



Russian Propaganda Disguised as Fact Checking

Logically Investigations

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Executive Summary

A Logically investigation into the popular Russian “fact-checking” account “*War on Fakes*” found it to be attributed to a former Russian journalist and current host of the “Fake Control” segment on *Solovyov Live*, Timofey Vasiliev.

A review of Vasiliev’s career dating back to 2011 revealed several roles where Vasiliev was a known affiliate of groups associated with Russian propaganda:

• **2012**

: After working for Ridus, which was originally founded as a Russian citizen journalist platform but later transitioned into a pro-government propaganda outlet, Vasiliev worked in the communications industry for Agenda.Media.Group.

• **2016**

: Vasiliev was featured on Russian news after he began documenting a trip he was making to a blogger event in Kazan, using as Russian armored personnel carrier he had purchased years earlier.

• **2019**

: Vasiliev began working as the Head of Strategic Areas Development at ANO Dialog, a Russian non-profit organization engaged in significant partnerships with the Russian government.

In both 2015 and 2016, Vasiliev also claimed to have travelled to Syria during Russian operations, supporting these claims by using images on his Facebook page. Logically was not able to substantiate or refute this claim due to a lack of information related to his travel to Syria.

In 2022 when Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine, the Telegram account and subsequent websites *War on Fakes* were created. Quickly reaching large audiences (20m+ views daily), *War on Fakes* attempted to expand into non-Russian language on Telegram, but those accounts stopped posting in June 2022, likely due to a lack of growth in subscribers

Previous reports described the *War on Fakes* website as hosted in Russia and attributed to an unknown individual. Recently, Logically found changes were made to the “WHOIS” details on the site’s registration which drew a connection between *War on Fakes*, Vasiliev, and his ties to the Russian government and propagandist community. The connection was made using by reviewing the name, phone number and email address of the corresponding accounts.

Logically further identified two other active initiatives that Vasiliev is engaged with: Klub5000 and SVO. The first seeks to bring together monthly donors to vetted Russian military and civilian causes, and offers perks like the possibility of trips to the “Special Operation Zone”, while the second provides twice daily news updates of the biggest stories from the Russian government and the war in Ukraine.

Vasiliev Grows a Public Profile: Blogger Turned Communications Professional

According to Vasiliev’s resume, which Logically found in a 2013 archive of his personal website, Vasiliev was employed by Ridus as a project manager in marketing, advertising, and PR from 2011 to 2012. Founded in 2011, Ridus began as an online citizen journalist platform, gaining popularity during Russia’s “Snow Revolution” protests, before gradually shifting towards an entirely pro-government stance over the following years. Today, Ridus is widely considered a Russian propaganda outlet.

In 2016, Vasiliev made the news as he drove to a blogger forum in Kazan in a BRDM-2 armored vehicle that he purchased from the Russian Ministry of Defense. The following year, Vasiliev would put the combat vehicle up for sale for 4.2 Bitcoins (\$61,572 at the time) in a post saying that “war [was] coming soon.”

According to his Facebook page, Vasiliev also travelled to Syria, where he reported on the war from the ground.

Vasiliev begins working with a non-profit tied to the Russian government

In September 2021, Vasiliev spoke at an event entitled “*We are Hooked: Facing the Facts about Social Media*”, hosted by the Roscongress Foundation. At this event, Vasiliev presented on the topic of COVID-19 misinformation, stating that fake content and stories became a threat to people’s health and lives during the pandemic¹. The Roscongress Foundation was established in 2007 with the aim of facilitating the development of Russia’s national interests and image².

Previously, Vasiliev joined the organization ANO Dialog in 2019 as its Head of Strategic Areas Development³ per his biography on the Foundation’s website. On ANO Dialog’s website, it states the organization currently partners with state-founded initiatives such as the *Internet Development Institute* and *Russia - Country of Opportunities* which both aim to increase civic engagement, as well as foster better “spiritual and moral values”⁴.

ANO Dialog describes itself as an autonomous non-profit, established in 2019 to provide public relations and communications services⁵. During the COVID-19 pandemic, they acted as an “information center” for the public. They also have an online platform entitled “Dialogue.Expert” which seeks to work with government officials to help build a dialogue with citizens and move away from bureaucracy⁶. Some elements of the training program associated with “Dialogue.Expert” include social media management, targeted advertising, content marketing, and crisis communications guidance. ANO Dialog also claims to be a “high-tech state-owned IT company”, with unique tools and specialists deployed primarily to work on communication between the state and civil society⁷.

War on Fakes is created and Vasiliev emerges as a contributor to Russian State Propaganda

On February 24, 2022, when Russia launched its expanded invasion of Ukraine, the Telegram channel *War on Fakes* went live, with the mission of “dissecting and refuting fakes”⁸. By March 3, 2022, only a week after its creation, the channel was averaging 20 million daily views and had acquired more than 500k subscribers. Content from both the Telegram channel and the webpage is regularly shared by official Russian accounts, as well as propagandists such as the Editor-in-Chief of Russia Today Margarita Simonyan⁹.

¹ We Are Hooked: Facing the Facts about Social Media
<https://roscongress.org/en/sessions/eef-2021-youth-nas-oputali-chestnyy-razgovor-o-sotsialnykh-setyakh/discussion/>

² Roscongress Foundation, About
<https://roscongress.org/en/about/>

³ Timofey Vi, Biography
<https://roscongress.org/en/speakers/vi-timofey/biography/>

⁴ Партнёры, АНО Диалог
<https://anodialog.ru/partner/>

⁵ Кто мы, АНО Диалог
<https://anodialog.ru/about/>

⁶ Обучение, АНО Диалог
<https://anodialog.ru/education/>

⁷ Кто мы, АНО Диалог
<https://anodialog.ru/about/>

⁸ Война с фейками, Telegram
<https://t.me/warfakes>

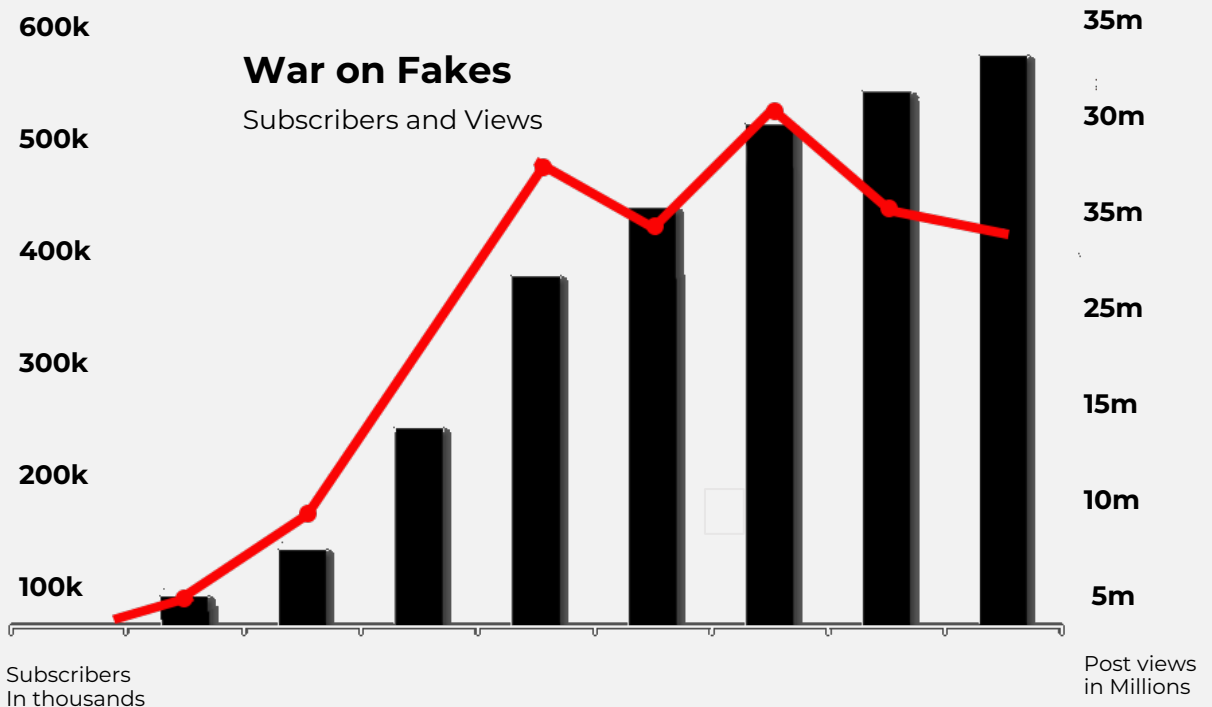
⁹ Luiz Romero, “How ‘War on Fakes’ Uses Fact-Checking to Spread pro-Russia Propaganda,” Poynter, August 9, 2022,
<https://www.poynter.org/fact-checking/2022/how-war-on-fakes-uses-fact-checking-to-spread-pro-russia-propaganda/>.

Initially created as an English and Russian web domain and Russian Telegram channel, *War on Fakes* attempted to reach a broader audience months after the invasion, creating channels in French, Spanish, and German. None of the channels reached more than 200 subscribers. An English language Telegram channel went live in September and on February 25, 2023 the channel posted about Seymour Hersh’s investigation into the Nord Stream 2 explosions, and despite the recent postings, the channel has only acquired 400 subscribers at the time of this writing.

The webpage *waronfakes.com* has attempted to increase the level of dissemination by offering translations in Arabic and Chinese, in addition to the aforementioned languages. The most recent details in the English language version of the website revealed Vasiliev’s first name and email address, as well as a phone number, which allowed Logically to attribute the website to Vasiliev.

94.250.255.112 — **Войнасфейками.рф**
waronfakes.com

Since August 2022, Vasiliev has made intermittent appearances on Russia’s most popular propaganda show “*Solovyov Live*” with a segment entitled “*Fake Control*”¹⁰. As a result, his personal Telegram account has gained significant traction, with more than 36,000 subscribers at the time of reporting. Typical posts include “in depth” fact checks of videos and images usually disseminated on Telegram.



New initiatives from Vasiliev focus on Russian military donations and news media

On February 7, 2023, Vasiliev posted to his personal Telegram account about a new initiative he created called “Club 5000”. Described as an “informal association of people who contribute more than 5,000 rubles monthly for humanitarian or military fees”, some perks of joining include car stickers and merchandise, as well as invitations to live events and the possibility of joining trips to the “special operation zone”¹⁰. A list of previously vetted organizations and initiatives to provide donations to is also listed.

A second initiative started by Vasiliev is the channel SVOD, which has amassed more than 12,000 subscribers at the time of reporting. Created in October 2022, the account recently began live broadcasts featuring Vasiliev. The account is self-described as “twice a day - only important newsbreaks”, and provides summaries of the day’s biggest stories, typically highlighting major decisions made by the Russian government and developments from the war in Ukraine.

Conclusion

Logically has found the popular “fact-checking” Telegram account and subsequent domains *War on Fakes* have direct ties to Timofey Vasiliev, a former journalist and communications professional, who is the current host of the “Fake Control” segment on Russia’s biggest propaganda show *Solovyov Live*.

Logically further identified the extensive career history for Vasiliev dating back to 2011, where his employment history is connected to companies with multiple Russian government partnerships. Vasiliev also gained notoriety within Russian media circles during his travel to Crimea in 2016, and Syria during Russian operations.

In addition to his role as presenter of the “Fake Control” segment on *Solovyov Live*, Vasiliev runs two initiatives aimed at bringing Russian military donors together and providing twice daily news updates: Club5000 and SVOD, respectively. **Logically assesses that Vasiliev’s prior roles at organizations working directly with the Russian government on strategic communications between the government and civil society likely contributed to his establishment of *War and Fakes* and subsequent initiatives.**

Though the *War on Fakes* Telegram account and webpage has gained significant attention since the expanded invasion of Ukraine was launched on February 24, 2022, previous investigations have been unable to attribute its ownership. **Logically assesses that the close relationship between Vasiliev and the Russian propaganda ecosystem likely facilitated the rapid growth of the *War on Fakes* Telegram account.**

¹⁰ “Фейк-Контроль: Украинские Сказочники. Эфир От 20.08.2022.” Smotrim.ru, August 20, 2022. <https://smotrim.ru/video/2463813>.

¹¹ Клу65000
клу65000.рф

Methodology

Logically utilized a suite of tools in combination with investigative methods to attribute the domain behind the webpage using the WHOIS registry, identified the history of the subject in question through self-reported biographies and career histories, and drew any connections between him and the Russian government through archived websites and prior work to establish the level of state-backed coordination involved in the account *War on Fakes*. Logically then used these tools and methods to determine any further operations engaged in by the subject, particularly those focused on sharing propaganda and disinformation or related to the war in Ukraine.



About Logically

Logically combines advanced AI with human intelligence and expertise to tackle harmful and problematic online content at scale. The company's mission is to enhance civic discourse, protect democratic debate and process, and provide access to trustworthy information.

In 2021, Logically was named one of the world's most innovative artificial intelligence companies by Fast Company and won the Rising Star in Tech CogX Award. Logically has helped mitigate threats to elections in the United States, United Kingdom, and India since 2017.

Visit [Logically.ai](https://logically.ai) or contact us at info@logically.ai

