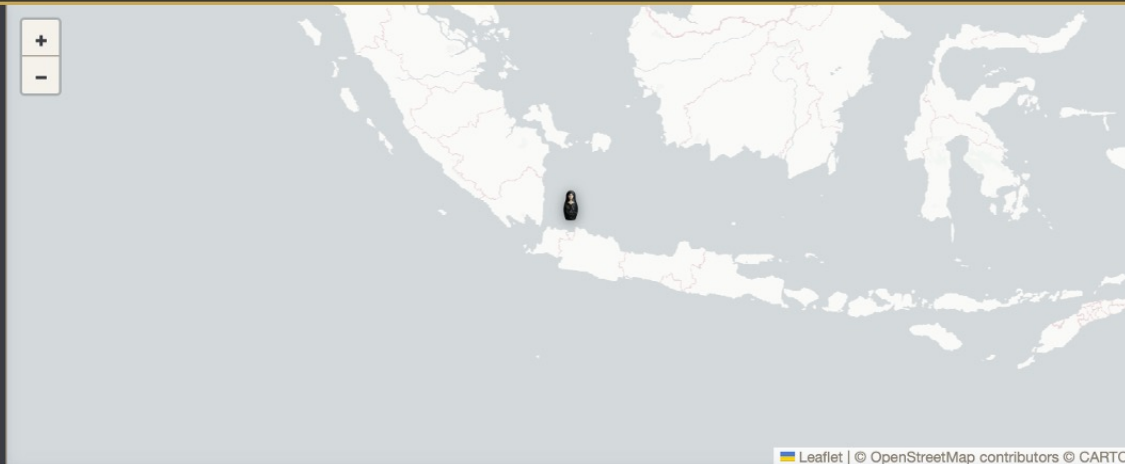
● ASIA-PACIFIC OVERVIEW

ASIA-PAC · 1/3
NAMRU-2, Jakarta, Indonesia

ASIA-PAC · 2/3
RADDL, Tarlac City, Philippines

ASIA-PAC · 3/3
AFRIMS Lab, Thailand

• CROSS-CASE SYNTHESIS
ASEAN in the Matryoshka System



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// ASIA-PACIFIC · CASE 1 / 3

NAMRU-2 Jakarta, Indonesia

// BACKGROUND

The US Naval Medical Research Unit No.2 (NAMRU-2, now NAMRU INDO PACIFIC) has been a central component of US cooperative threat reduction and global-health engagement in the Asia-Pacific for decades. Its origins trace back to the final months of the Second World War, when the US Navy, working with the Rockefeller Foundation, established the first iteration at Oca Point, Guam in 1945 to study tropical and emerging infectious diseases affecting military personnel and regional populations^[64].

Over the following decades, the unit's location shifted in response to regional health priorities and geopolitical developments. It moved to Taipei in 1955, expanded its work on vector-borne and enteric diseases, and later relocated to Manila in 1979. In 1991, a permanent detachment was established in Jakarta, which became one of Southeast Asia's most capable infectious-disease laboratories. Following the closure of the Jakarta site in 2010, the command was reconstituted in Singapore in 2013,

The Matryoshka War



Disinformation Hotspot Mapping

Methodology

- Historical narrative review
- Actor mapping
- Information environment assessment
- Amplification pathway tracing
- English-language baseline with targeted local-language review
- Structured coding for cross-case comparison



Two Hotspot Types



PUBLIC-HEALTH / CRISIS-EVENT NARRATIVES (DRC, MADAGASCAR)

Driven by uncertainty around an outbreak or public-health incident.



KEY DRIVERS

Causes, risks, and institutional credibility



KEY ACTORS

Health authorities, international organisations, medical experts, community actors, media



CORE QUESTIONS

Is the threat real? Who is responsible?
Can we trust official responses?



FOCUS

Public trust in interventions, transparency, and institutional legitimacy



DRC
Ebola-related narratives



MADAGASCAR
Toxin-use incident



STRATEGIC BIOLAB NARRATIVES (ARMENIA, AZERBAIJAN)

Geopolitical in nature, focused on alleged foreign-funded laboratories, military-biological research, and sovereignty.



KEY DRIVERS

Sovereignty, foreign influence, and security



KEY ACTORS

State-linked media, government officials, political actors, think tanks, online influencers



CORE QUESTIONS

Are foreign labs a threat? Who is influencing our country? What are they hiding?



FOCUS

Geopolitical narratives, external influence, and national security concerns



ARMENIA
Biolab-related narratives

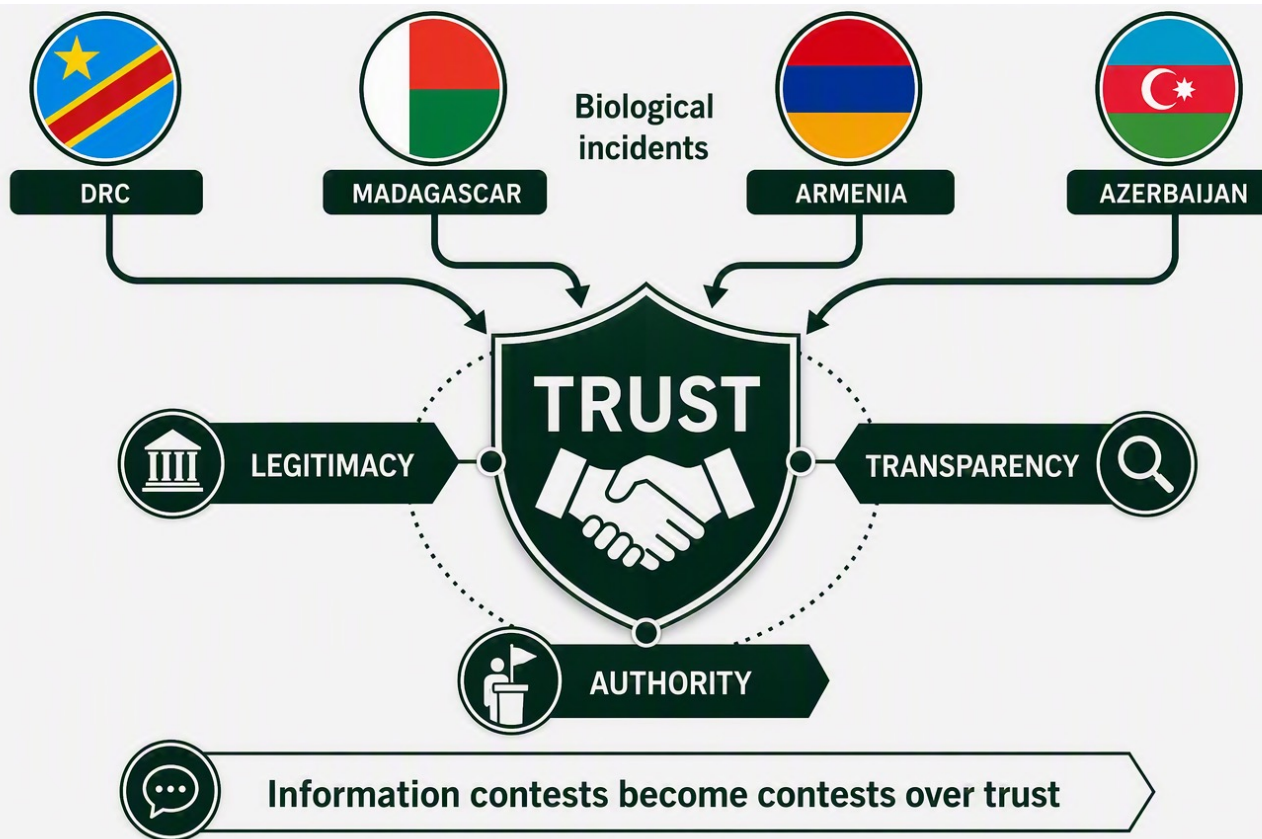


AZERBAIJAN
Biolab-related narratives

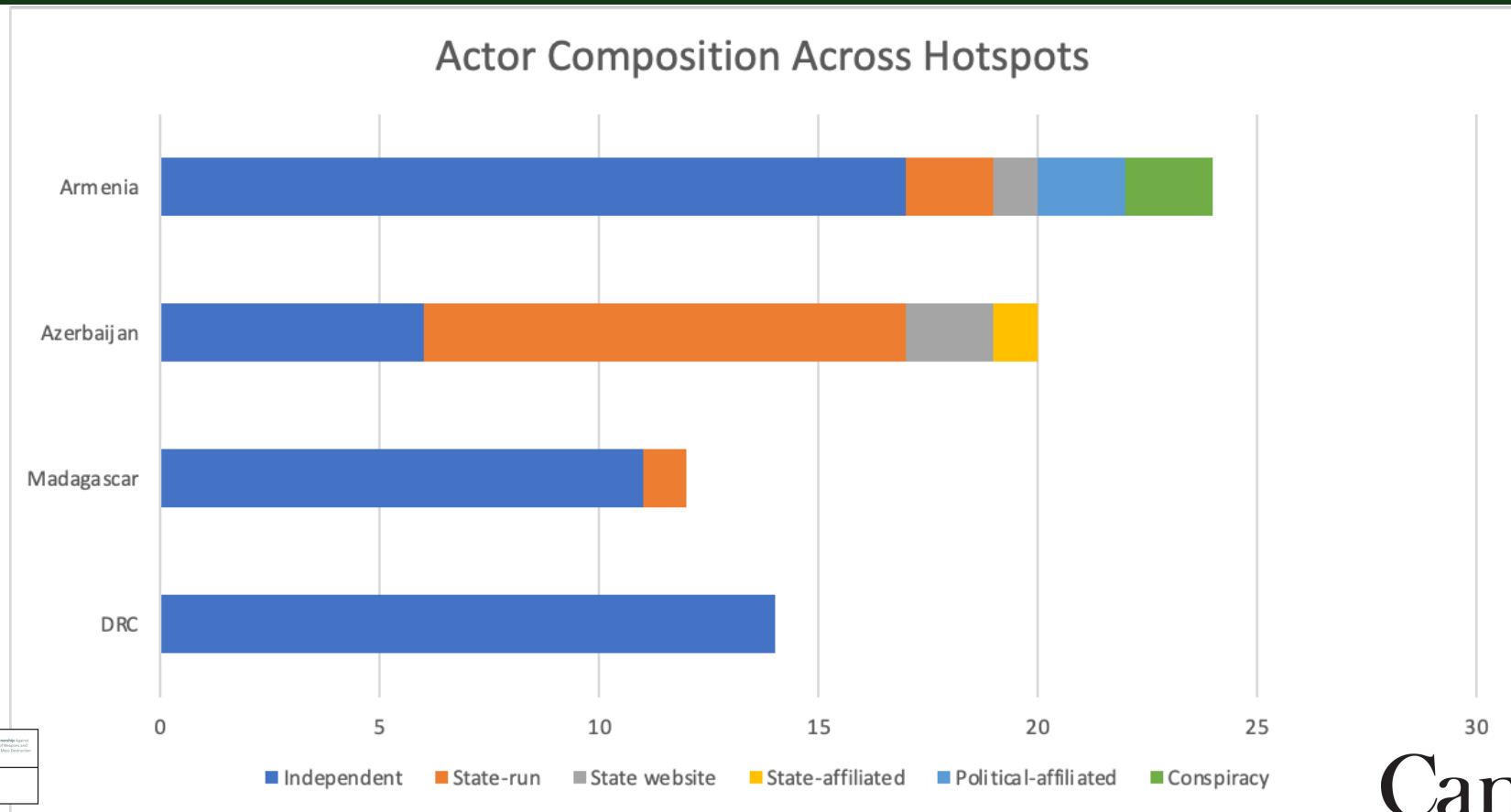


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Different Narratives Common Themes



Actor Ecosystems

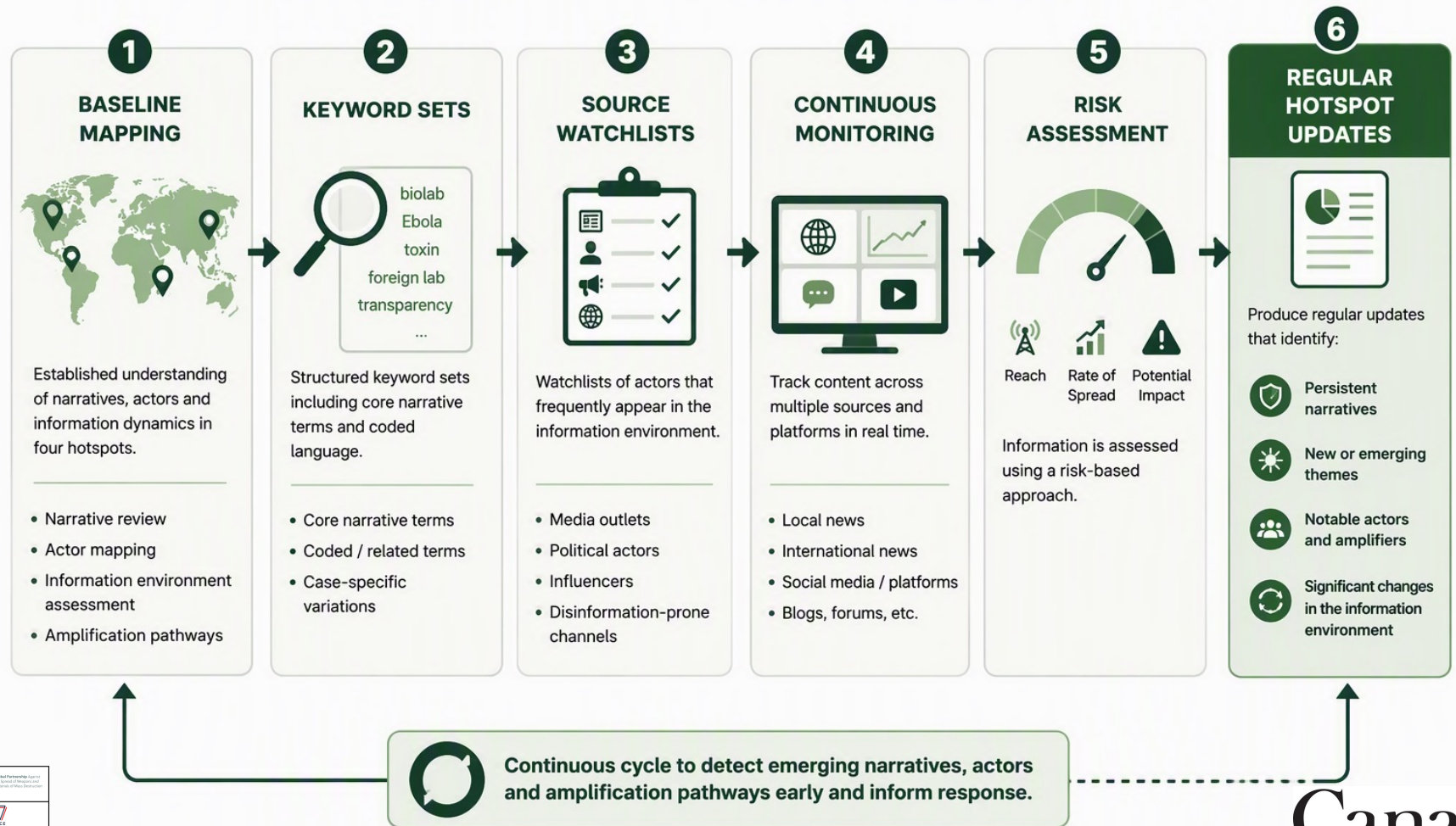


Narrative Spread



FROM BASELINE MAPPING TO CONTINUOUS MONITORING

A continuous cycle to detect, assess and respond to disinformation across four hotspots



Building Resilience: Highlighting Narrative Reuse

EBOLA DISINFORMATION NARRATIVES

A new outbreak – the same old story

June 2026

As Ebola spreads in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, disinformation narratives have emerged about the disease, generating suspicion about its origin and the development of bioweapons. Yet these narratives are familiar, and baseless. In fact, they are recycled from prior Ebola outbreaks, including the West Africa outbreak in 2014. Why? Because they worked. These narratives stoke fear, suspicion, and confusion, which is the objective of those who promote them. In essence, they take advantage of a topic that is grabbing attention to further a range of pre-existing strategic interests and goals. Here, we show the reuse of these narratives to help expose these tactics and increase resilience against these narratives in the future.

2014 Disinformation Tactics That Worked	2026 Outbreak Disinformation Plan of Action
1. Increase threat perception	1. Increase threat perception
2. Create a cloud of suspicion	2. Create a cloud of suspicion
3. Make direct accusations	3. Make direct accusations
4. Frame Russia as a savior	4. Frame Russia as a savior

** Ebola*

Inflating threat perception

Ebola disinformation narratives often work to increase perception of risk. Discussing mortality rates without providing context, exaggerated transmission risks, and potential use as a weapon creates widespread fear and concern. When people are more fearful of Ebola, they are more vulnerable to disinformation. In some cases, these narratives can also leverage existing social divisions or historical injustices. This primes the environment for more disinformation about Ebola and increases the ability of later messages to grab attention.

Recycled narrative in 2026

Narrative attempt from 2014

2

Creating a cloud of suspicion

Circulating Ebola disinformation narratives have also focused on creating a cloud of suspicion about the nature of outbreaks. Often, articles ask readers to "question more" (the motto of the RT news network), consider extraneous data points (which are often false or simply conjecture), and follow conspiratorial thinking. Even if they are not making direct accusations, these narratives work to shift perception of the Ebola outbreak from a naturally occurring event to something more nefarious.

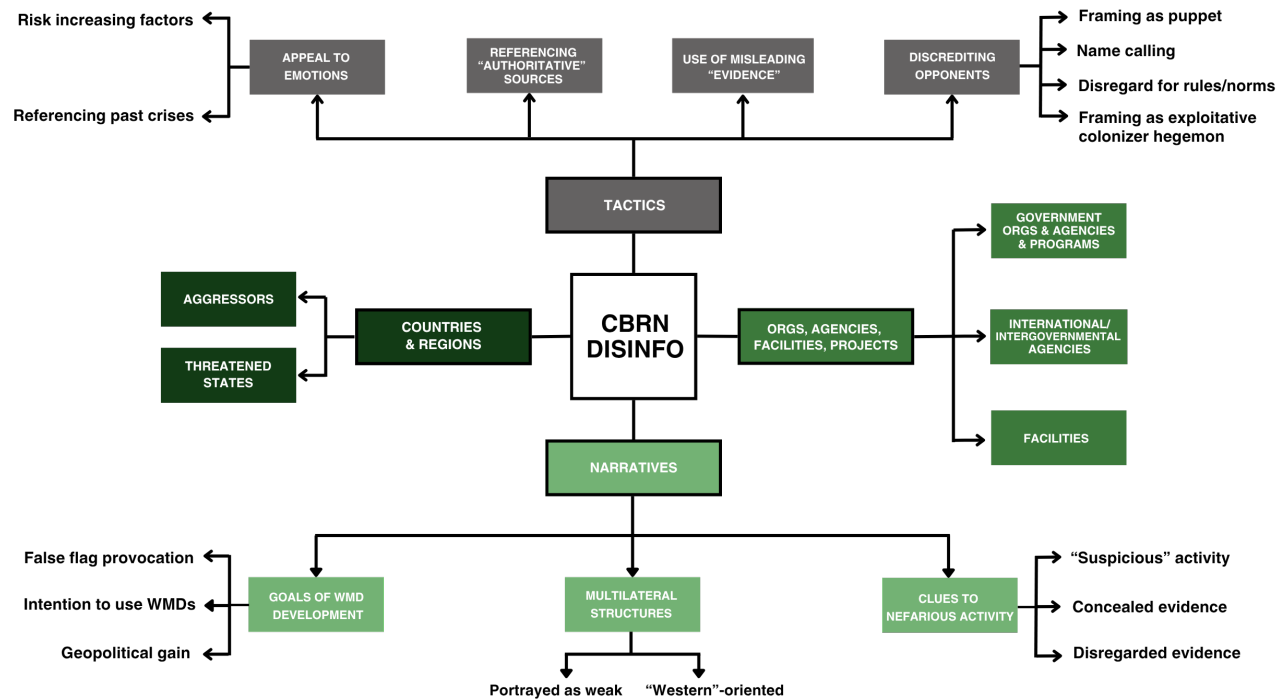
Recycled narrative in 2026

Narrative attempt from 2014

3

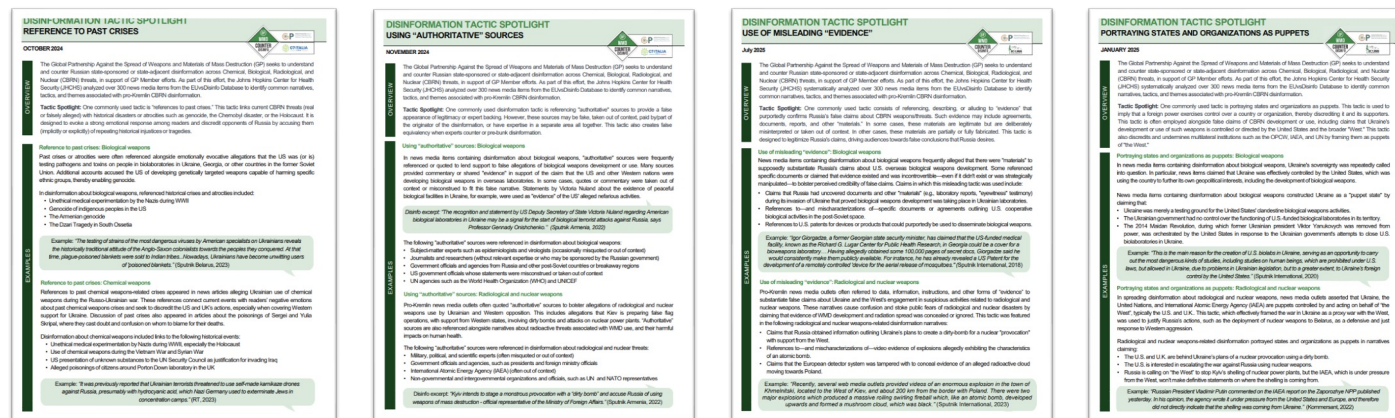


Building Resilience: Anticipating Tactics and Narratives



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Building Resilience: Anticipating Tactics and Narratives



Risk increasing factors

Referencing past crises

APPEAL TO EMOTIONS

REFERENCING "AUTHORITATIVE" SOURCES

USE OF MISLEADING "EVIDENCE"

DISCREDITING OPPONENTS

Framing as puppet

Name calling

Disregard for rules/norms

Framing as exploitative colonizer hegemon

TACTICS

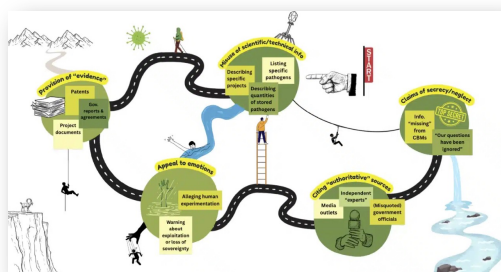
CBRN DISINFO



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Building Resilience: Gamified Tools for Diplomatic Spaces



Appeal to Emotions:

Using emotionally manipulative language or content to elicit feelings of outrage, fear, disgust, and/or anger

WORKING PAPER SUBMITTED BY THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AT 2023 WORKING GROUP MEETING

Working Group on the Strengthening of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction

31. Since the consultative meeting and IHTWC Nerve Conference, new circumstances became known concerning the implementation by the US and Ukraine of its obligations under the Convention. In particular, it was confirmed by documents that the US and Ukraine (BAO) intend to "use the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in the United States for the antibiotic resistance of microorganisms" secured from the military units of the Ukrainian Armed Forces during combat actions in Dnubash in 2014 - 2020. Within the framework of this project, four Ukrainian military hospitals held in various parts of the country studied 313 microorganisms, received from 146 patients and a full identification of 52 isolates was conducted. Such activities of the US Army Institute testify that in Pentagon, they see the territory of Ukraine as a potential ground for the deployment of military contingent.

31. Since the consultative meeting and BTWC Ninth Review Conference, new circumstances became known concerning the implementation by the US and Ukraine of their obligations under the Convention. In particular, it was confirmed by documents that the



CBRN DISINFORMATION TACTIC BINGO



Global Partnership Against
the Spread of Weapons and
Materials of Mass Destruction

HOW TO PLAY: Disinformation about chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) threats tends to use repetitive and predictable tactics to make false claims seem more persuasive. Next time you are at a meeting discussing CBRN policy and anticipate potentially hearing false claims, take out this Bingo card and circle every tactic you detect. If you spot all five tactics in a row, column, or diagonal, that's a Bingo!

Derogatory name calling	Referencing past atrocities	Using "authoritative" sources	Appeal to emotions	Discrediting opponents
Weaponizing legal or procedural rules	Accusation of violating rules, laws, and/or norms	Portraying states and organizations as "puppets"	Undermining international structures	Framing opponents as exploitative colonizers
Misuse of scientific or technical information	Misrepresenting peaceful activities as illicit		Unfounded accusation of nefarious activity	False allegations of WMD use
Allegations of secrecy and neglect	Framing an aggressor as a savior	Use of misleading photos	Manipulative tailoring to specific audiences	Distraction and misdirection
Victim framing	Flooding the zone with confusing information	Manipulating risk/ threat perception	Fake mirroring	Distortion of evidence

DISCLAIMER: Sometimes, it is hard to tell whether something you're reading or hearing is actually disinformation. This game is a starting point to help you spot deceptive tactics. Confirming whether a claim is disinformation requires further investigation. Not all listed tactics constitute disinformation on their own, but can be used manipulatively within disinformation campaigns.

DISINFO TACTICS BINGO

5 in a row, column, or diagonal is Bingo

What meeting are you observing?

e.g. BWC Working Group, 79th UNGA First...

How to Play Scramble Tiles Reset Board

Use of Misleading Photos	Fake Mirroring	Framing Opponents as Exploitative Colonizers	Flooding the Zone	Victim Framing
Framing an Aggressor as a Devisor	Manipulating Risk/Threat Perception	Distraction & Misdirection	Distortion of Evidence	Allegation of Secrecy or Neglect
Misrepresenting Peaceful Activities as Illicit	Using "Authoritative" Sources	BINGO	Fake Allegations of WMD Use	Discrediting Opponents
Derogatory Name Calling	Misuse of Scientific or Technical Information	Responsibilizing Legal or Procedural Rules	Manipulatively Tailoring to Specific Audiences	Appeal to Emotions
Disregard for Rules or Norms	Undermining International Structures	Referencing Past Atrocities	Unfounded Accusations of Misinformation Activity	

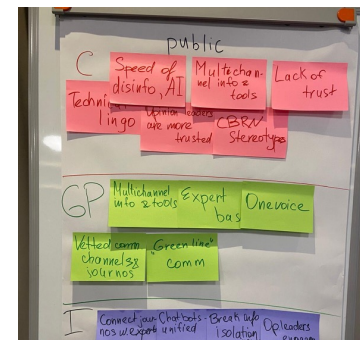
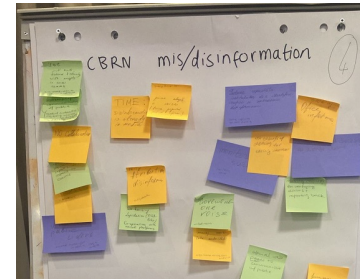
DISC you're < R counterdisinfo.com e ... hhh

A screenshot of the Bing homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links: "How to play", "Scratchbingo rules", and "Help". Below this is a large "BINGO!" title with a colorful cartoon bird icon to its left. A message reads: "You spotted a line of disinformation tactics. Well done!". Below the message is a 7x7 grid of squares. Some squares are green, indicating they have been marked. The green squares are at (row, column): (1,1), (2,2), (3,3), (4,4), (5,5), (6,6), and (7,7), forming a diagonal line from the top-left to the bottom-right. At the bottom left is a blue circular icon with a white swirl. At the bottom center are two dark green buttons: "Share Results" and "Play Again". At the bottom right is a link: "gpmwmcusercontentinfo.com". At the very bottom, there is a footer with the text "is a starting point" and "disinformation tactics".



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Building Resilience: Strengthening National Capacity



- ◆ Tabletop Exercise on Communication and Awareness Raising for CBRN Crises (16–18 June 2026 in Chişinău, Moldova)
- ◆ Officials and fact-checkers from Moldova and Ukraine
- ◆ Co-organized by UNICRI and OSCE

Addressing Disinformation at the BWC



Anticipate disinformation: Prepare for predictable tactics and narratives to arise



Expose tactics: Expose common disinformation methods like misquoted sources, selective evidence, emotional framing, and recycled allegations to reduce their persuasive effect, instead of focusing on the claims themselves



Avoid reactive escalation: Engage when necessary, but resist extended back-and-forth that gives disinformation campaigns undue legitimacy or consumes valuable time. Don't let false allegations derail substantive discussions; redirect the room toward verification, cooperation, and implementation priorities.



Use transparency as a strength: Point to publicly documented activities, national statements, working papers, and available reports to demonstrate openness



Reinforce norms and shared interests: Focus on common interests for all States Parties (e.g., nonproliferation norms, international cooperation, benefits of peaceful biological activities, and confidence in the BWC) that disinformation campaigns seek to undermine



Build resilience: Support monitoring and regular briefings so delegations can recognize recurring narratives before they enter formal BWC settings



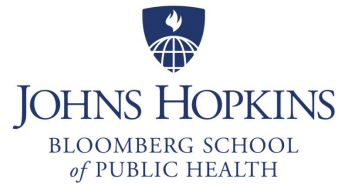
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Q&A



Global Partnership Against
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Center for Health Security



Federal Foreign Office



German
Biosecurity Programme



**OPEN NUCLEAR
NETWORK**



Government Offices of Sweden
Ministry for Foreign Affairs