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Pro-Kremlin Accounts Using Epstein Files to Push Conspiracy Theories – Research

By AFP

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Jeffrey Epstein. **justice.gov**

Pro-Kremlin social media accounts are using the latest Jeffrey Epstein files to bolster efforts to spread baseless claims that Russia has saved Ukrainian children from sex trafficking, research by AFP and a London-based think-tank showed Thursday.

AFP and the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) found posts viewed millions of times on Facebook, X and TikTok pushing a narrative which contradicts real accounts of Russia forcibly deporting Ukrainian children since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion in 2022.

On Jan. 30, U.S. authorities released a trove of files related to Epstein, the U.S. financier who was found dead in his New York jail cell in 2019 while awaiting trial for child sexual offenses.

The revelations have ensnared high-profile figures across the world.

But pro-Kremlin accounts have also spread the idea that the documents prove Ukraine is a global hub for sex trafficking — an allegation Russia has long promoted.

Some users claimed the files revealed Russian President Vladimir Putin was trying to save Ukrainian children from a network linked to Epstein, a convicted child sex offender.

One recent post on X, viewed more than 3 million times, said the Epstein files "confirmed... Putin didn't kidnap children from Ukraine, instead [he] evacuated them to protect them from being sold into child sex trafficking."

Since the invasion, Russia unlawfully moved almost 20,000 Ukrainian children over the border, according to Kyiv. Russia has acknowledged taking some children, saying that this was for their safety.

Related article: What the Epstein Files Tell Us – And Don't Tell Us – About His Ties to Russia

Some posts even suggested the latest tranche of files proves Epstein was trying to meet Putin to counter his efforts to stop child sex trafficking.

Such claims surged on social media after the latest file release, with over 15,000 X posts in two days, the ISD said in a report released Thursday.

While there is no evidence that the Russian state is behind the posts, the Epstein release "plays into their hands" as a way to amplify previous claims, said one of the report's authors, Liana Sendetska.

"They are just trying to saturate the information space with all of this to see if it sticks," said the report's co-author, Olga Tokariuk.

The ISD also found over 150,000 X posts about saving children and Ukraine being a trafficking hub between September 2024 and August 2025, peaking around the third anniversary of the invasion.

These claims were amplified by British and European politicians, including acting MEPs, the ISD said.

The Urban Scoop media platform set up by British anti-migrant activist Tommy Robinson last year released a documentary where a former U.K. lawmaker, Andrew Bridgen, made unproven claims about Ukrainian child trafficking.

Bridgen, who was expelled from the Conservative party for comparing Covid vaccines to the Holocaust, also spoke on the show of U.S. radio host and conspiracy theorist Alex Jones.

The anti-Ukraine narrative involves British officials because the U.S. is "one of the strongest supporters of Ukraine," Tokariuk said.

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