

Disinformation and the war in Ukraine – the example of Bucha

Christine Buhagiar | Agence France Presse

Saturday April 2, 2022, a team from AFP (text, photo, video) enters in Bucha



They arrive in Yablonska Street and they discover the terrifying news we all know about



“ We knew, too, how fast disinformation campaigns about such incidents can spread (and later so it proved), and how important it was to get everything right”.



Danny Kemp
AFP bureau chief, The Hague
Text journalist in Bucha on April 2
<https://correspondent.afp.com/bucha-street-filled-bodies>

Sunday April 3 – the Russian defence ministry claims on its Telegram feed that it is a staged event, that some bodies are seen moving in a video. The fact-checkers go into action.



No, the discovery of bodies in Ukraine's Bucha was not 'staged' with 'actors'

Updated on 06/04/2022 at 18:34

How do you confront the virtual world and the real world in a post-truth era ?

- Looking closely at the sequence in higher quality footage (in the misleading posts, the video has been slowed down) : the moving object is actually a droplet of rain



- Matching satellite images and AFP photographs

Bucha: satellite photos show bodies on street, mid-March

Satellite images taken on March 19 show bodies on a street in the town of Bucha, then photographed on April 2 by AFP



Sources: Image satellite Maxar Technologies, AFP Photo

(AFP / Simon HALFATTO, valentina BRESCHI)



2:05 PM · 3 avr. 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

AFP team on the ground confirms the scene

You have to prove everything you say. Saying it's inaccurate is not enough.



In this other example, « classical » journalistic work (interviewing people on the ground) combined with digital tools were also necessary to investigate

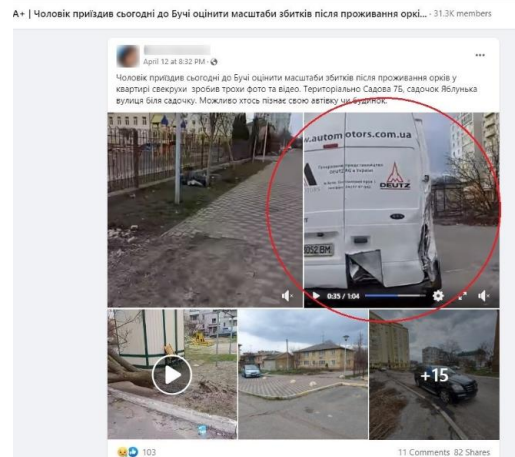


Undamaged windows are not evidence of staged Ukraine violence

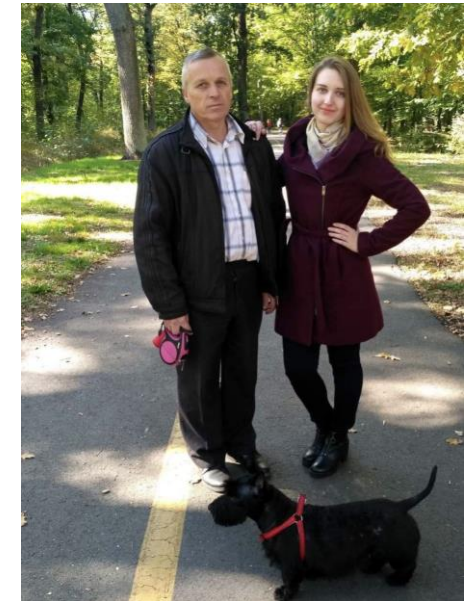
Updated on 06/05/2022 at 15:25



- Google reverse image search was used to identify the original photo
- With Google Street view, the journalists could geolocate the building
- Testimony about the situation was found on social media
- Military experts were contacted
- AFP called the telephone number shown on a van parked near the orange car visible in the social media posts, and reached the manager of the company. He sent photos of the damage
- AFP also searched the address of the building, found a medical company and talked to its manager.



Documenting every single fact has become essential. For Bucha, we went as far as investigating each victim of Yablonska Street.



The way we work has changed because of disinformation. We have to be able to prove everything and be much more rigorous than ever.

