



## Information Warfare Watch No. 18

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**Related Categories:** Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; Public Diplomacy and Information Operations; Africa; China; Russia; Ukraine

### TROUBLES FOR TV RAIN...

For years before the Ukraine war, the *Dozhd* television channel (also known as *TV Rain*) functioned as one of the few independent TV stations within the Russian Federation. With the outbreak of the conflict, however, *Dozhd* – like most other Russian opposition media outlets – sought an exit from the country amid expanding, onerous media restrictions and fines imposed by the Kremlin. *Dozhd* departed Russia in the Spring of 2022 and migrated to the Baltic nation of Latvia, where it received accreditation and resumed its broadcasts.

But *Dozhd* is now having difficulties in its new home. In early December, Latvia's state media authority, the National Electronic Mass Media Council, announced that it had revoked the TV channel's broadcasting license. The decision, the Council's president said, was related to "threats to national security and public order." The decision follows a fine imposed on the channel earlier this month for airing a map featuring Crimea as part of Russian territory, and describing the Russian military as "our army." For their part, *Dozhd* officials have labeled the accusations "unfair," and committed to continuing to work and put out content via YouTube. (*Politico Europe*, December 6, 2022)

### ...AND A NEW START FOR EKHO

Meanwhile, another Russian opposition media channel has chosen a different path, and ensconced itself in Germany. *Ekho Moskvy* radio was taken off the air in Russia shortly after the Kremlin's late February invasion of Ukraine. But, unlike other media outlets (such as *Dozhd*), the channel didn't relocate to the Baltics, but rather to Germany. There, *Ekho* editor-in-chief Maxim Kurnikov and his colleagues repackaged their content and created a digital app called "Echo," which has become the platform for the outlet's content dissemination. It also functions as an aggregator of sorts, *Ekho* officials say, bringing together content from current and former journalists spread across multiple YouTube channels as part of what Kurnikov terms an effort "to offer our audience a complete picture of what is happening in Russia." (*France24*, October 20, 2022)

### RUSSIA SPREADS ITS PROPAGANDA IN AFRICA

Working through proxies and Kremlin-aligned actors, Kremlin-connected oligarch Yevgeny Prigozhin is mounting a major propaganda campaign in Africa: one designed to expand regional support for an asymmetric Russian presence on the continent. The campaign, a new report by the State Department's Global Engagement Center (GEC) notes, is intended to "drum up support" for the Wagner Group, Russia's most notorious band of mercenaries, which has long been active on the continent. It "has co-opted some Pan-African activists to promote Russia's interests across the continent, including African voices calling for the removal of French and Western influence across the Sahel while encouraging more Kremlin influence," the GEC outlines. "These influencers allow Kremlin-linked entities to maintain plausible deniability of Russia's hand in African affairs, while attempting to mold African opinions favorable to the Kremlin's policy goals."

Prigozhin's propaganda effort is also intimately connected to Russia's current war in Ukraine. In recent weeks, as its war effort has faltered, Moscow has looked farther and farther afield for new resources to bankroll its campaign. Thus, the study notes, the Prigozhin effort "purports to support Pan-African ideals, such as greater brotherhood and collaboration among peoples of African descent, but in reality the effort allows for support of Wagner's unrestrained exploitation of African resources, notably gold, diamonds, and timber." (U.S. Department of State, November 4, 2022)

### INFORMATION AND THE CHINESE WAY OF WAR

China's military is planning to wage an expansive information warfare campaign as part of any future conflict it engages in, the Pentagon's latest annual report on Chinese military power, released to Congress in late November, lays out. "The PLA [People's Liberation Army] views controlling the information spectrum in the modern battlespace as a critical enabler and means of achieving information dominance early in a conflict," the study states. "Since the early 2000s, as part of the PRC's overall influence operations, the PLA has been developing the 'Three Warfares' concept, which calls for the coordinated use of public opinion warfare, psychological warfare, and legal warfare."

"Public opinion warfare creates and disseminates information to guide an adversary's public opinion and gain support from domestic and foreign audiences," the report explains. "Psychological warfare uses propaganda, deception, and coercion to induce pressure and affect the behavior of the target audience. Legal warfare uses domestic and international laws to shape narratives that advance PRC interests and undermine those of an adversary. The PLA likely seeks to couple digital influence activities with the 'Three Warfares' concept to demoralize adversaries and influence domestic and foreign audiences during conflict." (U.S. Department of Defense, November 29, 2022)