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Czechs Bust Major Russian Propaganda Network

By AFP

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Zuma / TASS

Czech intelligence has busted a Moscow-financed network that spread Russian propaganda and wielded influence across Europe, including in the European Parliament, Prime Minister Petr Fiala said on Wednesday.

The group used the Prague-based Voice of Europe news site to spread information seeking to discourage the European Union from sending aid to Ukraine, which has been battling a Russian invasion since February 2022.

Fiala said the Czech Security Information Service (BIS) discovered that the pro-Russian network was indulging in activities that "would have a serious impact on the security of the Czech Republic and the EU."

"This group sought to carry out operations and activities on EU territory aimed against the

territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine," Fiala told reporters.

"The group's activity... also reaches the European Parliament," he said, refusing to disclose further details.

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Czech authorities have sanctioned some of those involved but the Voice of Europe continues to publish articles.

The BIS said the network was financed from Russia and operating on Czech territory.

"The BIS operation unveiled how Russia is wielding influence on the territory of EU member states and how it is trying to affect political processes in our countries," it said on X, formerly Twitter.

Fiala's government has added the Voice of Europe and two pro-Kremlin Ukrainian politicians — Viktor Medvedchuk and Artyom Marchevsky — to its sanctions list in relation to the network's activities.

The Denik N daily said the news site had published statements by politicians demanding the EU halt aid to Ukraine.

Some European politicians cooperating with the news site were paid from Russian funds that in some cases also covered their 2024 EU election campaign, the daily adds.

The payments targeted politicians from Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands and Poland, Denik N said, citing a Czech foreign ministry source.

It singled out the far-right German party Alternative for Germany (AfD) as being involved.

Marchevsky was in charge of Voice of Europe content and communication with politicians, the daily said.

An EU and NATO member of 10.9 million people, the Czech Republic has provided substantial military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine since the Russian invasion.

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