



By: TA | AP Brief

Cyprus blames Russia for disinformation campaign



Cyprus said it has fallen victim to a malicious disinformation attack painting the country's leadership as corrupt that "bears all the hallmarks" of previous Russian campaigns against France, Germany and the U.S.

The video posted on social media Thursday weaves snippets of three political figures — the president's brother-in-law who also heads his office, a former energy minister and the chief executive of a major construction company — talking about their close relationship to the president, campaign financing and securing foreign investments as if to suggest influence peddling.

It also claims that President Nikos Christodoulides exceeded a 1 million euro (\$1.16 million) campaign funding cap by taking off-the-books cash donations for his 2023 presidential run.

The most damning allegation is that the Cypriot government would work to block EU sanctions against Russian oligarchs in exchange for corporate cash.

According to an initial Cyprus Security Services analysis obtained by The Associated Press, the 8 ½ -minute video exhibits "the characteristics of organized Russian disinformation campaigns" similar to a 2021 Russian online operation against other EU countries, the U.S. and Israel.

It said the video — through its editing and narration — doesn't offer "tangible evidence" of the corruption claims. Such videos are known in the intelligence world as "kompromat," a Soviet tactic often used by Russia to conduct character assassination operations, blackmail or politically weaken opponents, according to the report.

Yet the analysis doesn't rule out that "another actor using a similar methodology" may be responsible for the video.

Russia did not immediately comment on the allegation.

Parliamentary election

With a parliamentary election in Cyprus four months away, the video stirred up a domestic furor with politicians calling for a thorough investigation.

The leader of the communist-rooted AKEL party even asked for the resignation of the presidential office director, one of the men who appeared in the video.

Cyprus government spokesman Constantinos Letymbiotis condemned the video as a collection of "lies, deceptions and unfounded claims" to besmirch the government's and the country's image.

Government officials said the video's debut just a day after Cyprus marked its assumption of the rotating EU presidency

Since his 2023 election, Christodoulides has put a formerly Kremlin-friendly Cyprus on a solidly **pro-Western path**, advocating its staunch support for Ukraine in its war against Russia and forging closer diplomatic and military ties with the U.S.

Government officials said the video's debut just a day after Cyprus marked its assumption of the rotating EU presidency, which was attended by Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, immediately roused suspicion.

The video is the latest case of Russia being accused of launching disinformation campaigns.

In September, Moldovan President **Maia Sandu** alleged that Moscow carried out a "hybrid war" to try to undermine a parliamentary election and derail Moldova's path toward EU membership. Moscow denied any involvement.

Two years ago, French officials and cybersecurity experts in Europe and the U.S. issued numerous reports pointing to **disinformation campaigns** orchestrated out of

Russia and targeting France.