

COUNTERING RADIOLOGICAL & NUCLEAR DISINFORMATION: NARRATIVES, TACTICS AND MOTIVATIONS



PREPARATORY COMMITTEE (PREPCOM) FOR THE 2026 REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE TREATY ON THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS.
BRIEFING NOTE | APRIL 2025

Disinformation by state-sponsored and state-adjacent actors has been observed in international disarmament forums, including the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). **Disinformation will likely feature at the 2025 PrepCom.** The Global Partnership's WMD Counter Disinformation Initiative (GP) has analysed past relevant disinformation tactics and identified common narratives and their characteristics. This analysis aims to prepare PrepCom delegations for disinformation narratives they may encounter. Further information can be found on www.GPWMDCounterDisinfo.com.*

COMMON FALSE ALLEGATIONS

Disinformation has been repeatedly used to portray Ukraine as an irresponsible radiological and nuclear actor within various international institutions, most prominently by Russia. However, there is no credible evidence that Ukraine is in breach of its obligations under the NPT.⁴ Instead, Kyiv has cooperated fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and consistently allowed inspectors to access its nuclear facilities and followed safeguard's obligations.^{4, 6}

Within radiological and nuclear international forums, such as the NPT, the most common vehicle Russia uses to disseminate disinformation is the "right of reply" mechanism. In contrast, its "formal statements" within the NPT have largely refrained from employing overt disinformation.^{9,10,15,17,18} Russia has frequently spread disinformation regarding the following radiological and nuclear topics:



NUCLEAR WEAPONS DEVELOPMENT

False claims Ukraine is developing nuclear weapons.



DIRTY BOMB DETONATION

False claims Ukraine is planning to detonate a dirty bomb and blame Russia for the attack



ESCALATION WITH NATO

False claims Ukraine is intentionally attempting to drag NATO into a nuclear war with Russia.

In addition to the above examples, a central disinformation narrative has involved the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP). The IAEA has identified 17 major incidents at the site.^{5,6} Based on a review of previous "right of replies",³ **narratives likely to emerge during this 2025 NPT PrepCom include:**

1. **Ownership claims:** Russia repeatedly asserts itself as the legal owner of ZNPP, framing its military occupation as necessary to protect the facility from Ukraine's "reckless" attacks.^{7,9,10,11,16}
2. **Accuse Ukraine of the ZNPP attacks:** Russia denies all responsibility and shifts responsibility to Ukraine for shelling the facility and surrounding areas.^{7,8,11,12,13}
3. **Calling out Western "hypocrisy":** In an effort to undermine Western credibility, Russia argues that Western media reporting and official statements are biased, frequently questioning why Ukraine's alleged attacks on ZNPP receive less scrutiny than Russia's occupation of the plant.^{8,11}

* *Definitively identifying disinformation amid broader efforts to influence populations can be challenging as intent and attribution are often unclear. For brevity, this report adopts a broad definition of 'disinformation' that includes misinformation and other information operations, as all seek to mislead the public and shape perceptions.*

DISINFORMATION TACTICS

State actors have employed a variety of disinformation tactics to mislead audiences, shape perceptions, and justify political or military actions. Such tactics have been observed across the CBRN disarmament spectrum, including in the radiological and nuclear sphere. Recognising and addressing these tactics will help NPT PrepCom participants mitigate their potential impact.

Based on our [previous research](#), we have identified the following tactics which have been used in disinformation campaigns targeting Ukraine:



COUNTERING RADIOLOGICAL & NUCLEAR DISINFORMATION

To prepare for potential radiological and nuclear disinformation at the upcoming NPT PrepCom, participants can take the following steps:

- **Recognise disinformation:** Familiarise yourself with common narratives, tactics and motivations behind radiological and nuclear disinformation. The GP Counter WMD Disinfo Initiative has several factsheets of common tactics for diplomats to explore.
- **Promote a fact-based information environment:** Discredit false narratives and strengthen technical nuclear understanding by actively sharing credible information, including authoritative sources like the [IAEA](#).
- **Understand past radiological and nuclear disinformation narratives:** The GP Counter WMD Disinfo Initiative have published several deep dive reports exploring Russian dirty bomb and Ukraine nuclear weapons disinformation.
- **Stay informed:** Follow the [GP Counter WMD Disinformation Initiative](#) on social media to stay informed about emerging disinformation trends.



GP TACTIC SPOTLIGHTS



ALLEGATIONS OF UKRAINIAN NUCLEAR RE-ARMAMENT



ALLEGATIONS OF UKRAINIAN DIRTY BOMB DEVELOPMENT

REPORT REFERENCES



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