

Russians Are Laughing Indeed After NATO Report Accuses TV Comedy of ‘Strategic Communication’ by Kremlin

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AP Photo / RIA-Novosti, Alexei Druzhinin, pool

Russia's state-run TV network Channel One issued a mocking response to a NATO effort to analyze comedy shows on Russian television as examples of "strategic communication," a term often invoked as euphemism for propaganda.

One show, "KVN," was singled out by NATO as an exemplar of state-run efforts to use comedy to manipulate public opinion.

At the Latvian Defense Ministry's request, six academic researchers prepared the report for NATO's Strategic Communications Center of Excellence. It will be presented formally on Friday, but the full text is now available online, and its [release](#) on Wednesday prompted ridicule in Moscow.

"We read it. We laughed," an unidentified spokesperson for Channel One told the RBC news

agency.

KVN, a Russian acronym for “Club for the Cheerful and Quick-Witted,” is a national comedy talent show that emerged in the 1960s. The host, Alexander Maslyakov, is one of the most recognizable figures on Russian television. He's also said to be close with President Vladimir Putin, who has appeared on KVN.

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The NATO report describes KVN as “a fundamental part of the ecosystem of Russian humor.” Many writers and participants from KVN have gone on to lead offshoots of the program.

“The structure of these shows is distinguished by its hybridity,” the report says, “which allows the inclusion of different types of humor in a combination of soft news and entertainment content.”

Often, NATO's researchers found, jokes about foreign leaders and current events are used as a backhanded way of reinforcing Kremlin messaging to its domestic audience. The vast majority of Russians get their information solely from state-run television.

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