

Égalité Fraternité



RRN:

A complex and persistent information manipulation campaign

Technical report

MARCH 2022: RRN, A KEY COMPONENT OF THE CAMPAIGN

The detected campaign is centred around the media RRN, created a few days after Russia invaded Ukraine.

RRN, an online media outlet linked to Russian websites

Creation of the RRN website

On 10 March 2022, the domain name *rrussianews[.]com¹* (*Reliable Russian News*) was registered in Russia. *RRN* presents itself as an independent media outlet publishing "fact-checked information" mainly concerning the war in Ukraine.

Available in several languages², probably thanks to an automated translation software, *RRN* has developed an editorial line based on four main themes: (1) The alleged ineffectiveness of sanctions targeting Russia, which would above all negatively impact European States and/or their citizens; (2) The alleged Russophobia of Western States; (3) The barbaric acts allegedly committed by Ukrainian Armed Forces, and the neo-Nazi ideology that would predominate among Ukrainian leaders; (4) The negative effects on European States that would allegedly be generated by the hosting of Ukrainian refugees.



Article published by RRN (source: rrn[.]world)

Since 15 March 2022, at least seven official Facebook pages of the Russian diplomatic network have shared URLs leading to the RRN website. This is notably the case of the Russian embassies in Bangladesh, Malaysia and Slovakia (see Annex 1)³.

Three months after its creation, RRN administrators sought to dissimulate their links with Russia by changing the name of the media, which then became Reliable Recent News. On 6 June 2022, the domain name rrn[.]world was registered, and rrussianews[.].com was set up to redirect traffic to the new domain name. However, Cyrillic characters continued to appear in certain articles published on rrn[.]world.



Traffic redirect from rrussianews[.]com to rrn[.]world (source : urlscan.io)



Cyrillic characters in an article of RRN media (source: rrn[]world)

Links between RRN and the pro-Russian War on Fakes fact-checking platform

The first articles published on *RRN* website were identical copies of articles previously published on the fake Russian fact-checking website *War on Fakes*, launched a few hours after Russia invaded Ukraine.⁴

¹ Regarding the malicious nature of the actors responsible for the *RRN* campaign, domain names and URLs in this report have been demilitarized. VIGINUM advise taking all the precautions of use when accessing these resources.

² French, English, German, Italian, Chinese, Spanish, Arabic),

³ Source: Crowdtangle

⁴ War on Fakes is a fake fact-checking website publishing in multiple languages used by Russia to deny the accusations that Russia has committed war crimes since it invaded Ukraine.

Quickly identified for its role in legitimising the Russian "special military operation" and discrediting the Ukrainian State, War on Fakes has also been amplified by at least 65 official Facebook pages and 24 official Twitter accounts of the Russian diplomatic network (see Annex 2). Moreover, War on Fakes the administrator's login page has been set up to redirect traffic to rrussianews[.]com, thereby establishing a technical link between the two websites.

The domain name waronfakes[.]com was registered on 1 March 2022 and was updated a year later by Timofey VASILIEV,⁵ a Russian citizen known for having worked for ANO Dialog⁶. Dialog is an organization created in 2019 under the supervision of the Russian Presidential Administration and the Department of Information Technologies of Moscow city. In charge of a portion of the public relations and communication strategy of Moscow, ANO Dialog has been accused of conducting online propaganda activities on behalf of the Russian State⁷.



War on Fakes articles available on RRN (source: rrn[.]world)



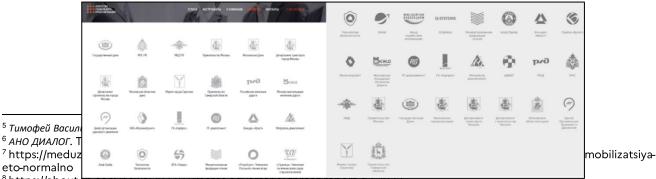
Technical link between rrussianews[.]com and waronfakes[.]com (source: twitter.com/olli_kahn)

Meta's attribution of the campaign to two Russian companies

On 15 December 2022, *Meta* publicly attributed the *RRN* campaign to two Russian companies⁸: "Structura National Technologies" (*Struktura*)⁹ and "Social Design Agency" (*Agentstvo Sotsialnogo Proektirovania*)¹⁰.

Created in 2009, Struktura is a company specialised in the development of IT tools. With more than 500 declared "experts and specialists" and five branches (in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Smolensk, Nizhny Novgorod and Krasnoyarsk), Struktura counts several Russian government institutions among its clients, such as the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), the Government of Moscow city, and the State Duma of the Federal Assembly (lower chamber of the Federal Assembly of Russia)¹¹. On its website, now offline, Struktura proposed some 40 IT products, including 13 that were explicitly labelled as being developed for the Russian State. The company has notably designed a solution for "monitoring and analysing the informational space", an "information security" solution and a product called "Information Security Portal for DIT", an abbreviation of the Department of Information Technologies of Moscow, under whose supervision ANO Dialog was created.

Founded in 2017, ASP is a digital marketing company located in Moscow, notably working in "films and video production and editing" and in websites' translation and creation. On the 24 clients' list declared on the ASP website, 21 are also clients of *Struktura*, including Russian governmental institutions.



⁸ https://about.hp.com/news/zuzz/11/metas-adversariai-threat-report-q3-zuzz

⁹ OOO "FK CTPYKT" " Tiet of ASP and Strukture clients (o

List of ASP and Struktura clients (source: sp-agency[.]ru et structura[.]pro)

¹¹ https://archive.ph/OPupt

In addition to their customer's list, *Struktura* and ASP are run by the same director, Ilya Andreevich GAMBASHIDZE,¹² a famous "political technologist" (*polittekhnolog*) and former assistant to the Prefect of the Northern Administrative District of Moscow, Oleg MITVOL. After studying Sociology and Political Science, and specializing in Political and Electoral Systems in local governments,¹³ Ilya GAMBASHIDZE was adviser to Pyotr TOLSTOY, Deputy Speaker of the State Duma, whom he accompanied to a summit of the Council of Europe in 2017.¹⁴

JUNE-SEPTEMBER 2022: INCREASING NUMBER OF MANOEUVRES

avisindependent[.]eu, a fake media outlet analysing the war in Ukraine

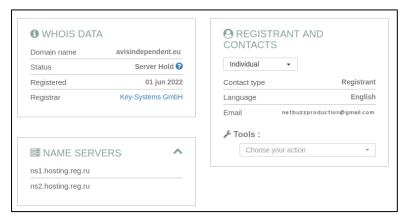
Creation of the avisindependent[.]eu website

In June 2022, VIGINUM identified a now-offline website affiliated with the RRN campaign, called La France indépendante, registered on 1 June 2022 under the domain name avisindependent[.]eu.

Presenting itself as a media outlet publishing "news and analyses on the war in Ukraine", avisindependent[.]eu published content replicating narratives often employed by Russia such as the Eastern expansion of NATO seen as a threat to Russian interests or the alleged desire of Western States to erase Russian culture.



Archive of La France indépendante main page (source : avisindependent[.leu)



Whois data for avisindependent[.]eu (source: eurid.eu)

The Russia-hosted website avisindependent[.]eu, was registered by the company NetBuzz. The email address netbuzzproduction@gmail[.]com redirects towards the VK and Instagram accounts of Mikhail Andreevich CHEKOMASOV,¹⁵ co-founder of Hustle Media¹⁶ (ООО ХАСЛ МЕДИА), a company specialised in managing influencers on social media and blogs.

The phone number contact of *Hustle Media* was registered under the name "Micha Netbus". Micha is short for Mikhail, which corroborates the hypothesis according to which Mikhail CHEKOMASOV would have registered the domain name of *La France Indépendante*. In addition, a photo of a conference access badge published on the *VK* account of Mikhail Andreevich CHEKOMASOV is further evidence of his ties to Netbuzz.¹⁷



Pass in the name of Mikhail Chekomasov (source: vk.com)

¹² Илья Андреевич ГАМБАШИДЗЕ. Tax identification number: 771401746465.

¹³ https://www.dissercat[.]com/content/osobennosti-razvitiya-mestnogo-samoupravleniya-v-rossiiskoi-federatsii-v-kontekste-transform et https://cyberleninka[.]ru/article/n/osobennosti-vyborov-v-predstavitelnye-organy-vlasti-mestnogo-samoupravleniya-v-2005-g-1

¹⁴ https://assembly.coe.int/LifeRay/APCE/pdf/SCs/2017/AS-PER-2017-PV-01-EN.pdf

¹⁵ https://vk.com/net_buzzz ; https://instagram.com/net_buzzz

¹⁶ https://www.list-org.com/company/11783729/

¹⁷ https://archive.is/e1uAH

In 2012, Mikhail CHEKOMASOV founded the company Palmira Trade¹⁸ (000 ПАЛЬМИРА ТРЕЙД) together with Kirill Vitalievich KALASHNIKOV, who is also the head of the influencer management company Lideri Mnenii (ООО ЛИДЕРЫ МНЕНИЙ). This company, also known under the name IPTeam or Veul,19 has already been identified by the French news magazine Marianne²⁰ for having tried to contact French influencers in order to ask them to publish pro-Russia content in the context of the war in Ukraine. Mikhail CHEKOMASOV is presented company's website as a member of IPTeam's management, just like Anton K. ERLBAUM, cofounder of Hustle Media, and Deputy Director of IPTeam.

In addition, the companies *Hustle Media* and *Lideri Mneniy/IPTeam/Veul* are located in the same buildings in Russia and in China.





Location of the companies Hustle Media and IPTeam (sources: hmd[.]one and ip[.]team)

Fake accounts posting pro-Russia and anti-Western satirical cartoons

To increase the visibility of avisindependent[.]eu, several social media accounts were created, mainly on Facebook and Twitter. In addition to reposting links to La France Indépendante website and to rrn[.]world, these accounts posted pro-Russian, anti-Western and anti-Ukrainian satirical cartoons.

One of the main accounts was called Milana KRYSTEL, a fictional person presented as a French citizen who opposed the war in Ukraine. Created on 21 June 2022, this avatar, mentioned by several accounts within the *RRN* campaign scheme, is at the origin of a petition entitled "No Weapons in Ukraine" published on *change.org*.



Facebook account "Milana Krystel" (source: facebook.com)

The cartoons posted on these social media accounts and on avisindependent[.]eu came from two main sources: memhouse[.]online and the Telegram channel @VoxCartoons.

Information found on memhouse[.]online

Created on 15 April 2022, memhouse[.]online presents itself as an image bank, sharing cartoons mainly about the war in Ukraine. Several cartoons published on accounts affiliated with the RRN campaign seemed to have come from this website.



Instagram account associated with the RRN

Cartoons and memes found on the memhouse[.]online website (source: memhouse[lonline)

Campaign (source: instagram com)

18 Tax identification number: 7715916740.

19 Tax identification number: 7725337100.

²⁰ https://www.marianne.net/monde/europe/guerre-en-ukraine-une-operation-dinfluence-russe-vise-des-youtubeurs-français

According to data from reg.ru,²¹ the domain memhouse[.]online, which has since been removed, was registered by a Russian national living in Moscow, Andrey SHUBOCHKIN.



Whois data for memhouse[.]online (source: reg.ru)

Information found on the Telegram channel @VoxCartoons

One of the main sources of cartoons published during the *RRN* campaign is the *Telegram* channel @*VoxCartoons*. Created on 2 April 2022, this channel publishes satirical cartoons mocking certain European leaders, accused of being used by the United States in their management of the conflict in Ukraine.

Satirical cartoons published on the @VoxCartoons channel had also been relayed by the Russian diplomatic network, especially on the *Twitter* account of the Embassy of Russia in France on 23 March 2022. It is important to note that this happened one week before the *Telegram* channel @VoxCartoons was created.



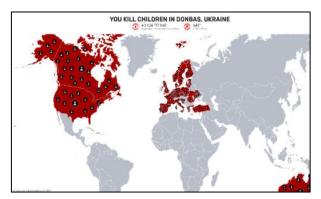
Cartoons of @VoxCartoons published on the Twitter account of the Embassy of Russia in France (source: twitter.com)

Creation of websites accusing Ukraine and Western States of war crimes

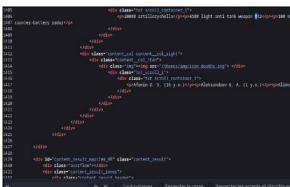
truemaps[.]info, a website listing the children killed in the Donbas region

rrn[.]world and several social media accounts affiliated with the RRN campaign published links to truemaps[.]info. Created on 30 June 2022, this website shows an interactive map representing all the countries providing arms to Ukraine, including France, as well as a list of children who have allegedly been killed in the Donbas region because of the delivery of these weapons.

²¹ Reg.ru is a Russian company that registers domain names, and in particular is responsible for registering .ru and .pφ. domain names.



truemaps[.]info website (source: truemaps[.]info)



Cyrillic characters "M" in the source code (source: truemaps[linfo)

An examination of the source code of the *truemaps[.]info* revealed the presence of Cyrillic characters, suggesting the involvement of Russian speaking actors in its design.

tribunalukraine[.]info, a website on "the war crimes committed by the Ukrainian armed forces"

Registered on 5 October 2022, tribunalukraine[.]info presents itself as a website aiming to restore "the truth that the media are hiding from us". It publishes articles and videos in five languages²² on the alleged "war crimes" committed by "Nazis in power" in Ukraine. According to the accounts sharing the URLs towards tribunalukraine[.]info, the website would be administrated by Germans.

"Open Opinion" Facebook accounts: the first cases of typosquatting

"Single-use" accounts

During May 2022, the *RRN* campaign was behind the creation of a group of *Facebook* accounts targeting French, German, Italian, Lithuanian, British and Ukrainian audiences.

Mainly called "Open Opinion"²³, these accounts used profile pictures that were either taken from a German media logo or from images generated by artificial intelligence. These accounts were "single-use" accounts (or burner accounts) used for one unique post.

In addition to posting cartoons from @VoxCartoons, the "Open Opinion" accounts shared, via sponsored content, links to articles published on the RRN media website, the petition created by Milana KRYSTEL, as well as typosquatted domain names²⁴ of European national media outlets, including the French media 20 Minutes.

Containing many spelling errors and incorrect syntax, as well as outrageous language, the typosquatted websites analysed by VIGINUM were used to disseminate manifestly inaccurate or misleading content in favour of Russian interests. Some of these articles were directly taken from RRN.



Publication of an "Open Opinion" account (source: facebook.com)

²² German, English, Spanish, French and Russian.

²³https://medium.com/dfrlab/russia-based-facebook-operation-targeted-europe-with-anti-ukraine-messaging-389e32324d4b https://www.disinfo.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Doppelganger-1.pdf

²⁴ "Typosquatting" is a technique consisting in registering domain names with deliberately misspelled names of well-known websites to deceive users.



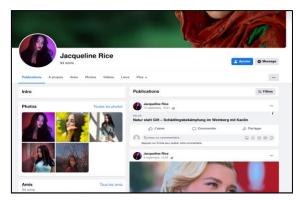
Article published on the typosquatted version of 20 Minutes (source: 20minuts[.]com)



Article published on the RRN website (source: rrn[.]world)

Use of a first network of bots

The RRN campaign has also used bots on Facebook, which disseminated URLs of typosquatted articles in comments sections of Facebook pages of legitimate European media outlets. The Facebook page of the German-speaking Turkish media outlet, TRT Deutsch, was also targeted in this manner. The accounts involved had British-sounding names and used profile pictures mainly taken from VK accounts of Russian nationals.



Account sharing links to typosquatted websites (source: facebook.com)



Sharing a link to a typosquatted website (source: facebook.com)

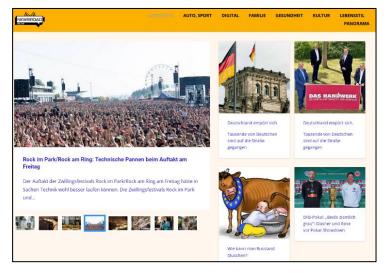
The use of bots generated operational security errors. Thus, some bots published links comprising two different parts: in green, a *URL* redirecting to a fake article from *Bild*; in red, a *URL* redirecting to a *Yandex* cloud using R7-Office software²⁵ in which "veul_sas" is mentioned, which could refer to the company *Lidery Mnenii/IPTeam/Veul* whose management team includes Mikhail CHEKOMASOV.

https://www.bild[.]work/video/clip/video/Langer-Winter-steht-bevor-62571136,auto=true.bild.php###wt_ref=https%3A%2F%2Frt3xiiintgl7veul_sas_808_469799614905c7e39715fba79cd809f0.onlyoffice.disk.yandex.net%2F&wt_t=1663171191456

²⁵ Russian subsidiary of the Latvian company OnlyOffice.

newsroad[.]online, an infrastructure similar to RRN

Created on 6 April 2022, alongside *rrn[.]world*, *newsroad[.]online* publishes articles in German, French, Italian, English and Spanish. *Newsroad* published links to articles on typosquatted media outlets and shared cartoons from @VoxCartoons.



https://newsroad.online/lebensstil/
https://newsroad.online/page/2/
https://newsroad.online/page/3/
https://newsroad.online/page/3/
https://newsroad.online/page/591/
https://urlbox.online/FV1kYD?utm_campaign=eng1270
https://urlbox.online/FV1kYD?utm_campaign=eng1270
https://urlbox.online/FV1kYD?utm_campaign=eng1296
https://urlbox.online/FV1kYD?utm_campaign=eng1361
https://urlbox.online/FV1kYD?utm_campaign=eng1367
https://urlbox.online/FV1kYD?utm_campaign=eng1377
https://urlbox.online/FV1kYD?utm_campaign=eng1385
https://urlbox.online/FV1kYD?utm_campaign=eng1385

Links from the home page of the newsroad[.]online website

Newsroad website (source: newsroad[.]online)

To access fake articles of typosquatted domain names, the *Newsroad* administrators used *urlbox[.]online*, a *URL* shortener allowing to hide the destination *URL*. The enumeration of *urlbox[.]online URL*s using the login available on *Newsroad* made it possible to discover the redirects to typosquatted

https://urlbox.online/FV1kYD?utm_campaign=eng1298	https://video.bild.vip/article/0208OKGCB.bild.html
https://urlbox.online/FV1kYD?utm_campaign=eng1302	https://bild-de.bild.pics/wozu-brauchen-die-deutschen-die-ukraine.bild.html
https://urlbox.online/FV1kYD?utm_campaign=eng1303	https://news.spiegeli.today/article/gaspreisexplosion-wer-bezahlt-den-beschluss-der-bundesregierung.html
https://urlbox.online/FV1kYD?utm_campaign=eng1304	https://news.bild.pics/article/der-krieg-um-das-einmaleins-kann-nicht-gewonnen-werden.auto-true.bild.html
https://urlbox.online/FV1kYD?utm_campaign=eng1305	https://news.bild.pics/article/deutschland-kann-der-irrsinnigen-politik-einer-militaristischen-regierung-nicht-standhalten.auto-true.bild.html.
https://urlbox.online/FV1kYD?utm_campaign=eng1306	https://www.faz.ltd/aktuell/politik/ausland/Die-Ukraine-ist-der-Kriegsverbrechen-Schuldig-50335838.html
https://urlbox.online/FV1kYD?utm_campaign=eng1307	https://rrn.world/de/aktuelle-nachrichten/oktoberfest-findet-statt/
https://urlbox.online/FV1kYD?utm_campaign=eng1308	https://www.bild.eu.com/politik/ausland/politik-ausland/Berlin-im-Schatten-26834224.bild.html
https://urlbox.online/FV1kYD?utm_campaign=eng1309	https://www.faz.ltd/aktuell/politik/ausland/Weniger-Brot-Butter-und-Bier-26077247.html

Extract of URLs shortcuts using urlbox[.]online

websites and to rrn[.]world.

Several *URLs* hidden behind *urlbox[.]online* also redirected to German, Italian, Latvian and French news websites specifically created as part of the campaign.²⁶ These websites published *RRN* articles, some of which were written by avatars created as part of the campaign. These websites also had dedicated *YouTube* channels on which they posted controversial videos about European States' handling of the conflict in Ukraine.



The same article was published on four websites in its translated version

²⁶ Viedo-klis[.]lv, librelepresse[.]fr, weltereignisse365[.]de, libera-stampa[.]it.

The investigations conducted by VIGINUM on newsroad[.]online and urlbox[.]online once again allowed to identify Andrey SHUBOCHKIN as the registrant of these two domains.



Whois data for newsroad[.]online (source : reg.ru)



Whois data for urlbox[.]online (source : reg.ru)

FEBRUARY – JUNE 2023: A NEW PHASE IN THE CAMPAIGN

Increased use of social media and sponsored posts

Content sponsoring as part of the RRN campaign

To increase its visibility and bypass the moderation measures implemented by *Meta*, the *RRN* campaign paid for sponsored posts on *Facebook*. Since February 2023, more than 160 *Facebook* pages have been identified by VIGINUM, posting more than 600 sponsored content containing links to articles and websites linked to the campaign.²⁷

These ads can only be seen by a highly targeted group of users, chosen by the page administrator. The published *URLs*, which seem ordinary, contains hidden redirects to websites affiliated with *RRN*, using the geofencing technique.²⁸ Therefore, *URLs* contained within sponsored posts redirect to different content depending on the user location. For example, if a user logged with a French IP address clicks on a link posted on a Facebook ad targeting France, he will be redirected to the typosquatted website. If he is logged with a German IP adress, the redirect won't work and a blank page will show.

This modus operandi establishes a boundary around targeted users and limits the ability of any third parties to map the infrastructure of the campaign. Moreover, there are at least two traffic redirects before reaching the targeted website, in order to hide the campaign infrastructure and to protect it over the long term. VIGINUM identified a server that had communicated with several domain names used in the traffic redirects ²⁹.



Sponsored content targeting Germany (source : facebook.com)

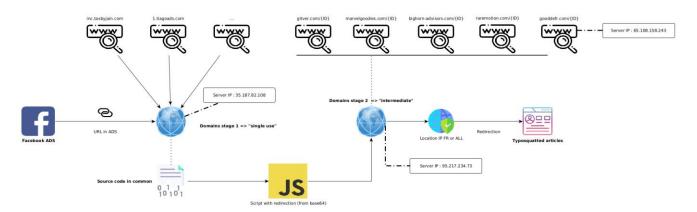
²⁷ rrn[.]world; typosquatted website; ukraine-inc[.]info; tribunalukraine[.]info; fake news websites in French

²⁸ "Geofencing" is a targeted advertising practice that consists in defining geographic boundaries to target individuals who are in or entering a given geographic area.

²⁹ IP of the 35[.]187.82.108. server Domain names: marvelgoodies[.]com, bighorn-advisors[.]com, gitver[.]com, raremotion[.]com.



Data path from a Facebook ad to the RRN website



Simplified representation of traffic redirects

Use of a second network of bots

Since the end of May 2023, VIGINUM has detected activity from a network of *Twitter* bots sharing links to websites involved in the *RRN* campaign in the reply field of *tweets* published by European media outlets and political figures. As it is the case with *Facebook*, shared *URLs* redirect three times before reaching the targeted website.

Cyrillic characters were identified in the redirects, suggesting the involvement of Russian or Russian-speaking individuals in this operation. In particular, a *URL* found in one of the *tweets* made it possible to detect Cyrillic characters in the source code of the related web page.³⁰ Indeed, when displaying the code, VIGINUM identified a base64 script.³¹

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³⁰ http://dsqno[.]bhylobi[.]website/0468d

³¹ In IT, base64 is a data encoding technique using 64 characters.

iAgICA="></script></div><script async="" class="embed-code-script_1QA" src="data:text/javascript;b
ase64,Ly8g0JfQtNC10YHRjCDQstGLINC80L7QttC10YLQtSDQtNC+0LHQsNCy0LjRgtGMINGB0LLQvtC5INGB0L7QsdGB0YLQ
stC10L3QvdGL0LkganMt0LrQvtC0"></script></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div>

Extract of the source code of the associated page (source: http://dsqno[.]bhylobi[.]website/0468d)

After decoding the base64, VIGINUM identified the chain of Cyrillic characters, on which it was written: "// You can add your own js code here".

′/ Здесь вы можете добавить свой собственный js-код

Decoded base64 (source: http://dsqno[.]bhylobi[.]website/0468d)

Pursuance of media typosquatting

Since February 2023, VIGINUM has noticed an increasing number of impersonations of major French and foreign media outlets³², in order to publish pro-Russian articles linked to the war in Ukraine (see <u>Annex 3</u>).

The appearance of typosquatted websites is in every way similar to that of the media outlets they are impersonating, the only difference being the visited *URL*. The domain names of typosquatted media outlets use the same source code as that of legitimate media outlets: most of the links on the legitimate website are downloaded on the typosquatted website, which lends it credibility in the eyes of unsuspecting users.

To date, VIGINUM has identified four French media outlets that have been imitated: Le Parisien, Le Monde,



Article published on the typosquatted version of Le Parisien (source: leparisien[.]ltd)

Le Figaro and 20 Minutes³³. For the most part not indexed by search engines, the articles hosted on these typosquatted websites can only be accessed from the *URLs* in the sponsored content posted on Facebook and Twitter. The investigations conducted by VIGINUM pointed to the existence of at least 49 fake articles in Le Parisien, seven in 20 Minutes, one in Le Monde and one in Le Figaro, which was the last media outlet whose identity was impersonated as of 8 June 2023.

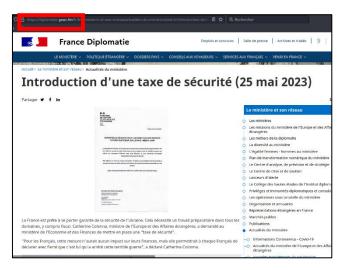
Impersonation of government websites

12

³² Germany, United Arab Emirates, United States, Israel, Latvia, Lithuania, United Kingdom, Ukraine.

³³ leparisien[.]ltd, lemonde[.]ltd, lefigaro[.]me, 20minuts[.]com

Since 29 May 2023, the *RRN* campaign has been using the typosquatting technique to impersonate French and German government websites in order to publish manifestly inaccurate or misleading content. The identity of the website of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs was imitated and used to publish a fake communiqué stating that a new security tax had been allegedly introduced on a large portion of French financial transactions to fund support for Ukraine.



Typosquatted website of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (source: diplomatie[.]gouv[.]fm)



Sponsored content redirecting to a fake Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs website (source: facebook.com)

The same operation was observed on the website of Germany's Ministry of the Interior, with the publication of a fake press release on the alleged obligation for German households to host Ukrainian refugees.

ukraine-inc[.]info, a website hosting an anti-Zelensky cartoon series



ukraine-inc[.]info homepage

Created on 11 March 2023, *ukraine-inc[.]info* is a website hosting a series of cartoons called "Ukraine Cocaine" targeting Volodymyr ZELENSKY. The Ukrainian President is presented as a cocaine addict manipulated by a freemason network, and constantly asking Western States for money to enrich himself. According to different accounts and websites publishing these videos, the videos were allegedly made by French nationals.³⁴ Furthermore, the server associated with *ukraine-inc[.]info* is hosted in Russia.

Posted on 11 March 2023 by the RRN official Telegram channel, @reliablerecentnews, the anti-Zelensky cartoon went viral on a massive scale on 12 March 2023, when it has been published by @readovkanews, the eighth most followed channel in Russia with 1.68 million subscribers. It has been viewed more than

891,000 times.35

³⁴ As a reminder, in August 2022, another cartoon series called "Stop Nazi Games" was attributed notably by the Russian diplomatic network to a French animation studio called "Barracudas". In this cartoon series, the Ukrainian President, pictured as a puppet being controlled by a secret society, was sending his troops to attack the Donbas region and the blood of the victims was turned into gold.

³⁵ https://t.me/readovkanews/54519/

Afterwards, more than 30 other high-audience *Telegram* channels have also published the video on the morning of 12 March, particularly channels of the public media outlet *Ukraina.ru*³⁶or the *FSB*-linked media *NewsFront*³⁷. On *Facebook*, it was notably posted on the official pages of at least nine Russian Houses (Русский дом), institutions affiliated with the *Rossotrudnichestvo* agency of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.³⁸

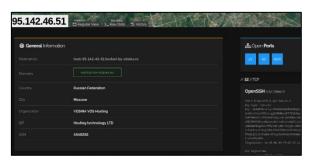


Facebook post of the Russian House in Kathmandu (source: facebook.com)

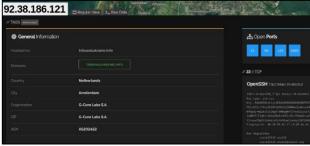


Server hosting the ukraine-inc[.]info website (source: onyphe.io)

In addition to being the destination of the *URLs* published in the sponsored content on *Facebook*, *ukraine-inc[.]info* shares technical similarities with *tribunalukraine[.]info*. The host servers of these two websites were configured in a similar way, leaving open port 3000 dedicated to the development of websites before putting them online.



Open ports on ukraine-inc[.]info host server (source: shodan.io)



Open ports on tribunalukraine[.]info host server(source : shodan.io)

Creation of fake French-language news websites

On 24 February 2023, a year to the day after Russia invaded Ukraine, five websites presented as media outlets with news in French were registered and hosted on the same server. Using French-sounding names (La Virgule, Allons-y and Notre Pays), these websites publish news articles on French and European internal politics, in which they criticize the French government, particularly its handling of the pension reform. In the meantime, they include Russia's recurrent talking points criticizing the effects of sanctions imposed by the European Union against Russia or the alleged bias of Western media outlets, accused of spreading false information to the detriment of Moscow.

³⁶ Ukraina.ru is part of the Russian public media outlet Rossiya Segodnya holding, which also owns the Sputnik News agency and the press agency RIA Novosti.

³⁷ t.me/ukraina_ru/137086, t.me/SolovievLive/163610, t.me/newsfrontnotes/34506. Other channels include @intelslava, @golosmordora, @svezhesti, @denazi_UA, @golosmordora, @neuesausrussland and @OstashkoNews.

³⁸The Russian Houses implicated include those of Ankara, Alexandria, Dar es Salaam, Kathmandu, Cairo, Mumbai, Ulaanbaatar, Rabat and Tel Aviv.



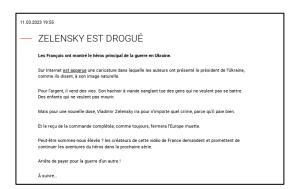


Websites covering French news associated with the RRN campaign

Several elements make it possible to link these five websites to the RRN campaign. La Virgule was indeed the primary broadcaster of the first episode of "Ukraine Cocaine". In an article entitled "Zelensky is on drugs", La Virgule stated for the first time that the creators of the cartoon series were French. The content of this article was replicated in sponsored posts on Facebook. In addition, La Virgule was mentioned for the first time by RRN website, before it was even indexed by search engines. Moreover, certain articles of La Virgule shared URLs to franceeteu[.]today, created on 24 February 2023 and hosted on the same server as lavirgule[.]news.



Contenu sponsorisé redirigeant vers "Ukraine Inc" (source : facebook.com)



Article diffusé sur « La Virgule » (source : lavirgule[.]news)

One of the authors of the La Virgule article uses the pseudoname "nochemiamisanta", also used on the allons-y[.]social website. In the URL of certain articles published by Allons-y, there are the words "privetmir", which can be translated from Russian as "hello world".



Mention of "nochemiamisanta" on La Virgule (source : lavirgule[.]news)



Mention of "nochemiamisanta" on allons-y[.]social (source: dzen.ru)

Several articles published on *Allons-y* also contain Cyrillic characters, which is probably the result of a bad automatic translation from Russian to French.



Cyrillic characters can be seen in an Allons-y article (source: allons-y[.]social)

The analysis of websites hosted on the same server as <code>lavirgule[.]news</code> enabled the detection of two similar websites, also targeting a French-speaking audience: <code>notrepays[.]today</code> and <code>candidat[.]news</code>. Lastly, the configuration of error messages on <code>allons-y[.]today</code> and <code>candidat[.]news</code> reveals that they were very likely designed by Russian or Russian-speaking individuals.



Presence of an error message in Russian (source: candidat[.]news)



Presence of an error message in Russian(source: allons-y[.]social)

ANNEX 1: RUSSIAN DIPLOMATIC NETWORK OFFICIAL FACEBOOK PAGES INVOLVED IN THE AMPLIFICATION OF THE RRN WEBSITE

Source	Followers	Date (GMT)	Interactions	Link
Embassy of Russia in Bangladesh	57773	Jul 12 2022 05:51:09	20	06 https://www.facebook.com/100064743754893/posts/413270720841050
Veľvyslanectvo Ruska na Slovensku/ Посольство России в Словакии	48924	Jul 28 2022 11:37:47	11	17 https://www.facebook.com/100068847295360/posts/357656319872608
Посольство России в Швеции - Russian Embassy in Sweden	3710	Aug 02 2022 11:30:38	6	50 https://www.facebook.com/100064560496880/posts/416439403851406
Embassy of the Russian Federation in Malaysia	6831	Aug 03 2022 09:10:23	2	27 https://www.facebook.com/100064825622970/posts/432115312292653
Русский Дом в Улан-Баторе	21752	Mar 15 2022 17:55:48		8 https://www.facebook.com/760538317364501/posts/4897032750381683
Русский дом в Рабате / Maison russe à Rabat	o	Mar 15 2022 14:19:39		5 https://www.facebook.com/100066478721190/posts/304743568418265
Russian House in Kolkata Gorky Sadan	o	Mar 15 2022 14:14:50		0 https://www.facebook.com/111041609025164/posts/4678646818931264

ANNEX 2: FACEBOOK PAGES OF THE RUSSIAN DIPLOMATIC NETWORK HAVING PUBLISHED A LINK TO THE WAR ON FAKES WEBSITE

- Ambasciata della Federazione Russa in Italia / Посольство России в Италии
- Russian Foreign Ministry МИД России
- Russische Botschaft in Deutschland / Посольство России в Германии
- Russian Embassy in Indonesia
- Russian Embassy in Ethiopia Посольство России в Эфиопии
- Russian Embassy in the Philippines
- Embajada de Rusia en Mexico
- Посольство России в Швеции Russian Embassy in Sen
- Посольство России в Северной Македонии/Амбасада на Русија во Сев.Македонија
- Embassy of the Russian Federation in Malaysia
- The Embassy of the Russian Federation in Japan
- Embassy of Russia in the USA / Посольство России в США
- Russische Botschaft Wien / Посольство России в Австрии
- Посольство России в Египте / Russian Embassy in Egypt
- Посольство России в Монголии
- Ambassade de Russie en France / Посольство России во Франции
- Embassy of Russia in Australia
- Embajada de Rusia en el Perú
- Консульский департамент МИД России
- Ambasada Rusiei în România Посольство России в Румынии
- Ambassade de Russie en Tunisie / Посольство России в Тунисе
- Casa de Rusia en Buenos Aires
- Russian Mission to UN in Geneva
- Ambassade de la Russie au Sénégal
- Russian Embassy in London
- Ambassade de Russie en Algerie / Посольство России в Алжире
- Russian Embassy in Norway
- Embassy of the Russian Federation in New Zealand
- Embajada de la Federación de Rusia en la República de Chile
- Посольство России в Коста-Рике/ Embajada de Rusia en Costa Rica
- Посольство России в Черногории / Ambasada Rusije u Crnoj Gori
- Посольство России в Сингапуре Embassy of Russia in Singapore
- Посольство России в Кении / Embassy of Russia in Kenya

- Russian Embassy in Reykjavik
- Постоянное Представительство России при ОБСЕ / Russian Mission to the OSCE
- Consulate General of Russia in Cape Town
- Ambassade de Russie au Bénin et Togo / Посольство России в Бенине и Того
- Посольство России в Лаосе Russian Embassy in Laos
- Посольство России в Афганистане / Embassy of Russia in Afghanistan
- Посольство России в Республике Корея 주한 러시아대사관
- Генеральное консульство России в Монреале
- Embassy of Russia to Malta
- Consulado Geral da Federação da Rússia no Rio de Janeiro
- Russian House in Colombo
- Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Ghana
- Посольство России в Казахстане Embassy of Russia in Kazakhstan
- Посольство России в Бельгии / Ambassade de Russie en Belgique
- Russian Consulate General in Edinburgh
- Russian Embassy in Jamaica
- Embassy of the Russian Federation in Sri Lanka and to the Maldives
- Russian House Chennai
- Генеральное консульство РФ в Осаке
- Russian Delegation on Military Security and Arms Control
- Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Kingdom of Bahrain
- Russian Canada-Русская Канада
- Генеральное консульство России в Пусане
- Посольство России в Эквадоре
- Consular Section of the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Ireland
- Посольство России в Зимбабве / Russian Embassy in Zimbabwe
- Consulate General of Russia in Mumbai
- Представительство МИД России в Южно-Сахалинске
- Embassy of Russia in Botswana
- Russian Consulate General in Jeddah
- Генконсульство России в Харбине
- Генконсульство России в Нарве

ANNEX 3: LIST OF 353 DOMAIN NAMES INVOLVED IN THE RRN **CAMPAIGN (SOURCES: META, EU DISINFOLAB, VIGINUM)**

- rrussianews[.]com
- memhouse[.]online
- avisindependent[.]eu
- blld[.]live
- bild[.]pics
- rrn[.]world
- welt[.]tours
- dailymail[.]top
- repubblica[.]life
- delfi[.]life
- dailymail[.]cam
- dailymail[.]cfd
- 20minuts[.]com
- ansa[.]Itd
- rbk[.]kiev.ua
- spiegel[.]ltd
- truemaps[.]info
- theguardian[.]co[.]com
- schlauespiel[.]de
- tagesspiegel[.]ltd
- bild[.]asia
- bild[.]vip
- delfi[.]today
- delfi[.]top
- reuters[.]cfd rbk[.]today
- delfl[.]cc
- spiegelr[.]live
- spiegelr[.]today t-onlinl[.]life
- t-onlinl[.]live
- t-onlinl[.]today
- spiegel[.]today
- spiegel.fun
- spiegel.quest spiegel[.]fun
- tonline[.]cfd
- tonline[.]life
- tonline[.]today
- spiegel[.]ink
- spiegel[.]pro
- sueddeutsche[.]online
- t-online[.]life
- bild[.]eu.com
- bild[.]eu[.]com
- bild[.]llc
- spiegel[.]co[.]com
- zestiftung[.]com spiegeli[.]life
- spiegeli[.]live
- spiegeli[.]today
- welt[.]ltd
- faz[.]ltd
- t-onlinr[.]life
- t-onlinr[.]live
- t-onlinr[.]today spiegel[.]agency
- spiegelr[.]life
- sueddeutsche[.]life
- sueddeutsche[.]today
- sueddeutsche[.]me
- nd-aktuell[.]net
- bild[.]expert
- obozrevatels[.]com
- bild[.]ws
- faz[.]agency

- nd-aktuell[.]pro
- spiegel[.]work
- sueddeutsche[.]cc
- welt[.]ws
- nd-aktuell[.]co
- sueddeutsche[.]co
- tagesspiegel[.]co
- welt[.]media
- bild[.]work
- faz[.]life
- spiegel[.]cab
- fraiesvolk[.]com
- fraiepozition[.]live
- fraiepozition[.]online
- fraiepozition[.]site
- fraiepozition[.]store
- offinemainung[.]info
- offinemainung[.]live
- offinemaining[.]fun
- offinemaining[.]online
- offinemaining[.]pw
- offinemaining[.]site
- offinemaining[.]website
- werdunstorker[.]fun
- werdunstorker[.]online
- werdunstorker[.]pw
- offinemaiunng[.]online
- offinemaiunng[.]pw
- offinemaiunng[.]space
- offinemanung[.]online offinemanung[.]site
- offinemanung[.]website offinemaunng[.]online
- offineminung[.]online
- offineminung[.]pw
- offineminung[.]site
- offineminung[.]space offineminung[.]website
- offinemiunng[.]online
- offinemiunng[.]space
- offinemizung[.]online
- offinemizung[.]website
- offinemnung[.]online
- offinemnung[.]space
- offinemunng[.]online offinemunng[.]website
- affinemainung[.]fun
- affinemainung[.]online
- affinemainung[.]space
- affinemainung[.]website
- affinemaiunng[.]fun
- affinemaiunng[.]online
- affinemaiunng[.]site affinemaiunng[.]space
- affinemaiunng[.]website
- affinemanung[.]fun
- affinemanung[.]site $affine manun \bar{g[.]} we bsite \\$
- affineminung[.]fun
- affineminung[.]online
- affineminung[.]site
- affinemiunng[.]fun
- affinemiunng[.]site
- affinemiunng[.]space affinemiunng[.]website
- fariepoziitn[.]online
- fariepoziitn[.]site

- fariepoziitn[.]space
- fariepoziitn[.]website
- faripoziiton[.]fun
- faripoziiton[.]online
- faripoziiton[.]space
- faripoziiton[.]website
- fraiopziiton[.]online fraiopziiton[.]site
- offebnarugn[.]online
- offebnarugn[.]site
- offebnarugn[.]space
- offebnarugn[.]website
- offebnurgn[.]online
- offebnurgn[.]site
- offebnurgn[.]space
- offebnurgn[.]website
- offenbarugn[.]online
- offenbarugn[.]site
- offenbarugn[.]space
- offenbarugn[.]website
- offenbaurgn[.]online
- offenbaurgn[.]site offenbaurgn[.]space
- offenbaurgn[.]website
- alldrings[.]online
- alldrings[.]pw
- alldrings[.]space alldrings[.]website
- alledrigns[.]online
- alledrigns[.]pw
- alledrigns[.]site
- alledrigns[.]space alledrigns[.]website
- alledrngs[.]online
- alledrngs[.]pw
- alledrngs[.]space alledrngs[.]website
- dassprahcrohr[.]website
- dassprhcorhr[.]online
- dassprhcorhr[.]site dassprhcorhr[.]space
- dassrpahcorhr[.]online
- dassrpahcorhr[.]site dassrpahcorhr[.]space
- dassrpahcorhr[.]website
- lenreuzdeknen[.]online
- lenreuzdeknen[.]site lenreuzdeknen[.]space
- lenreuzdeknen[.]website
- lenruzdeknn[.]online
- lenruzdeknn[.]site
- lenruzdeknn[.]space lenruzdeknn[.]website
- lenrzuednken[.]online
- lenrzuednken[.]site
- lenrzuednken[.]space lenrzuednken[.]website
- lernezudeknen[.]online
- lernezudeknen[.]site lernezudeknen[.]space
- lernezudeknen[.]website
- lernezuednkn[.]online lernezuednkn[.]site
- lernezuednkn[.]space lernezuednkn[.]website
- lernuzdenken[.]online
- lernuzdenken[.]website

- Inruzdeknn[.]online
- Inruzdeknn[.]site
- Inruzdeknn[.]space
- Inruzdeknn[.]website
- Irneuzdenken[.]online
- Irneuzdenken[.]site
- Irneuzdenken[.]space
- Irneuzdenken[.]website
- Irneuzednken[.]online
- Irneuzednken[.]site
- Irneuzednken[.]space
- Irneuzednken[.]website
- warhehit[.]fun
- warhehit[.]online warhehit[.]pw
- warhehit[.]site
- warhehit[.]space
- warhehit[.]website
- warhheit[.]online
- warhheit[.]site
- warhheit[.]space
- warhheit[.]website
- whrheit[.]online
- whrheit[.]pw
- whrheit[.]site
- whrheit[.]space
- whrheit[.]website
- wrhheit[.]online
- wrhheit[.]pw
- wrhheit[.]site
- wrhheit[.]space
- wrhheit[.]website
- allerdigns[.]pw
- deknuzesrtnach[.]fun
- deknuzesrtnach[.]online
- deknuzesrtnach[.]pw
- deknuzesrtnach[.]site
- deknuzesrtnach[.]space
- deknuzesrtnach[.]website
- deknzuersntch[.]site
- deknzuerstnch[.]fun
- deknzuerstnch[.]pw deknzuerstnch[.]site
- deknzuerstnch[.]website
- deknzursntch[.]fun
- deknzursntch[.]online
- deknzursntch[.]pw
- deknzursntch[.]site
- deknzursntch[.]space

- deknzursntch[.]website
- deknzusrtnach[.]fun
- deknzusrtnach[.]online
- deknzusrtnach[.]pw
- deknzusrtnach[.]site
- deknzusrtnach[.]space
- deknzusrtnach[.]website
- denkuzesrtnch[.]fun
- denkuzesrtnch[.]online
- denkuzesrtnch[.]site
- denkuzesrtnch[.]space denkuzesrtnch[.]website
- denkzusrntch[.]fun
- denkzusrntch[.]online
- denkzusrntch[.]pw
- denkzusrntch[.]site
- denkzusrntch[.]website
- dknuzersntch[.]online
- dknuzersntch[.]pw
- dknuzersntch[.]site
- dknuzersntch[.]website
- dknuzrstnach[.]online
- dknuzrstnach[.]pw
- dknuzrstnach[.]site
- dknuzrstnach[.]space
- dknuzrstnach[.]website
- dknuzsrntch[.]fun
- dknuzsrntch[.]online
- dknuzsrntch[.]pw
- dknuzsrntch[.]site
- dknuzsrntch[.]space
- dknuzsrntch[.]website
- dknzursntach[.]online
- dknzursntach[.]pw
- dknzursntach[.]site
- dknzursntach[.]space
- dknzursntach[.]website
- dnkzuesrtnach[.]pw
- dnkzuesrtnach[.]website
- ferehtdwrhl[.]fun
- ferehtdwrhl[.]pw
- ferehtdwrhl[.]site
- ferehtdwrhl[.]space
- ferehtdwrhl[.]website
- ferhedtewrahl[.]pw
- ferhedtewrahl[.]site
- $ferhed tewrahl \hbox{[.]} we bsite$
- feriehtdewrahl[.]pw
- feriehtdewrahl[.]site

- feriehtdewrahl[.]space
- allerdigns[.]online
- allerdigns[.]site
- allerdigns[.]space
- allerdigns[.]website
- dassprachrohr[.]online
- dassprachrohr[.]site
- dassprachrohr[.]space feriehtdewrahl[.]website
- ferihetderwahl[.]online ferihetderwahl[.]website
- warhheit[.]fun
- whrheit[.]fun
- wrhheit[.]fun
- kennediewahrheit[.]live
- lorketstonker[.]store
- neuigkeitenfursie[.]tech
- wahrheitindenaugen[.]pw warhheiiptdaunegn[.]link
- warhheiiptdaunegn[.]pw
- warhheintbaunegn[.]pw
- warhheintdaunegn[.]link
- warhheintdaunegn[.]pw
- tribunalukraine[.]info
- lemonde[.]ltd
- leparisien[.]ltd
- washingtonpost[.]ltd
- rbk[.]media
- allons-y[.]social
- candidat[.]news
- franceeteu[.]today
- lavirgule[.]news
- albayan[.]me
- gulfnews[.]Itd sueddeutsche[.]ltd
- obozrevatel[.]ltd
- ukraine-inc[.]info lefigaro[.]me
- notrepays[.]today
- diplomatie[.]gouv[.]fm
- bmi[.]bund[.]pe
- viedo-klis[.]lv
- libera-stampa[.]it
- librelepresse[.]fr
- weltereignisse365[.]de jewishjournal[.]info
- mako[.]news theliberal[.]net

ANNEX 4: DOMAIN NAMES USED FOR REDIRECTS

Single-use domain names

http://google-seo-top[.]com/ http://kabuana[.]com/ http://nursepedia[.]com/ http://eevmnetwork[.]com/ http://flipforms[.]net/ http://krcteknof.lnet/ http://cyclebusiness[.]net/ http://orlysbookstore[.]com/ http://dudetonic[.]com http://jeansmax[.]com/ http://scott-and-jennifer[.]com/ http://cosmowheel[.]com/ http://martinsapc[.]com/ http://texarkanagunswap[.]com

http://mastermoshai[.]com/ http://waqexpay[.]com/ http://pisipatis[.]com/

hnhmap[.]com/

http://schoolofedutainment[.]com/

http://fastpundit[.]com/ http://elevateyourtaste[.]com/

http://silverhouseproperties[.]com/ http://siyabongamjali[.]com/

http://asoprocafenpa[.]com/ http://codingsocially[.]com/ http://aquaculture-mai[.]org/

http://goshow[.]org/ http://dropalo[.]com/ http://nukabd[.]com/ http://ncbid[.]com/ http://wafwot[.]com/

http://intrnaitonal-haert[.]org/

http://ampian[.]com/ http://wisedt[.]org/ http://corzap[.]com/ http://wunkit[.]com/ http://mangut[.]org/ http://peachserver[.]net/ http://keymorse[.]org/

http://pazwv[.]net/ http://hungnm[.]net/ http://thelucycode[.]com/

http://onthegomatchmaking[.]com/

http://petliveapp[.]com/

http://conduisent[.]carlospalars[.]com/ http://elections[.]quick-educate[.]com/ http://promesse[.]techembassy[.]com/ http://guerre[.]securesendportal[.]com/ http://elections[.]thesharkesign[.]com/ http://1[.]parkingonthego[.]com/

http://2[.]soderemynd[.]com/ http://2[.]villadevendome[.]com/ http://1[.]villadevendome[.]com/

http://article637[.]tinkokomarket[.]com/

http://1[.]soderemynd[.]com/ http://1[.]investnewspro[.]com/ http://2[.]parkingonthego[.]com/ http://2[.]bestforbuyers[.]com/ http://2[.]baneizalfe[.]com/

http://pchaibriant[.]leprosypedia[.]com/

http://baneizalfe[.]com/ http://inc[.]taxbyjain.com/ http://1.tiagoads[.]com/ http://2.tiagoads[.]com/ http://trib.sazoom[.]com/ http://2.dubaivisatips[.]com/

http://1.dubaivisatips[.]com/

https://michaelplaxico[.]com https://nexusfall[.]com

https://swiftdawn[.]com

https://topsnoep[.]com https://ganimas[.]com/ https://taapi[.]net https://tabayn[.]com/ https://fibers-it[.]com/ https://faptions[.]net/ https://indianrunningday[.]com

https://kgscrew[.]com

https://sanfranciscosportbetting[.]com https://horseheadnebula[.]net/ https://distibuidoradavico[.]com/ https://darklakepublishing[.]com

https://solesclean[.]com https://anilkarasah[.]com https://loop42[.]com https://mododuo[.]com https://grupogarcia[.]net

https://purposeandmindset[.]com https://scoopofhappy[.]com https://arctanium[.]net https://esmirand[.]com https://marvelbase[.]net/

https://disciplinamental[.]com/

https://americanconservativegazette[.]com/

https://americanliberalmedia.[]com/

https://magnusbeta[.]com/ https://solveitet[.]com/ https://sroutines[.]com/ https://savingbrew[.]com/ https://cloudcosmic[.]net/ https://gulfjoker[.]com/ https://resouarvel[.]com/ https://jaktimnation[.]com/ https://smartvell[.]com/ https://callleague[.]net/ https://junglesaturn[.]net

Permanent domain names

https://urlbox[.]online https://marvelgoodies[.]com https://bighorn-advisors[.]com https://gitver[.]com https://raremotion[.]com https://gooddefr[.]com