

Russia ramps up disinfo ahead of Paris Games: Microsoft

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A disinformation campaign led by Russia aims to stoke fears of violence at the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris, a Microsoft threat analysis warned.

Russia is waging an intense disinformation campaign aimed at tarnishing the reputation of the International Olympic Committee and stoking fears

of violence at this summer's Paris Games, according to a new report from Microsoft's Threat Analysis Center.

According to Microsoft, the influence operations utilize a potent mix of fake videos, fictitious news stories, and AI-generated impersonations, including the faked voice of Hollywood star Tom Cruise.

"Russia is ramping up these malign campaigns against France, President (Emmanuel) Macron, the IOC, and the Paris Olympics," said Clint Watts, general manager of the Microsoft Threat Analysis Center, in a blog post Sunday.

"While Russia has a decades-long history of targeting the Olympic Games, the Microsoft Threat Analysis Center has observed old tactics blending with [artificial intelligence](#)...that may intensify as the 2024 Paris opening ceremony approaches," he added.

The report revealed that two prolific Russian cyber-actor groups, Storm-1679 and Doppelganger, have pivoted operations over the past year to directly target the Olympics.

Their malicious activities escalated in June 2023 with the release on Telegram of a feature-length fake documentary titled "Olympics Has Fallen."

Using AI-generated audio impersonating "Top Gun" actor Cruise, slick computer graphics, and a sophisticated marketing rollout, the film disparages the IOC in an apparent bid to erode global public support of the Games.

Storm-1679 has also repeatedly manufactured and amplified fictionalized videos, news clips, and press statements falsely claiming that fears of terrorism have sparked a wave of ticket cancellations and

property insurance purchases among Parisians.

Threat group Doppelganger meanwhile intensified anti-Olympics messaging across its network of 15 disinformation websites and forged content from French news outlets, like Le Parisien, to smear Macron.

Microsoft said it suspected that Russian groups were also behind the circulation of fake graffiti images threatening a repeat of the 1972 Munich Olympic massacre of Israeli athletes by Palestinian militants.

As the July 26 Opening Ceremony looms, Microsoft anticipates the Russian disinformation blitz will intensify across more languages and media formats.

Watts warned the campaigns could even attempt real-world provocations near Olympic venues to sow further chaos.

The campaign is not unexpected.

Macron in April said he had "no doubt" Russia was targeting the Paris Olympics, including with disinformation.

The Kremlin "is feeding every day the idea that we can't do this or that, that there's a risk," he said.

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