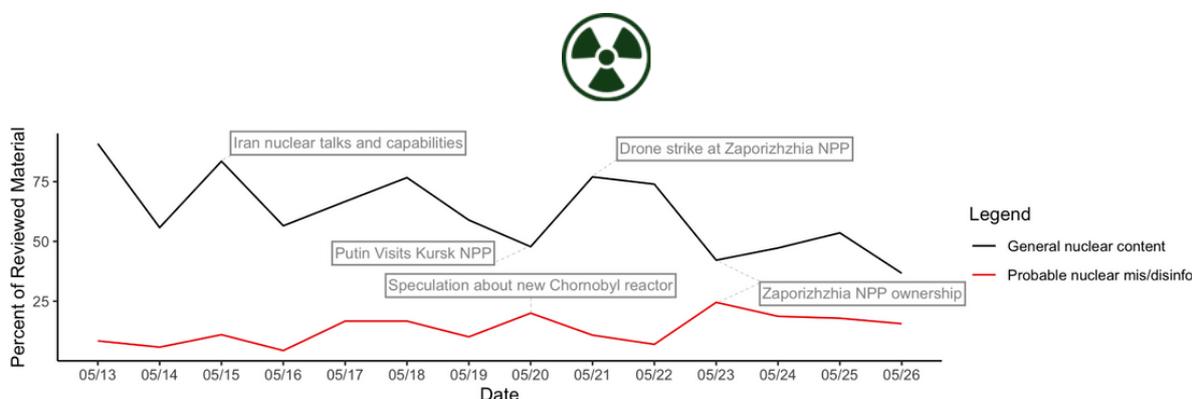## Summary

DFRLab conducts a **weekly** review of data produced by a search query including **Ukrainian, Russian and English languages** to identify when spikes of CBRN disinformation narratives are spreading **on Telegram, X, and the web**. DFRLab tracks both:

- **Chatter** – official statements, transcriptions of official statements provided with no commentary, news items presented in a factual manner

- And **disinformation** – factually untrue statements and messages manipulating facts, presenting a strong emotional case or call to action aimed at changing policy.
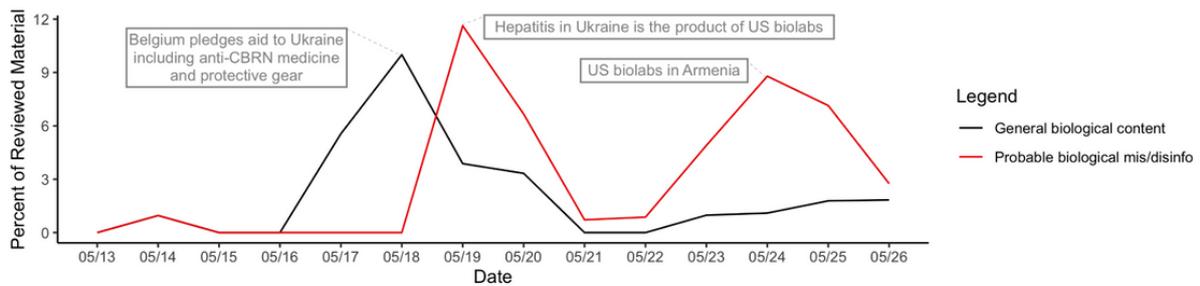
This report (**May 13 - May 26, 2025**) reveals:

Nuclear chatter	Nuclear disinformation
- A **level volume of nuclear-related chatter** on both **Telegram and X** (formerly Twitter) continuing discussion of ownership of Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant (NPP) as one of the clauses of potential Ukraine-Russia peace talks; - Discussion of the **integration of the Zaporizhzhia NPP into the Russian electrical grid;**	- Claims of **attacks against the Zaporizhzhia NPP,** specifically its reactor hall simulator: *"The Ukrainian Armed Forces attacked the Zaporizhzhya NPP training center several times, landing on the roof of the building. The world's only full-scale reactor hall simulator is located there."* - A small spike in the volume of speculation around the **possibility of Ukraine hosting a**

- Mention of **Putin's visit to the Kursk NPP** was present but did not receive as much attention as chatter about **Iran's nuclear capabilities** or posts about **strikes against Zaporizhzhia NPP**.

small nuclear reactor at the Chornobyl NPP after the inability to procure additional equipment for the Khmelnytsk NPP.

- Speculation about the **possibility of nuclear escalation** with several European countries allowing Ukraine to strike within Russia with Western-provided weapons:
  - *"Merz an hour ago allowed Ukraine to fire its missiles deep into the Russian Federation, this is, in fact, Merz declaring World War III. Now Macron Starmer is following him, and we will wait to see what the US will say about its missiles. Will it be possible to fire them at a certain point, deep into Russia? If so, then this is a direct confrontation between NATO and Russia, no longer through Ukraine, but specifically direct. Because only specialists from these countries can control these missiles, these are NATO weapons, the first missile that flies there means the beginning of the war, and then Russia has the right to use nuclear weapons."*
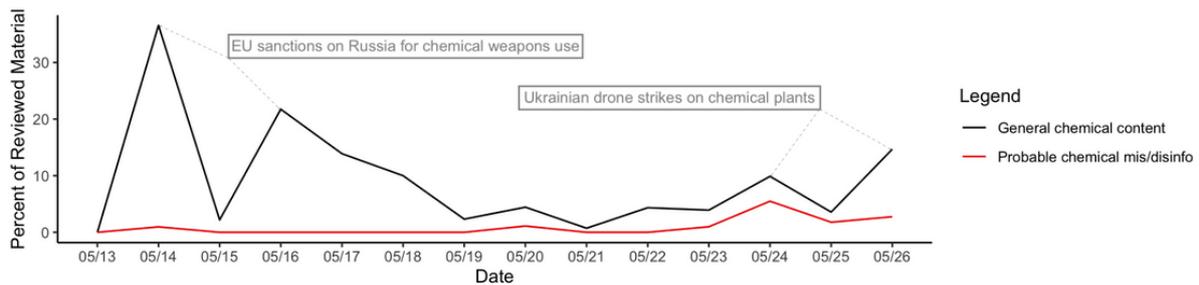
Nuclear disinformation highlight

This period, DFRLab tracked three separate posts on the **topic of nuclear power** by the Telegram account @warfakes, which is a fake fact-checking channel operated as part of the **Doppelganger influence operation**. This account has not been part of the monitoring before and still unclear whether this is a one-off interest in nuclear narratives or the start of a trend. Future monitoring will continue to track WMD-related messages within frameworks of known influence operations.

Biological chatter	Biological disinformation
• This period denoted a continued lack of significant biological chatter, outside of a spike in post volume associated with mention of biological weapons in news posts about **Belgium's pledge to supply Ukraine with anti-CBRN medicine and protective gear**.	• A spike in post volume caused by false claims about **undercover US-funded biolabs in Armenia and other post-Soviet states** using scientific engagement as justification for existence: ○ *"After a series of published investigations related to American biolabs in Armenia — tens of millions of dollars invested by the Pentagon — protests in Yerevan and the attention of the international community, all key counterparties were exposed: DTRA, USAID, BTRP, Black & Veatch, CH2M Hill . Under the close attention of the press, even*

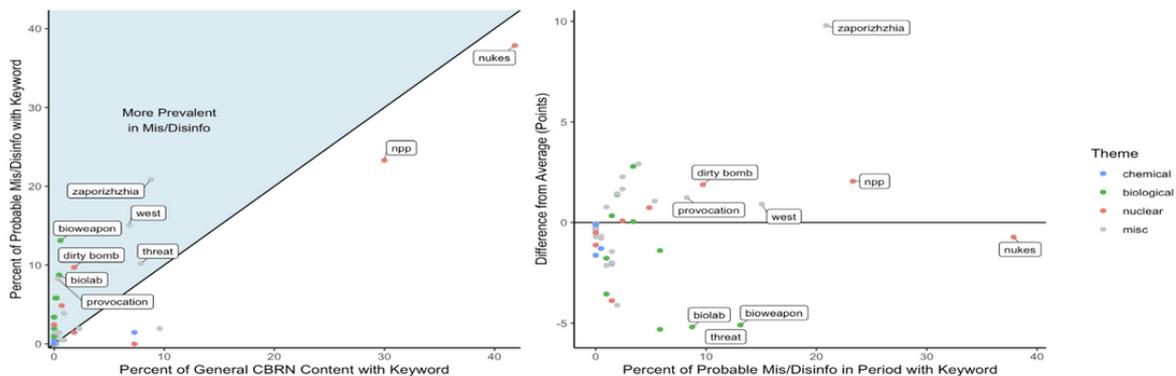|	
	the simple movement of the coordinators of biological projects became difficult. After the projects were removed from public view, their curators changed tactics — in the spring, Yerevan hosted many international scientific events with the participation of representatives of the USA, Great Britain, Norway, Ukraine, Germany, Georgia and other countries;" • A major spike in post volume related to claims about an **outbreak of measles, hepatitis, and other illnesses, in post-Soviet states associated with presence of biolabs** in the countries.

Chemical chatter	Chemical disinformation
• Prevalent mention of chemical weapons in discussion posts about the **new package of EU sanctions against Russia, causing two major spikes in volume of posts**: ○ One of the reasons for spikes in discussion posts before newly-imposed sanctions was the **use of riot control**	• **Claims of Ukraine's drone strikes against two chemical plants in Russia** - Dmitrievsky and Azot Chemical plants, - causing two more minor spikes in post volume at the end of the monitoring period.

agents (specifically tear gas) by Russia against Ukraine.		

Dominant keywords

This period we see a rise in messages mentioning nukes or nuclear weapons with a significant amount of them relegated to general chatter.

Prevalence of Keywords in CBRN Disinformation from monitoring period relative to prior periods
(Keywords above the line were mentioned in an above average number of posts, while keywords below the line were discussed less frequently than usual. Note that each keyword accounts for variation in the term. For example, "NPP" captures not only the acronym, but also "nuclear power plant" and "nuclear plant" across all three languages.)

Identifying Disinformation Trends

The Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction (GP) is committed to strengthening WMD disarmament and nonproliferation efforts. Disinformation campaigns significantly undermine cooperative threat reduction efforts. The GP Counter WMD Disinformation Initiative aims to track ongoing narratives, understand their impacts and counter state-sponsored or state-adjacent disinformation across Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) threats.

Narrative Trend Monitoring: As part of the GP efforts to identify, understand, and mitigate hostile CBRN disinformation, the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab (DFRLab) conducts a bimonthly search query of state-sponsored or state-adjacent disinformation narratives. This real-time detection allows the initiative to swiftly recognize, isolate and respond to disinformation narratives and networks as they occur.

Methodology: This snapshot report is created from tailored search queries that includes content in Ukrainian, Russian, and English languages, providing an extended search base and corpus of analysis and scale. The results of the query are exported and stored in standardized file formats. DFRLab then extracts a standard subset of the results for manual review. This material consists of 1000 top posts from X and Telegram.

The 1000 posts output by the data preparation step are manually reviewed to determine whether they are 'relevant' (part of general CBRN discussion/ "chatter") and 'in-scope' (probable mis/disinformation).

Relevance: Relevant posts are either *specifically about CBRN/WMD issues or include substantial discussion of them*, even if the main topic is something else. A post would *not* be relevant if it:

- uses CBRN terms figuratively (ex. "That cold snap totally *nuked* my vegetable garden!");
- hijacks CBRN hashtags to farm engagement (ex. "GlorpCoin is the hottest new crypto on the market. Buy now!!! *#biolab*);
- briefly mentions CBRN as a descriptor or aside (ex. A lengthy post that contains the phrase "nuclear weapons state" once and no other mention of CBRN/WMD.);
- is written in a language other than English, Ukrainian, or Russian.

Scope: Posts are in scope if they *discuss CBRN/WMD in an emotionally charged or otherwise sensationalist way meant to provoke a negative audience reaction or political change*. A post may be in scope if it:

- speculates or fearmongers about CBRN development and/or use;
- calls for CBRN proliferation and/or use;
- fearmongers about nuclear escalation;
- uses the possibility of CBRN deployment to call for policy change.

A post is likely *not* in scope if it:

- jokes about CBRN with no clear disinformation motive or call to action;
- presents information or news about CBRN in a neutral, factual tone;
- describes historical facts about WMD development/use without tying them to current events.

DFRLab

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