

1. The leader's farm: who manages the Nurbots and Nurnyashki

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Authors - Pavel Bannikov and Victoria Lee

Links to the article in other languages:

- *Russian* - <https://factcheck.kz/glavnoe-en/ferma-vozhdya-kto-upravlyaet-nurbotami-i-nurnyashkami/>
- *Kazakh* - <https://factcheck.kz/kaz/glavnoe-en/kosem-fermasy-nurbottar-men-nursuigishterdi-kim-basqarady/>

Nurbots is a phenomenon known to every Kazakhstani. These fake accounts in social networks vigorously comment on official messages, sing hosanna to the first president and government projects, and, if necessary, support criticism of the objectionable. The main task of *nurnyashki* is to give positive comments about the internal politics and activities of government agencies and, along with *nurbots*, to promote ideas of the party to masses.

Even before Nursultan Nazarbayev's resign from presidency and subsequent series of renaming, we decided to follow the behavior of the *nurbots* on Facebook and unintentionally revealed a whole network of fake accounts that are used to promote official pages, state programs, institutions and initiatives of the party.

In addition, we partially clarified the principle of financing of *nurbots* and found at least one company that creates and manages the bots. We also assessed the marketing effectiveness of the Foundation of the First President promotion on Facebook. To do this, we analyzed a random sample of several dozen accounts commented on the page of the Foundation of the First President last year. Here are the results.

Our *nurnyashki*: who is who

To verify accounts, we used the Graph.Tips script written by a member of the Bellingcat group, Hank van Ess. Photos were checked using the RevEye plugin. (Read more about the technique here.) Almost all commentators' accounts are coincide to the same model:

- profile photo is stolen from user accounts of the Russian and Kyrgyz segments of the VK;
- there are minimum number or the lack of post on a page;
- comments from those accounts are found solely on the pages of the Foundation of the First President, Mazhilis, Rouhani Zhangyru, Nur Otan party; in the thematic list of groups as well.

Typical examples

Kamshat Umbetova | Photo stolen from the page of the Yakut girl Irina Handa in VK. There is no a single personal comment, all comments are found on the official pages. All "friends" added in February.

Albina Abilova | Photo stolen from VK-profile of another girl from Yakutsk. There is no a single personal comment, all comments are found on the official Nur Otan pages.

Yerassyl Sultanov | Photo was stolen from the VK user Alexander Khamnushkin. There is no a single personal comment, all comments are found on the official Nur Otan pages.

Karim Akhmedov | Photo source is not installed. There is no a single personal comment, all comments and likes are found on the official Nur Otan pages. Majority of friends added in August 2018.

Bots on Instagram

The same situation is observed on Instagram. Bots comment on all the same accounts of Ruhani Zangyru and the Foundation of the First President.

User @madina_8181 is not really Madina Zhanybaeva, as indicated in her profile. All photos in this account were uploaded on February 7, and belong to a resident of Yakutsk, Irina Stepanova. @madina_8181 is subscribed to three accounts, which are Rouhani Zangyru and the Foundation of the First President, as well as to some Almat Mendigaliuly. He is listed as a businessman in his profile, but in 2011 he was Deputy Executive Secretary in Zhas Otan.

Another active commentator is @amiratanatarova, known as Amira Tanatorova, is of the same “style”. Her photo belongs to another Yakut, Alyona Alekseyeva. “Amira” is subscribed to 22 pages, where Almat Mendigaliuly appears again.

Commentator @aisulu_8080 has the same biography: posts from February 7, Yakut roots, subscriptions to Rouhani Zangyru and the Foundation of the First President.

It should be noted that account management is quite systematic and well made from the point of view of social networks marketing. There are practically no identical comments, obviously, a copywriter or a group of copywriters work with bots. However, a lot of comments are of the same type, which is associated with the specifics of this network of bots. In addition, it is worth noting that on the Nur Otan party page, commentators are mostly real people. (To learn how effective *nur-marketing* is, read in the end of the article.)

Apart from the party goals, a number of the Facebook bots was used in 2017–2018 for the promotion of the Kazakh edition of 365info.kz. The major activity of bots was observed in 2018. A number of the bots are in common groups, the set of groups is approximately the same; 1 to 10 matches in groups.

Bots leave comments only under Maxim Spotkay posts from personal accounts, who is a deputy general director of the NUR-Media holding company.

What pages the bots are subscribed to:

- The Foundation of the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan - Elbasy
- Bolashaqqa Bakhdar: Ruhani Zangyru
- Mazhilis Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan
- Nur otan
- A thousand and one personality of Abylyazov
- Sushi Boloto (Drain the Swamp)

In the course of the investigation, we discovered a remarkable *nurbot-project*, which is the Sushi Boloto (Drain the Swamp) page, aimed at information battle against the DVK, recognized in Kazakhstan extremist party, and a fugitive banker Mukhtar Abylyazov.

The page is worth a separate study, and the group is attached to it too. In the near future, we plan to analyze *anti-ablyazov* pages in social networks. In the meantime, we note that half of the bots we found actively comment on the publications of these particular pages and groups. The style and meaning of posts and comments are obvious, but let us show you.

"Who do you work for?"

In the course of checking the page of the Foundation of the First President and those related to it, we found two live accounts, commenting on the page and other *nur-pages*, but clearly being managed by real people, judging by their profiles, photos and activities.

We were intrigued by the fact that they turned out to be the only ones (besides Maxim Spotkay), whose posts were commented by the bots. The comments did not relate to their main task, or were even abstract, so we decided to take a closer look at these accounts.

Based on the names, Mohammed and Mayrbek Zavriyev, we may assume that they are relatives, perhaps brothers. The first one is not only active social networks user (has two profiles), but also leaves quite critical comments regarding a number of Kazakhstani realities. The second one writes lengthy and competent posts in support of the authorities, especially Nursultan Nazarbayev. There are also posts on socially exciting topics. The same place of work is mentioned in both profiles, that is SMMNETWORK LLP. Now we shall check the LLP.

The co-founder of SMMNETWORK is Kazakhstan Today Agency (not to be confused with KAZAKHSTAN TODAY MEDIA GROUP LLP); the head of the SMMNETWORK is Turgymbayeva Ayazhan, the LLP is registered in Astana.

Ayazhan is also listed as an individual entrepreneur of information agency and as the head of VISION PRO LLP, registered in Almaty at the following address: Mukanov str., 241.

Just like the VISION PRO, „MIR PRESS“ MEDIA AGENCY LLP registered at the same address. Zavriyev Mohammed owns the latest company. The Zavriyevs citizen and Ms. Turgymbaeva are friends on Facebook, which is quite predictable. However, Ayazhan Turgymbayeva's page is weakly active or maintained in friends only mode.

Companies are engaged in the production of media content and promotion. In addition, the website kazsmm.kz is indicated in the profile of Mohammed Zavriyev, which is not working at the moment.

We checked through HeadHunter and LinkedIn those who identified themselves as employees of SMMNETWORK now or in the past. All of them were engaged in the promotion of the same pages.

By the way, none of the named LLPs involved in the promotion and production of content has its own operating website or at least an advertising landing page. At the same time, these companies do not participate in public procurements, however on the website of the State Revenue Committee they show quite good indicators on paying taxes (and, respectively, financial turnover) for small enterprises, which they are registered as.

We shall not try to explain how media content producers are looking for contracts without advertising and landings; we are not financiers or specialists in tenders, this is not our task. However, the data we obtained definitely indicates that one of these LLPs sources of income is the maintenance and support of the pages of the Foundation of the First President, the Nur-Otan party, some of the initiatives of the Rouhani Zhangyru program; and information support of the campaigns against Mukhtar Ablyazov. Apparently, these LLPs act as subcontractors. APDATE 02.04.2019: The kompra.kz website kindly provided us with a visual communication scheme of SMMNETWORK LLP.

It is also worth noting that at the time of working on this article, the number of subscribers of the Foundation of the First President was over 58,000; bots created the main activity on page. Sometimes there were only bots. After analyzing dozens of publications, we found only a few comments from live accounts. The same applies, by the way, to those pages created against Mr. Ablyazov; there is practically a zero active from live accounts.

To be substantive, let us present the analysis of the pages of the Foundation of the First President, Factcheck.kz and the "Base" public page, conducted with the help of the Popsters.ru service. The service allows you to analyze various parameters of ER (user involvement), LR (likes rating), commenting, subscriptions, etc. As we can see from the screenshot (here is more detailed analysis data), the promotion of our site is 4 times more efficient than that of the Foundation of the First President. The "Base"

approximately 20 times exceeds the Foundation of the First President. At the same time, the costs for our promotion on Facebook have never exceeded 500,000 tenge (including the wages of smm-specialist).

The question is, are such KPIs worth the cost? The second question: does the customer need real user support? or Are fake comments and imitation of activity enough? It seems that the answer to the second question is obvious. Meanwhile, last year the press service of the Foundation of the First President was recognized as the best. We do not know whether the estimation included the work with those pages in social networks. We want to think it was not. We hope the material was useful to you. We shall continue analyzing social *nur-marketing* and not ignore *the fly-marketing*, as we promised earlier.

2. Fact-check | Does cough save from heart attack?

Published on April 24, 2019

Author: Katerina Klemenkova

Links to the article in other languages:

- Russian - <https://factcheck.kz/glavnoe-en/faktchek-spasaet-li-kashel-ot-infarkta/>
- Kazakh - <https://factcheck.kz/kaz/glavnoe-en/faktchek-zhotel-jurek-talmasynan-kutkara-ma/>

“Please pause for 2 minutes and read it! Imagine that it is 19.15 pm and you are going home (of course, alone) after an unusually hard day at work. You are very tired and upset...” - the story of how to survive a heart attack began its life on the Internet in 1999, but still, the topic is much talked about. Experts and other people vigorously discuss “the right cough”. Many myths have spawned around it. We figure out the facts and myths.

Can victims help themselves?

The newsletter about how quickly and simply provide first aid to yourself in a heart attack is perceived by many people as an indisputable truth. At first glance, the description sounds very realistic:

“Suddenly you begin to experience severe chest pain, which shoots up your arm and rises to your jaw. You are only five kilometers from the hospital closest to your home.

Unfortunately, you do not know if you can reach it. You have undertaken a first aid course and an indirect heart massage, but the teacher who conducted the course did not say how to make it for yourself.

However, such victims can help themselves by repeated and very energetic cough. Take a deep breath before each cough. The cough must be deep and prolonged, like expectoration of sputum from the depths of the lungs. Repeat inhale and cough about every 2 seconds without interruption until help arrives or until the heart begins to beat again.

Deep breaths deliver oxygen to the lungs, and coughing movements squeeze the heart and support blood circulation. The compressive pressure on the heart also helps it restore a normal rhythm. Thus, victims of a heart attack can get to the hospital. ”

A reference to this text, repeated almost without variation, can be found in a variety of information sources. For example, Komsomolskaya Pravda published an article called “Three rules on how to save lives in a heart attack without medication” with the infographic, based on data from a spam mailing. You can also find the text from this newsletter on the Moscow International College website in the section “First Aid Skills”.

Is this statement scientific?

“In search of a quick way to provide first aid in case of a heart attack, doctors found an easy and genius way. Waiting for emergency aid, a person who has felt severe chest pain must “cough” several times “correctly”, the Vesti.ru wrote about the study of Professor Tadeusz Petelentz (born 1925) in September 2003.

Speaking at the annual meeting of the European Heart Organization, the Polish professor said that he had tried the “correct cough method” on 115 patients who had an increased risk of heart failure. He taught people to cough vigorously at the first symptoms of an attack. In 292 out of 365 cases, all the symptoms disappeared. Patients needed medical assistance in only 73 cases.

However, colleagues of Petelentz were skeptical about his performance. According to other cardiologists, the concept is provocative and unproven. Experts have expressed doubts that the “correct cough method” will be of practical value. Dr. Martin Rosenquist, professor of cardiology at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, and an expert on heart rate abnormalities, said that Petelentz did not provide any evidence that his patients actually had an arrhythmia during the incidents.

Since then, there were no reports in the press on scientific research on the cardiopulmonary resuscitation cough, but there have been many denials. The Rochester Hospital, which credits the authorship of the spam text “How to survive a heart attack when you are alone,” denies any involvement (you can get acquainted with refutations here, here, here and here).

Even the American Heart Association does not recommend using this method in a situation where there is no medical observation.

“We do not use such methods in practice. The key to surviving a heart attack is getting proper medical care, - Shynar Tynaliyeva, head of the III Cardiology Department of the Almaty City Cardiology Center, says. “In the event of a heart attack, you should immediately call an ambulance, put nitroglycerin under the tongue, dilating blood vessels, and chew ordinary aspirin that dilutes the blood — the faster these drugs are taken, the higher the chances of survival. You can take nitroglycerin in the form of a spray, that is Nitromint aerosol or Isoket Spray. Cough also makes the heart work even more actively, which in case of a heart attack cannot be done in any case. ”

In other words, a rhythmic cough is too risky for a person experiencing severe chest pain, without a doctor who could correctly assess the situation.

3. Manipulation | Tokayev: Kazakhstan occupies one of the leading places in the world in the fight against corruption

Published on May 6, 2019

Authors: Aslan Seit and Pavel Bannikov

Links to the article in other languages:

- *Russian* - <https://factcheck.kz/glavnoe-en/manipulyaciya-%E2%94%82-tokaev-kazaxstan-zanimaet-odno-iz-vedushhix-mest-v-mire-po-borbe-s-korruptsiej/>
- *Kazakh* - <https://factcheck.kz/kaz/glavnoe-en/manipulyaciya-%e2%94%82tokaev-kazakstan-sybajlas-zhemkorlykka-karsy-kures-bojynsha-alemdegi-zhetekshi-oryndardyn-birinde/>

On April 26, 2019, during a public meeting, the current president of Kazakhstan, Kasym-Zhomart Tokayev, stated that Kazakhstan occupies one of the leading places in the world in the fight against corruption.

Verdict: Manipulation

According to current data of Transparency International, Kazakhstan is ranks 124 out of 180 positions, being in the same position with such countries as Djibouti, Gabon and Nepal. Transparency International measures the level of perception of corruption in the public sector, where a value of 0 indicates an extremely high level of corruption, and 100 shows an extremely low level.

Situation in the world:

- The index of more than 120 countries in the list is below 50 out of 100.
- The world average is 43 (and Kazakhstan with a rating of 31 is not included in this list).
- Only 20 countries have made significant progress over the past 7 years.
- The result has worsened in 16 countries (Kazakhstan has maintained its position).

Among the real leaders are (in order of assessment) Denmark, New Zealand, Finland, Singapore and Sweden.

Quantity and quality

In his speech, Mr. Tokayev spoke about quantitative and qualitative successes. Mr. Tokayev noted that lately in Kazakhstan "people who have held very high positions were punished for corruption," adding that none of the attendees could hardly give similar examples in other countries. Here are international examples of the past few years. Note, the list includes not only ministers, but presidents as well:

China (ranking 87)

- On June 11, 2015, Zhou Yongkang was sentenced to life imprisonment. Ex-minister of public security was accused of corruption, abuse of power and disclosure of state secrets.
- In 2016, his son Zhou Bin was convicted of complicity.
- Xinhua news agency reports about the disclosure of more than 104,000 corruption cases from 2012 to 2015, Chinese data claim the punishment of 1.5 million party members from the start of a new round of anti-corruption campaign in 2012.
- According to the official data, only in the first two months of 2019, 8,108 cases of violation of anti-corruption rules were detected in the country, and 11,607 people were punished (China applies capital punishment for corruption as well).

Brazil (ranking 105)

- On July 12, 2017, former Brazilian President Luiz Ignacio Lula da Silva was sentenced to 9.5 years in prison for corruption. On January 24, 2018, he not only lost the appeal, but the court also increased the term of imprisonment from 9.5 to 12 years.
- On March 21, 2019, Brazil, as part of an anti-corruption investigation, arrested former president Michel Temer, who served as head of state from 2016 to 2018. The ex-president was involved in several corruption episodes at once.

Russia (138 position)

- On December 15, 2017, the former Minister of Economic Development Alexei Ulyukayev was sentenced to 8 years in prison in a penal colony and a fine of 130 million rubles. In April 2019, the court sentenced the former mayor of Vladivostok, Igor Pushkaryov, to 15 years in a strict regime colony and a fine of 500 million rubles.
- According to the Prosecutor General's Office of the Russian Federation in 2018, almost 12 thousand people were convicted of crimes of corruption, in 2017 about 10 thousand.

According to the latest data published on the State Public Awareness and Information Service web-site from 2001 to 2017, 10,931 people were convicted of corruption in the Republic of Kazakhstan. In 2018,

1,096 officials were prosecuted for corruption. (Of these, 20 heads of the republican level, 83 heads of the regional level and 134 city and district level.)

Based on the above data, improvement in the work of the anti-corruption department of the republic may be noted, but it is far from “one of the leading places” in the world in the fight against corruption. It is proved by the data of the World Bank:

Context

Let us recall, this is not the first case of manipulation regarding the indicators of the fight against corruption, which is widespread in Kazakhstani media. In December 2018, Salauat Muksimov, Director of the Anti-Corruption Policy Department of the Agency for Civil Service Affairs and Anti-Corruption, made a number of statements, which were also published by the bnews.kz portal during the Astana International Business Forum. Then we checked those statements.

4. Fake | Tax office and police inspect pensioners' incomes

Published on March 22, 2019

Author: Katerina Klemenkova

Links to the article in other languages:

- *Russian* - <https://factcheck.kz/glavnoe-en/fejk-nalogovaya-i-policiya-proveryayut-doxody-pensionerov/>
- *Kazakh* - <https://factcheck.kz/kaz/glavnoe-en/fejk-salyk-komiteti-men-policiya-zejnetkerlerdin-tabysyn-tekserip-zhatyr/>

The story of a 74-year-old pensioner in the Almaty region who was unexpectedly inspected by police and tax officers, “in order to find out why his income began to grow in a phenomenal progression,” is not a complete fake, but ineptly concocted fraudulent ad campaign.

Police loves sweet details too...

References to the article with a screaming headline "The police detained a pensioner because he wanted to put money into bank account" literally flooded Kaznet. The viral article tells about the pensioner, Utbayev Arystan, who grew tons of strawberries at home, sold them and, thus, earned 3.7 million tenge.

In Almaty region, the police officers, in cooperation with the tax office, inflicted a 74-year-old pensioner Utbayev Arystan with one simple goal to find out why did the pensioner's income begin to grow in a phenomenal progression?

According to law enforcement officers, Mr. Utbayev made an attempt to put 3.7 million tenge on his bank account, after which the tax service officers were informed of the suspicious activities of the pensioner.

According to the police officers, the first thing that surprised them was the persistent smell of fresh berries! It felt like they were on a glade with a wet strawberry.

When they went in the kitchen, they were extremely shocked.

The final point in the story about the millionaire pensioner is framed according to the classical advertising text scheme - a direct link to the “original manufacturer’s website” is given.

Arystan Utbayev is Yevgeny Dobrenko

When searching in Google for “the police detained a pensioner who grows strawberries at home”, the first results are the addresses of Russian websites. As it turned out, along with Kazakhstan, the article about a pensioner who became rich on the sale of strawberries is actively distributed in Russia and Ukraine.

The main character of the Russian and Ukrainian articles is not Arystan Utbayev, but Yevgeny Dobrenko. Pensioner Dobrenko grew strawberries in tons in the Kiev region and in Kaliningrad, Khakassia, Nizhny Novgorod, Leninogorsk, and Moscow...

In Russia, the pensioner earned 670 thousand rubles (3,9 million tenge as of 19.03.2019). In Ukraine the amount of earned money was 125 000 thousand hryvnia (1.7 million tenge). “This is a typical job of spamming affiliate marketing (also affiliate programs),” Yerlan Askarbekov, executive director of the Success agency, a member of the PR club said. - There are “white” and “black” methods for promoting goods or services. In this case, this method is called “gray”.

Several years ago, they used photos and names of Bayan Ysentayeva and Roza Rymbaeva. This is not exactly a fake, in a sense of a gossip of propagandists or bad journalists. Even more so, it is not true. Just unscrupulous advertising.”

“This is how people are fooled by media...”

Judging by the comments on the article, not all readers understood that there was unfair advertising in front of them. Some readers commented: “I do not understand. Whether this pensioner was debunked, or do they advertise strawberry like mushroom house not long ago?” “It has been two weeks since the old man was exposed and the news still appears. It’s for some reason”. And the main conclusion for many readers was the phrase: “This is how people are fooled by media!”

Apart from that, the story about the pensioner is nothing more than a fiction, the advertised home “wonder berry grower” is not a “wonder”, but a simple deception. According to the sellers, strawberry grows in three weeks and gives an unprecedented harvest because of the unique Ecuadorian soil: “Scientists of the Russian Academy of Sciences under the leadership of Academician Astafyev spent 5 years in Ecuador studying the jungles of Amazonia and scientifically proved that the key is in the soil”.

However, it was not possible to find on the Internet any links to the grand works of Academician Astafyev, the Nobel Prize nominee. Here is a photo where Astafyev is supposedly captured surrounded by like-minded people, taken from the Kazakh National Medical University website. In fact, the people captured in the photo are the teaching staff of the “pharmacist technologist” training module of 2011-2012 academic year.

Moreover, the law “On Plant Quarantine” (Clause 2-1, Article 13) prohibits the import of soil into the territory of Kazakhstan. The head of the “POISK” (“Search”) Agricultural-holding nursery Nikolai Salnikov and the chairperson of the Union of Gardeners of Russia Andrei Tumanov expose the sellers of the “wonder berry grower” and prove that literally every word from the abstract is a lie. According to experts, it is not possible to have the first harvest in 3 weeks, as promised by the sellers of the “wonder berry grower” (you can get detailed information from the experts Salnikov and Tumanov on the supersadovnik.ru website).

5. Fake | Prestigious schools of England switched to the Soviet education system

Published on February 21, 2019

Author: Aygerim Mekisheva

Links to the article in other languages:

- *Russian* - <https://factcheck.kz/glavnoe-en/faktchek-prestizhnye-shkoly-anglii-pereshli-na-sovetskuyu-sistemu-obrazovaniya/>
- *Kazakh* - <https://factcheck.kz/kaz/glavnoe-en/fej-k-angliyanyn-uzdik-mektepteri-sovettik-bilim-beru-zhujesine-koshti/>

The news that the most prestigious and modern schools in England have switched to the Soviet system of education has been worrying network users for several months. Facebook users actively engaged in reposting this news, published last November by the Pravda-TV.ru portal. The resources and people who reposted the “news” are numerous.

It would seem a clear lies. However, it is not so simple. In our memory, it is the only case in the field of fake building, when the creators of an obvious fake have deceived themselves...

By the way, the website does not provide any useful information about itself and its founders, except for this: “Truth-TV is a political discussion forum”.

Verdict: Fake (with an unexpected bit truth)

Why is it a fake in the first place?

Because back in September 2018, the “news” was generated by the well-known Panorama satirical network portal. We have already written that it is worthless to see the Panorama “news” as the news. But the problem lies in the fact that users often share fakes of the mentioned resource after they appear on other information resources.

What is the truth?

Perhaps not every fake has a bit of truth, but this fake has. The fact is that indeed, some British educational institutions adopted the Soviet experience. However, it is only related to the model of specialized mathematical pre-university education at universities. This is not about secondary education in general. The model was the boarding school named after A.N. Kolmogorov of the Moscow State University named after M.V. Lomonosov (Specialized scientific training center of Moscow State University), previously “Specialized Boarding School №18 at Moscow State University named after M.V. Lomonosov” (physical and mathematical school №18), which was opened on the initiative of Academician A. N. Kolmogorov in 1963.

Similar schools were opened in other cities of the former USSR, including Almaty, as they say on the website: “... (Republican physical and mathematical school) was founded on October 16, 1972 by analogy with physical and mathematical boarding schools at the largest universities of the Soviet Union.” In 2014, two schools - King’s College London Mathematics School and the Exeter Mathematics School - opened in England for physics and mathematics. These are the so-called 6 form math colleges, that is, educational institutions in which students study for the last 2 years of secondary school (they also study for 2 years before entering university).

In The Economist, Dominic Cummings, advisor to the then chief secretary of education, Michael Gove, argues that the Mathematics School in London has opened to give any child the opportunity to get an “Eton-level education” in mathematics or physics. Why? As it turned out, the UK government is stimulating the creation of specialized mathematics schools throughout the country. The document “How to apply to set up a maths school for 16 to 19 year olds”, released in March 2018 by the Ministry of Education, says that the two schools mentioned above are among the most successful pre-university educational institutions. In addition, they showed the success of the model and outstanding results

recognized by the Office of Education Standardization. (The two open maths schools demonstrate that the model can be very successful...both are Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education — author's note) outstanding and already among the highest performing school sixth forms in the country).

It is interesting, that the UK also has its own Industrial Strategy. It is within its framework that the government plans to invest an additional £ 406m in mathematical, technical and IT education. Each educational institution with an approved application for opening a school with in-depth study of mathematics for children from 16 years (post-16) will receive an additional £ 350,000 (168.5 million tenge) from the budget annually. In addition, throughout the kingdom so-called math hubs were opened, that stimulate and promote math education among children of all ages, including preschool children, as well as professional development of teachers.

6. Lies | Kazakhstan entered the top 10 the UN budget payer-countries

Published on January 11, 2019

Author: Margarita Bocharova

Links to the article in other languages:

- Russian - <https://factcheck.kz/glavnoe-en/lozh-kazakhstan-voshyol-v-top-10-stran-platelshhikov-v-byudzheto-oo/>
- Kazakh - <https://factcheck.kz/kaz/glavnoe-en/zhalgan-kazakhstan-buu-ga-en-kop-karzhy-tolejtin-on-el-katarynda/>

On January 2, 2019, several Kazakhstani media, including Forbes, reported that Kazakhstan would contribute 0.187% of the total budget to the United Nations next year and thus secure a place in the top ten largest donor countries of the international organization.

Verdict: Lies

The UN General Assembly Resolution of December 24, 2018, which determined the contribution of member countries to the organization's budget for 2019, indicates that Kazakhstan will not even enter the top 50 donor countries and will provide only 0.178% of the total income. The source of the news was an informational article on the "UN News" Russian-language website. It says that the General Assembly has approved a new scale of assessments for the next three years. Its author explains that the scale is based on the principle of the financial solvency of states: "If the economy of a particular state develops successfully, then the size of its contributions to the UN budget also grows." Following the explanations in the article, the examples of contributions from different states to the UN regular budget are given, but there is no question of any ranking:

Meanwhile, the real list of the top ten donor countries of the UN budget in 2019 will look like this:

Country	Budget share	Gross contribution (\$)
US	22.0%	674.2 million
China	12.0%	367.9 million
Japan	8.6 %	262.5 million
Germany	6.1%	186.6 million
United Kingdom	4.6%	140.0 million
France	4.4%	135.7 million
Italy	3.3%	101.3 million
Brazil	2.9%	90.3 million
Canada	2.7%	83.8 million

Russia	2.4%	73.7 million
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Kazakhstan is on the 51st position between Egypt and Slovakia in this improvised rating. In the coming year, the Republic will provide 0.178% of revenues to the UN budget, which in absolute terms will amount to 5.5 million US dollars (about 2.08 billion tenge).

The estimated amount of the contribution of Kazakhstan is 13 times less than that provided by the UN Russia, which closes the top ten of the leading countries. The UN regular budget consists of contributions from 193 member countries and two non-member countries. The total budget for 2019 was approved at 3.1 billion US dollars.

7. Photo and video geolocation: working with satellite images and maps

Published on September 24, 2018

Author: Pavel Bannikov

Links to the article in other languages:

- *Russian* - <https://factcheck.kz/glavnoe-en/geolokaciya-foto-i-video-kak-rabotat-so-sputnikovymi-snimkami-i-kartami/>
- *Kazakh* - <https://factcheck.kz/kaz/glavnoe-en/sputnik-suretter-i-men-kartany-kalaj-pajdalanuga-bolady/>

Satellite maps and images caused a revolution in investigative journalism. 15 years ago, we had to rely blindly on the photo and video evidence provided by anyone. Now, even using only free Google and Yandex services, you can get a lot of information, not to mention paid projects. In this article, we will describe in detail the algorithm for working with Google maps and Yandex, as well as work with the Chinese project called Baidu.

Basics of geolocation

The devil is in the detail

The first thing to keep in mind is that every detail is important. The key to finding the object may be the smallest detail in the photo or video. Consider, for example, the next snapshot, and find key details on it.

Besides the obvious keys (double-decker bus, red telephone booth and inscriptions indicating left-hand traffic, the logo on the bus tell us that it is London), there are a number of details that will help us pinpoint the location of the shooting.

Visual keys

- Greggs name (café chain)
- Road fork
- A brick building with three windows, two of which are located above the signboard
- A specific rectangular protrusion to the right of the entrance to the Greggs, probably located above the other door.

This is a simple example, and the address of the building is easy to find using Google search for images on “London Greggs” request.

As can be seen in the photo from the screenshot, this is the very brick building; the rectangular protrusion is located above the closed entrance, three windows, two of which are located above the sign. If we use Google Maps and Google Street View, we will find the photo at the indicated address, which would have a red telephone booth, and neighboring public places on it. Looking at this point from satellite, we can make sure that this is exactly the road fork and easily find the exact position of the photographer at the time of shooting.

Google Maps search

Let us complicate the task. We shall take a photo of worse quality and with fewer visual keys. For example, this one.

Visual keys:

- The slogan "In unity with Russia" in the colors of the Russian flag and the flag of an unknown (yet) country.
- Posters resembling movie posters.
- The building of constructivism style with specific details and a sign (unfortunately difficult to read), one of the details is the eaves, whose design resembles a photographic tape.
- Trees that can also be the keys.

First, we find out the country and its flag colors of which the slogan is painted. This is the flag of the Transdniestrian Moldavian Republic, an unrecognized state on the territory of Moldova. Searching for the slogan, we find out that the TMR participated in the “In Unity with Russia” forum, organized in 2016 by the Russian World Foundation, and Transdniestrian politicians frequently use the slogan. The building is quite large, judging by the scale, and we can assume that this is a cinema in a large city. There are only three large cities in Transdniestria, which are Tiraspol, Bender and Vinnitsa. Googling a bit more, we find out that there are practically three cinemas in Transdniestria, and all of them are in these cities. Looking at the maps, we can easily find photos taken by users near these cinemas. Thus, we can find the Tiraspol cinema in Tiraspol.

Features of Yandex services and reverse image search

The holy war between Google and Yandex fans should not interfere with the investigation. Yandex copes with a number of tasks better, for example, with searching by images. The Yandex algorithm allows you by downloading a snapshot to find and determine the location much more accurately. So, if the services of the “corporation of good” do not cope with the task, you can always ask for help in another search engine.

The most convenient for the task is the RevEye plugin, which can be installed in the Chrome or Firefox browser (by the way, we strongly recommend using only these browsers). It allows by opening any image to run it through all available reverse search services.

Yandex also provides a number of features that Google does not have (at least for now). For example, Yandex.Maps is better in working with Russian-speaking users and updates photos on the map more often. Therefore, if you need information on the CIS, then most likely Yandex will provide a more accurate search.

In addition, since 2014, Yandex maps provide information on the height of buildings, which can be very useful when conducting geolocation.

Work with Chinese maps

Banned in google

The phrase “banned in Google” as applied to the People’s Republic of China is not ironic at all. The great Chinese firewall not only restricts access of Chinese citizens to certain areas of the Network, but also restricts the Google services themselves. Therefore, geolocation using the method described above will fail. Sometimes it is necessary.

For example, in the summer of 2018, a message was distributed, stating that Kazakhstan and China were introducing a visa-free regime (which turned out to be a fake). A video was attached where the Chinese were standing in a line to get to Kazakhstan without a visa.

The message, coupled with the news of the introduction of a visa-free regime between China and Belarus, has caused a new wave of Sinophobic statements in social networks.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan responded quickly, and denied the information, officially stating that negotiations on a visa-free regime are not being conducted.

Nevertheless, we were curious where this video came from and whether it really is the line to the Republic of Kazakhstan Embassy. Let’s see the video.

The audio recording, which was distributed along with the video, states that it is the line in front of the consulate of Kazakhstan in Urumqi. Let’s check this statement.

Keys

- In the frame, there is an inscription in Chinese with the date, voiced in the comments. Fortunately, there are enough specialists in Chinese in Kazakhstan and the translation is quite simple: Kazakhstan consulate, documentation department. Schedule of receiving documents after lunch from 16:00 to 19:00.
- In the frame you can see a blue plastic sunshade, wire fence.

Baidu maps

Step two. We check the location using Baidu maps (as we said, Google does not work properly in China).

In order to do this, we translate the address of the consulate into simplified Chinese with the help of Google translator and run the resulting address (乌鲁木齐 昆明路 216 号) into Baidu maps.

On the maps, we launch the Street View analogue and look for the building of the consulate, and find out that the shots were actually taken on the territory of the consulate. This confirms the location of the trees, the visible part of the facade and the curved plastic roof. However, we note that the area has changed. The images on Baidu maps are updated irregularly, just like on the maps “corporation of good”.

That is, a part of the material used corresponds to reality, as this is indeed the Kazakhstani consulate in Urumqi. This is the standard principle of creating a fake - a combination of a real video or photo with a fake comment or caption to it. We observed something similar during last year’s clashes in Myanmar and analyzed one of the cases in detail.

As for the line itself (using logic again), there is only one consulate in Urumqi, issuing visas to Kazakhstan, working three hours a day. Given the trade relations of Kazakhstan and China and the number of visa departments, the presence of a line, at least, should not be surprising.

Why do journalists need geolocation?

For example, to conduct such investigations. (We warn you, the video is not for the faint-hearted, it contains footage of the victims and the dead because of a chemical attack in Syria.)

8. 6 myths about measles and vaccination against it

Published on May 14, 2019

Author: Margarita Bocharova

Links to the article in other languages:

- Russian - <https://factcheck.kz/glavnoe-en/6-mifov-o-kori-i-vakcinacii-protiv-nee/>
- Kazakh - <https://factcheck.kz/kaz/glavnoe-en/kyzylsha-men-ogam-karsy-vakcina-turaly-6-mif/>

Kazakhstan ranks third in the world among countries where measles in 2019 spreads much faster comparing to the last year. The situation with the control of the disease is worse only in Madagascar and in Ukraine. The FactCheck.kz has already posted on the threats of measles vaccination rejection, and this time it examines the most common myths associated with this deadly infection.

Statement: Vaccination did not affect the decline in mortality and morbidity from measles

Verdict: Lies

Before the first measles vaccine appeared on the market in 1963, the death rate from the disease had already begun to decline — in the United States, it had halved in 40 years (Figure 1). The reason for this was two circumstances. Firstly, since the beginning of the 20th century, diet and its vitamin component, as well as hygiene conditions have improved. Secondly, human survival increased with the advent of antibiotics and anti-inflammatory therapy. Since the 1950s, the mortality curve has leveled off, 400–700 people per year continue to die from measles-related complications (most often due to a bacterial infection) - indirect factors have reached the limit in their possible impact on the situation.

With the help of mathematical calculations, the team of evidence-based doctors showed that if in 1963 the measles vaccine had not been introduced into the vaccination schedule, humanity would have only achieved a two-fold reduction in the death rate from the disease by 2004. However, after the vaccine was released, such a reduction was achieved in only 10 years. Although there is no the same noticeable dynamics, it reduces to this day. According to the WHO, from 2000 to 2017, measles vaccination prevented 21.1 million deaths worldwide (mortality fell by 80% over the years).

If the mortality schedule does not clearly demonstrate the efficacy of measles vaccination, the morbidity figure below (Figure 2) fully reveals its effectiveness (USA). A statistically significant reduction in the morbidity of measles did not occur until the introduction of the vaccine.

Thus, medical advances gradually improved the survival rate of the diseased, but it did not affect the spread of the disease itself before the introduction of the vaccination. Before the introduction of universal measles vaccination, more than 90% of people were infected with this infection before the age of 10.

Statement: The vaccine against measles does not give a 100% protection

Verdict: Manipulation

According to the WHO position paper on the measles vaccination, the average efficacy of only one dose of vaccine, made at the age of 9-11 months, reaches 84%. For the age of more than 12 months, the vaccine gets in average 92.5%.

"Studies conducted on revaccination of children who did not have an immune response to the first dose of measles vaccine showed that approximately 95% of children develop protective immunity after the second dose," WHO experts add.

Doctors remind that vaccines are not the guarantee. Vaccinations increase the likelihood of favorable events and reduce the risk of unwanted events. In the case of measles, complications such as diarrhea, otitis or pneumonia can develop in 6-8% of cases. In this case, the vaccine, which effectiveness tends to 100%, is the best option to minimize the risks. Thus, it is a manipulation to compare the risks of getting measles for a vaccinated child and an unvaccinated one.

Statement: Measles vaccination causes immunity suppression for many years

Verdict: Lies

In fact, the wild type measles virus, not the one in the vaccine, causes the suppression of the immune system. The fact is that measles "prefers" to infect and deplete memory T-lymphocytes. These immune system cells "remember" how to fight pathogens that a body has seen before. Thus, the immunity built in response to previous infections ceases to operate (the process is called "immune amnesia").

It is shown that the so-called immunosuppression can persist for 2-3 years after suffering measles. Immunosuppression associated with the virus can lead to opportunistic infections. Such infections are caused by pathogens that do not cause disease in a person with normal immunity. In addition, researchers have documented cases of delayed mortality after measles.

At the same time, it is necessary to stipulate that once having experienced wild type measles, a person acquires immunity from this disease for life. Combined with proven immunosuppression, this effect is described as the "measles paradox".

The measles vaccine virus is weakened; therefore, it cannot cause a massive death of T-lymphocytes, as in the case of wild measles. WHO (with reference to the relevant scientific study) officially denied that the measles vaccine is capable of suppressing the immune system: it does NOT increase the risk of an invasive bacterial or viral infection within 3 months after vaccination.

The WHO expert also noted that the measles vaccine, unlike the absolute majority of other "live" vaccines, is not contraindicated for persons with immunosuppression, which is additional evidence of its lack of ability to suppress immunity.

Statement: Measles cures and prevents cancer

Verdict: Manipulation

Today, science knows only one successful case of a cure for blood cancer using the so-called oncolytic virotherapy, when a genetically modified measles strain was used.

In 2013, 49-year-old American Stacy Erholz became a participant in a clinical test initiated by researchers at the Mayo Clinic in the United States. The woman has suffered from multiple myeloma for 10 years (damage to the hematopoietic system and bones) and has already gone through a number of treatments. Each of them eliminated cancer, but after a while, it would return. Five years ago, the "measles cocktail" was inserted to Stacy, which could be used against measles for 10 million (!) people. As a result, she achieved complete remission with the spread of cancer throughout the body.

How does oncolytic virotherapy work?

Some viruses prefer cancer cells to healthy cells: it is much easier for them to reproduce there. At the same time, cancer can skillfully deceive immunity, forcing it to ignore the disease. When a virus enters the cancer cells, the immune cells instantly "wake up" and join in the fight against the "enemy". At the same time, the virus itself also destroys the "enemy". In such a treatment of cancer, the herpes virus and

adenovirus (both genetically modified) are already being successfully used, a number of “wild” viruses have also passed tests or are still being tested.

In the course of further clinical tests, the modified measles strain did not show its effectiveness. Moreover, along with Stacy, another woman participated in the test in 2013, to whom the cancer returned two months later in a more advanced form. The success of Stacy has not yet been repeated. Note that the woman would not be able to recover if chemotherapy had not previously destroyed all of her measles antibodies.

The presence of antibodies after measles or vaccination is an obstacle to the above therapy, and scientists are actively thinking about how to get around it. However, science does not yet have any evidence of the effectiveness of wild measles virus or a vaccinated strain in the treatment or prevention of any types of cancer, so doctors strongly recommend not to avoid vaccination in childhood.

Statement: Measles vaccination increases the risk of autism developing

Verdict: Lies

FactCheck.kz has already checked this opinion and cited references to studies confirming its contradictory nature. In 2019, Danish scientists once again refuted this statement. They conducted a national survey with the largest number of samples of this “problem”: almost 657.5 thousand children born in the country from 1999 to 2010.

The previous large-scale study, which led to the same results, was conducted in Denmark from 1991 to 1998 and included monitoring of 573.3 thousand children. American scientists also denied the link between measles vaccination and the development of autism in a nearly 100-thousand samples in 2015.

During the newest Danish study, autism was diagnosed in 6,517 children. At the same time, scientists did not find a significant difference between the incidence of autism in vaccinated and unvaccinated children: the adjusted risk ratio was 0.93. For children whose siblings were autistic, the risk ratio was 1.15. In both cases, risk indicators show that the connection is due to a mere chance.

"The vaccine against measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) does not increase the risk of autism, is not a provoking factor for children with an increased susceptibility to them, and is not associated with the clustering of autism cases after vaccination," the authors conclude.

Statement: Antibiotic in the measles vaccine can cause deafness and kidney problems

Verdict: Lies

The “Priorix” live vaccine against measles, rubella and parotitis actually contains an antibiotic called neomycin sulfate. Of course, an allergic reaction can develop to this component, but the risk of meeting any other allergen in everyday life is hardly much higher.

Antibiotics may be present as part of vaccines for two reasons: first, they are added to the vial, if it is designed for multiple doses, to prevent spoilage after opening; secondly, antibiotics can be included in the preparation if they are used at intermediate stages of vaccine production as a preservative.

The manufacturer claims that the neomycin content in the “Priorix” does not exceed 25 mcg. This concentration has no therapeutic effect (in other words, does not work) and is not toxic. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) allows you to eat milk with less than 0.15 mg/l (6 times more than one dose of vaccine) of neomycin, and baby-beef with less than 0.25 mg/kg (10 times more) of neomycin.

For therapeutic purposes, a person can safely take 1 g of neomycin every 4 hours for three days, a safe dose for 6-12 years old children is 250-500 mg every 4 hours. The antibiotic is toxic, and only due to the long and excessive use of neomycin rash, nausea and diarrhea, deafness and problems with the digestive organs may appear.

9. 10 dormant diseases: what the threats of rejection of vaccinations

Published on April 10, 2019

Author: Pavel Bannikov

Links to the article in other languages:

- Russian - <https://factcheck.kz/glavnoe-en/10-dremlyushhix-boleznej-chem-grozit-otkaz-ot-privivok/>
- Kazakh - <https://factcheck.kz/kaz/glavnoe-en/ekpe-saldyrmagandar-shaldyguy-mumkin-10-auru/>

Recently, WHO included a rejection of vaccines to the list of major threats to humanity, along with ebola, HIV and air pollution. We analyze the vaccination calendar and find out against what and why we are vaccinated and what threatens the rejection of vaccinations.

Diphtheria

Bacteria are transmitted by airborne droplets and by contact in severe cases. The disease affects the nasopharynx, oral cavity, and sometimes the skin. Mortality from diphtheria is 5-10%, and 20% in infancy. The diphtheria vaccine was discovered in 1923 and is part of TDP (tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis). According to the WHO estimates, 86% of the children in the world receive the recommended three doses of diphtheria toxoid-containing vaccine in infancy, and the majority of those vaccinated are simply immune to the disease. However, diphtheria bacteria are constantly circulating around us, waiting only for a break in vaccination. In the CIS countries in the 1990s, more than 150,000 people fell ill with diphtheria, who were not vaccinated or forged vaccination certificates (Source, p. 539.). Now (2017–2018) there is an outbreak of diphtheria in Latin America.

TDP vaccination against diphtheria (as well as against pertussis and tetanus) is scheduled at the age of two months. It may also include other components that are marked separately (vaccines against hepatitis, polio, hemophilic and pneumococcal infections).

Pertussis

The rejection of vaccinations in Britain caused massive epidemics of pertussis in 1978 and 1982. During the epidemics, 70,000 children fell ill, 60% were severe and fatal cases. It is believed that the moratorium on pertussis vaccination in Sweden from 1979 to 1996 led to the fact that during these years more than half of children under 10 years old were affected and only a high level of medicine allowed keeping the death rate from the disease at the level of one victim per year.

Polio

A disease that affects the nervous system of a child and leads to paralysis or death. In 2002, Kazakhstan was named a polio-free country among many other countries. This is exactly the result of the universal vaccination of children, started in the 1950s and taken under the control of UNICEF in the late 1980s. Now, Nigeria, Afghanistan and Pakistan are among the countries where the disease is not eradicated. The “imported” disease sometimes penetrates to us from these countries, as it did in 2010 with the virus imported from Tajikistan.

Rubella

Acute infectious disease, which is quite easily tolerated by children. This is the reason for the rubella vaccination criticism. However, rubella is very dangerous during pregnancy, causing abnormalities in the fetus, such as cataracts, heart defects and congenital deafness. Systematic vaccination has led to the fact that rubella has become a rather rare disease, but its outbreaks occur all over the world, for example, in Japan. In Kazakhstan, thanks to vaccination for 17 years, it has been possible to reduce the number of people who get sick every year from 30 thousand to zero.

Hepatitis B

Another disease, the vaccine against which is often criticized, in particular due to the content of harmful compounds. In contrast to the common hepatitis A, which is the "disease of unwashed hands", the probability of getting sick with hepatitis B, in fact, seems to be less. However, WHO recommends vaccination against hepatitis B for both newborns and all unvaccinated. According to WHO statistics, the number of carriers of the virus in the world can be from 3% to 6% of the population, and about 2 million people get hepatitis B every year.

Measles

According to WHO, measles is one of the most frequent causes of infant mortality at the age of under-five, despite the fact that the vaccine was invented back in 1966. Complications after measles include disorders of the respiratory and nervous systems, pneumonia, stenosis of the larynx, even encephalitis. The child has innate immunity for the first three months of life, if its mother had had measles before, but then this immunity disappears, so the vaccination is done at about the age of a year. Thanks to the widespread use of measles vaccine over the past 10 years, the world has managed to reduce mortality from the disease by 71%. WHO believes that measles outbreaks, such as those spread in Europe over the past 10 years, are the result of non-vaccination (see chart below).

Encephalitis

A tick-borne infection causes swelling of the brain and can be fatal. Vaccination is relevant for people living in risk areas, with a large number of parasitic vectors of the disease. The most dangerous zones in Kazakhstan are Almaty, Almaty region and East Kazakhstan region. The process of vaccination itself is rather complicated and takes place in three time-limited stages; therefore, vaccination is recommended strictly according to the schedule.

Tuberculosis

According to the Massachusetts Medical Society, bacteria carriers, that cause tuberculosis, can be up to a quarter of the world's population. This, however, is not a pandemic; only the active form of the disease is dangerous. In developed countries, thanks to BCG (Calmette-Guerin bacillus) vaccination, it was possible to reduce the incidence to a safe level. However, in developing countries, the situation is not so safe. Over 80% of severe cases occur in Africa. In Kazakhstan, up to 23 thousand cases of tuberculosis in open form were registered annually; according to the latest data, the figures are slightly lower - about 12 thousand per year.

Parotitis

It is also known as "mumps". The disease mainly affects children from 3 to 15 years. It is not so much the disease itself that is dangerous today, which is quite easily treatable, but the complications of an adult human disease such as pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas) and orchitis (testicular inflammation, which can lead to infertility in men). The mumps vaccine is part of the MPR (measles, parotitis, rubella) complex vaccine, which is given to children twice - at the age of 1 and 6.

Tetanus

The tetanus bacillus affects the human nervous system and causes muscle cramps that can lead to respiratory arrest. Anti-tetanus vaccine is made every 10 years starting from three months. Vaccination against tetanus (except for natal) is questioned by many, since it does not cause prolonged immunity and many do not make it in adulthood. However, it is worth remembering that tetanus mortality can reach 85 percent in children and 40 in adults, the mortality rate is higher than that of the plague and Ebola.

All these diseases are dormant, but their outbreaks occur regularly throughout the world, regardless of the development of countries. For example, measles outbreaks in Europe, rubella and mumps in Japan. Although, according to WHO, global vaccination coverage in recent years has remained at 85% of the population, this is not a reason to relax, because according to the same data, due to the rejection of vaccination every year around 1 500 000 people die in the world.

10. Fake | Iceland recognizes religion as a weapon of mass destruction.

Published on March 22, 2019

Author: Aigerim Mekisheva

Links to the article in other languages:

- *Russian* - <https://factcheck.kz/glavnoe-en/fejkslandiya-priznaet-religii-oruzhiem-massovogo-porazheniya/>
- *Kazakh* - <https://factcheck.kz/kaz/glavnoe-en/zhalgan-islandiya-dinderdi-zhappaj-kyryp-zhoyatyn-karu-dep-tanydy/>

On March 12, a curious material was published on the Yandex Zen platform called "Iceland accepts the declaration: all religions are weapons of mass destruction. Follow Laughing in Disbelief!" "The parliament considered it necessary for people to know that the whole religion is a mental disorder and is dangerous at the same time," the article cites the words of a certain Icelandic legislator Andrew Canard. Moreover, the article has a link to the source!

Verdict: Fake (satirical).

The text was written by the blogger, Andrew Hall, and was published on his "Laughing in disbelief" blog.

The format of fake satirical publications such as Panorama Information Agency is also well known to English-speaking audience. However, the pioneer in this sense was the American The Onion, organized back in 1988. But the origin of the "news" about Icelandic initiatives is due to the Patheos.com blog platform, which brings together people who are in a spiritual quest. This is the platform where the Laughing in disbelief blog is.

And here is the blogger's answer to the question "Is it a satire?". The answer contains information for thoughtful readers about why this is a satire. For example:

The story you are reading is satirical. The material may contain links to real events, but the Laughing in disbelief post is a fake ...

Probably the people mentioned in the post are named after the generals of the Confederation or the Nazis.

The article begins as quite sane, but then turns into an absurdity.

Just in case, we looked through the Althing (Icelandic Parliament) website and did not find such news. There was a feeling that the Icelandic legislators are more concerned about interstate agreements relating to the protection of capelin stocks and other issues of fishing and trade.

Context

However, Richard Dawkins, a famous British scientist, ethologist, popularizer of evolutionary biology, the author of the "meme" term, in a sense, is not far from the understanding of religion, which is shared by Icelandic parliamentarians from parallel reality.