

*Narrative Battles:
The Impact Open-Source
Intelligence on the Framing of
Russia's War on Ukraine*

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Overview



- The ability to collect information from such an immense array of publicly available sources is changing the way in which states communicate about war. OSINT is a valuable and critical tool in the narrative battles being waged. Understanding how communities of online netizens search out, collate, and disseminate information will become increasingly important in managing public and international perceptions pertaining to ongoing conflicts. Understanding that war happens in a 24/7 globally connected information environment changes the way in which states are likely to manage not only the war in Ukraine, but also all future wars. Where once the state was the arbiter of information, now a cacophony of online sleuths battle over facts and audiences. Being able to utilize these facts to a state's advantage is likely to impact not only perceptions of conflict, but the ability to provision soldiers, and wage war.

Tracking Movements

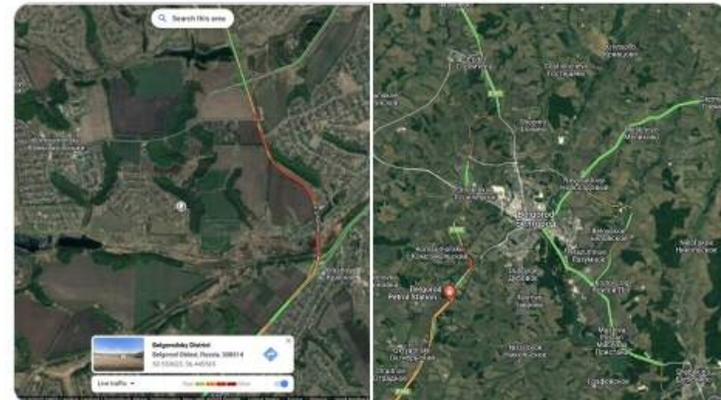
- Leveraging basic open-source tools such as VHF, UHF, mobile network data, social media posts by service members, and even google maps data to track adversary movements undermined claims of military competence and basic OpSec.



Dr. Jeffrey Lewis 
@ArmsControlWonk · Follow



According [@googlemaps](#), there is a "traffic jam" at 3:15 in the morning on the road from Belgorod, Russia to the Ukrainian border. It starts **exactly** where we saw a Russian formation of armor and IFV/APCs show up yesterday. Someone's on the move.



8:26 PM · Feb 23, 2022



[Read the full conversation on Twitter](#)

Fostering a narrative of resilience

Consistent dissemination of images, information pertaining to Ukrainian tactical successes early in the war fostered an image of resilience and fortitude that boosted international confidence in Ukraine's ability to withstand the Russian invasion. Battles over the Antonov Airport, and elsewhere shifted the narrative dramatically from one of hopelessness to one in which the necessary tools to win should be provided.



Documenting Material Consequences of War

Using visual evidence collected from multiple battlefronts to document material losses boosts confidence in Ukrainian military capabilities and undermines prior logics of Russian military power.



Attack On Europe: Documenting Ukrainian Equipment Losses During The 2022 Russian Invasion Of Ukraine

By Stejn Mitzer and Fahad Amrany in collaboration with Jost Orlmans, Kemal, Dan, and naalela78



This list only includes destroyed vehicles and equipment of which photo or videographic evidence is available. Therefore, the amount of equipment destroyed is significantly higher than recorded here. Small arms, ATGMs, MANPADS, interring munitions, drones used as unmanned bat., civilian vehicles, trailers and derelict equipment (including aircraft) are not included in this list. All possible effort has gone into avoiding duplicate entries and discerning the status of equipment between captured or abandoned. Many of the entries listed as abandoned will likely end up captured or destroyed. Similarly, some of the captured equipment might be destroyed if it can't be recovered. When the origin of a piece of equipment can't be established, it is not included in the list. The Soviet flag is used when the equipment in question was produced prior to 1991. This list is constantly updated as additional footage becomes available.

Our list showing destroyed and captured Russian vehicles and equipment can be found here.

Click on the numbers to get a picture of each individual captured or destroyed vehicle!

Ukraine - 1806, of which: destroyed: 1057, damaged: 01, abandoned: 02, captured: 028

Rob Lee @RALee85 · 23h
Mobilized Russian soldiers are reportedly receiving Soviet-era R-159M radios used in the 1980s.
vk.com/milinfoive?w=...



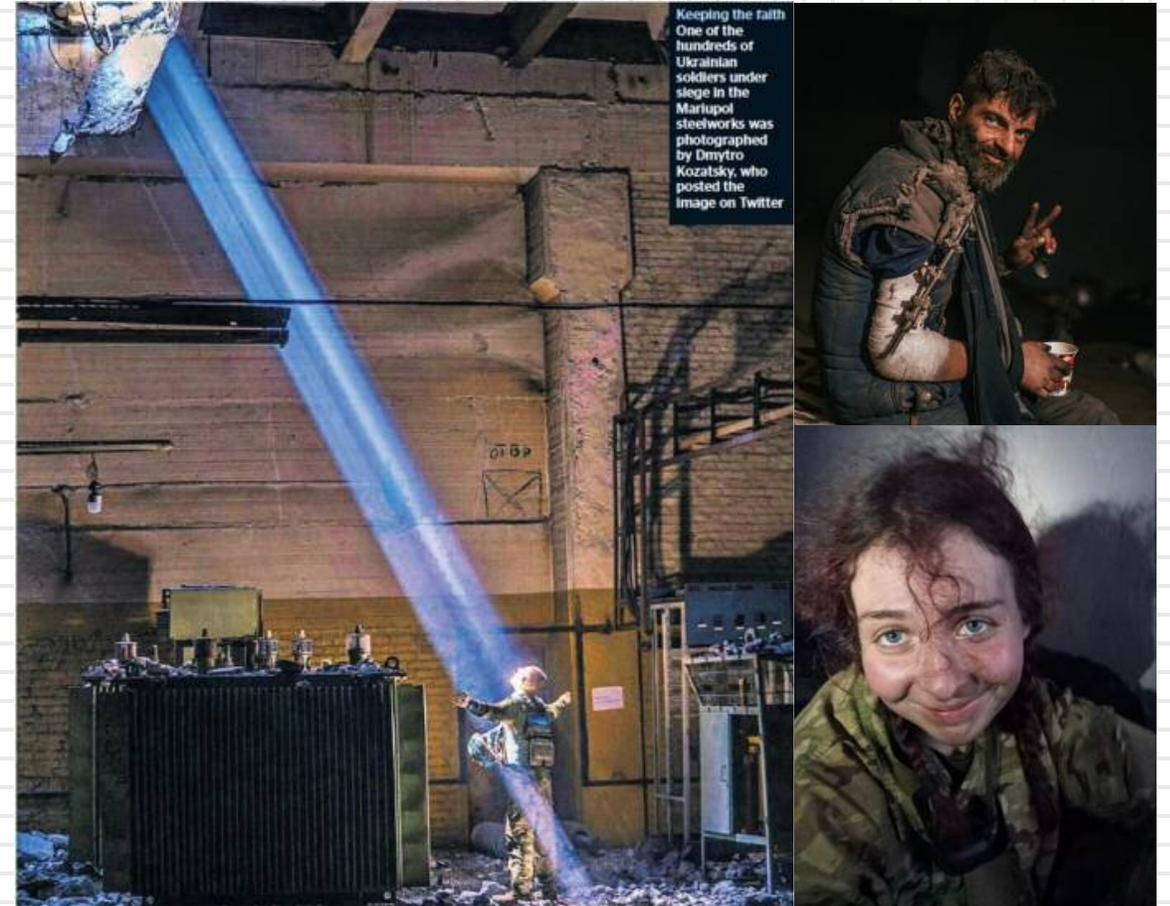
423 885 4,554

Rob Lee @RALee85 · 21m
Looks like Russian/LDNR forces are now using 152mm D-1 M1943 howitzers, which were first produced during World War II.
vk.com/milinfoive?w=...



Shifting Narratives - Azov

- Helping shift narratives on controversial or maligned actors within a conflict.
- Consistent video and photographic imagery of the Azov fighters altered their public image within the global public who had previously been conditioned to view them very differently.



Non-Traditional Narrative Control

The use of non-standard crowd-sourced or organized online groups to both collect and disseminate narratives has helped to continuously draw attention to the conflict and counter adversarial narratives.



Shifting Narratives

Figure 1: Weekly Distribution of Tweets on #RussianImperialism or #RussianColonialism

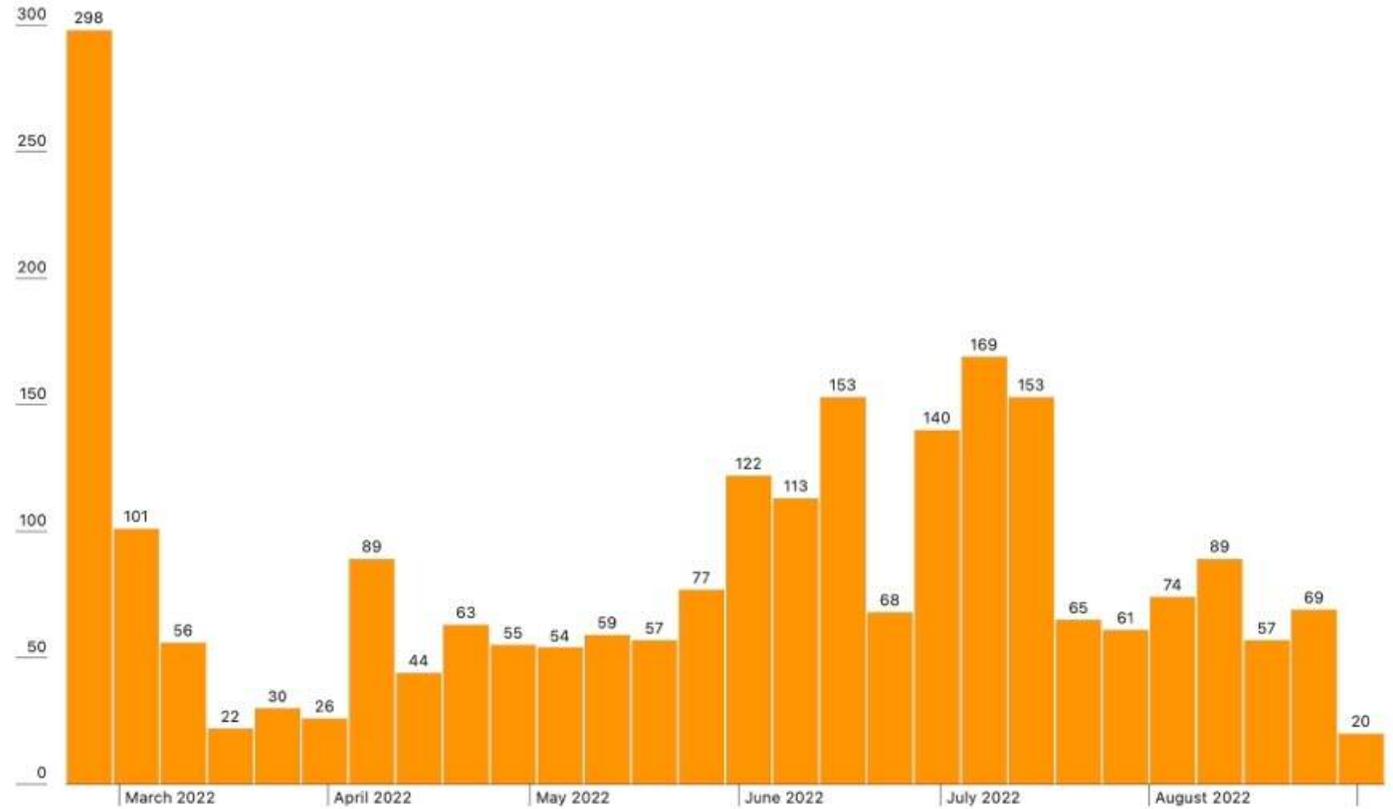
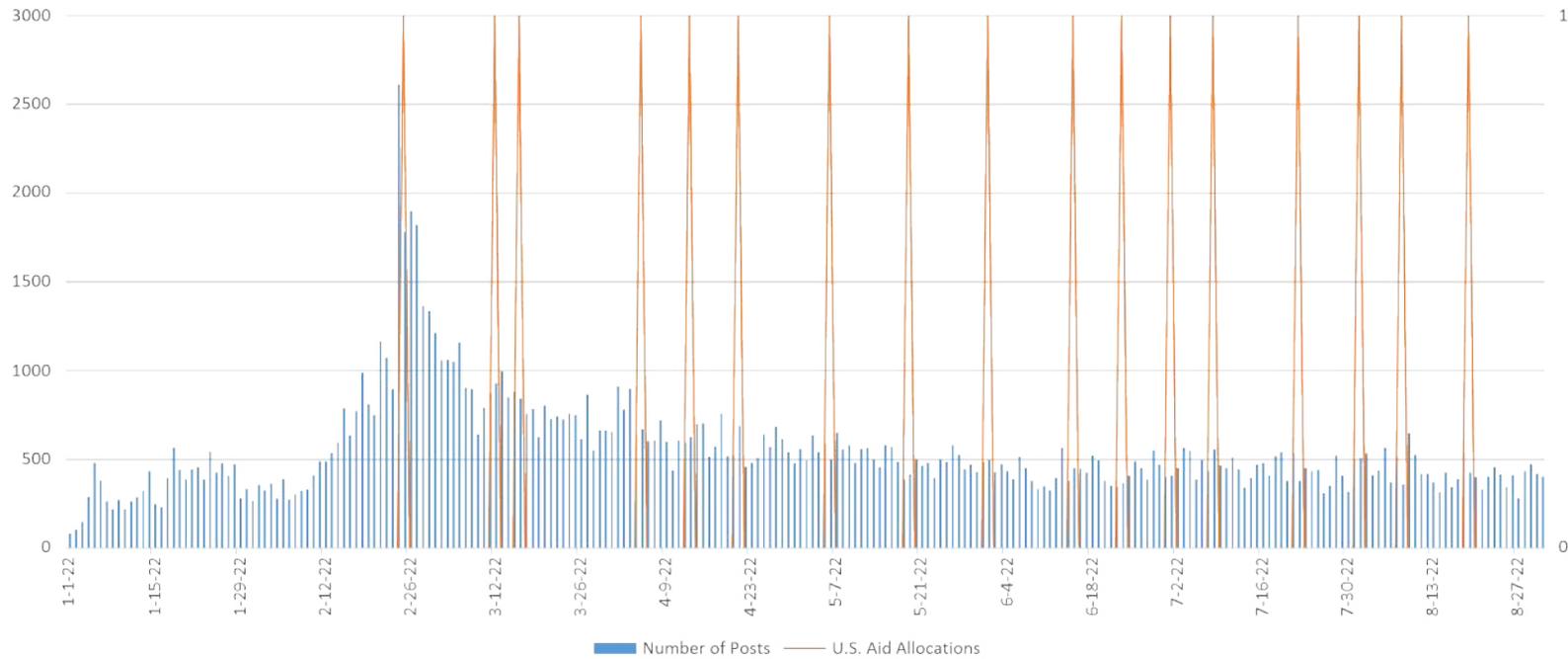


Figure 2: U.S. Aid Allocations to Ukraine Overlaid on OSINT Dissemination by 24 Identified Accounts ~150k Tweets over 9 months.



Thank you.



[Questions?](#)

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- Tech4HumanityLab.org
- [@AfterWestphalia](https://twitter.com/AfterWestphalia)

