# Monkeypox misinformation on social media — and the main myths that are being spread.

A Report for Governments and the WHO

June 27, 2022



**In May 2022,** thousands of cases of monkeypox, a disease commonly found in central and west Africa, were confirmed in Europe, the U.S. and other non-endemic countries. This outbreak led to false or misleading claims spreading online about the virus, often pushed by **well-known purveyors of health misinformation**.

In this report, we feature monkeypox false claims that have been **shared in English**, **French, Italian and German to over 3.8 million people on Facebook (pages and groups)** and **Twitter, between May 21 and June 13, 2022.** 

The sites whose false claims were shared on large groups and pages on social media included:

- 100PercentFedUp.com and Expose-news.com in English.
- FranceSoir.fr and LeMediaen442.fr in French.
- NoGeoingegneria.com and DatabaseItalia.it in Italian.
- Compact-online.de and Wochenblick.at in German.

These sites have all have long been identified by NewsGuard as repeatedly publishing false information.

#### The Myths:

Common myths about the 2022 monkeypox outbreak spreading on social media - all of which are listed in NewsGuard's Misinformation Fingerprints dataset - include:

- The monkeypox outbreak was caused by a lab-created virus.
- Monkeypox cases are linked to COVID-19 vaccines.
- The 2022 monkeypox outbreak was predicted in a simulation.
- Bill Gates predicted the outbreak.

Many are similar to early COVID-19 myths, using in some cases the exact same narratives and characters.

While some posts were flagged as false or partially false on social media platforms, others (at times, the exact same claim, but coming from another source) went completely unchecked.

# **English-language** misinformation

<u>False claim</u>: The monkeypox outbreak originated in a bioweapons lab in Ukraine, as revealed by a source at the European Centers For Disease Prevention and Control.

May 22, 2022



The current monkeypox outbreak originated from a bioweapons lab in Ukraine, a source at the European Centers For Disease Control reportedly has revealed.

#### newspunch.com



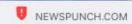
A website, formerly known as YourNewsWire.com, which has repeatedly published false information about topics including COVID-19, and promoted conspiracy theories about 9/11.



20/100

- Source was a Facebook page that is managed and owned by the owner of News Punch, which NewsGuard has rated Red for being untrustworthy, and whose description says: "We're a group of writers who cover topics the mainstream media won't touch."

- 729,000 followers

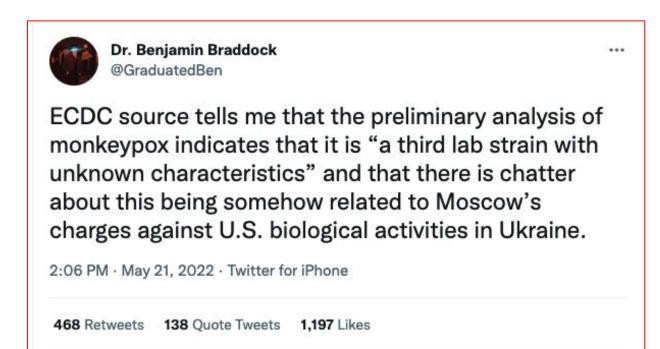


ECDC Bombshell: 'Monkeypox Outbreak Appears To Have Leaked From Ukraine Lab' - News Punch



17 Comments 16 Shares

This false claim was based on a May 21, 2022, tweet by "independent investigator Dr. Benjamin" Braddock." Braddock - which is the name of Dustin Hoffman in the 1967 movie The Graduate - has 48,000 followers on Twitter, where he presents himself as a "Writer, beauty appreciator, raw egg slonker, environmentalist, human and animal rights activist." In the cited Twitter thread, he also quoted Russian-state owned news agency Tass, which reported Russia's claim that the U.S. was "conducting illegal smallpox research in Ukraine."



May 21, 2022

#### tass.com



The website for TASS, a major Russian government-owned wire agency. The site uncritically promotes the false claims of the Russian government.



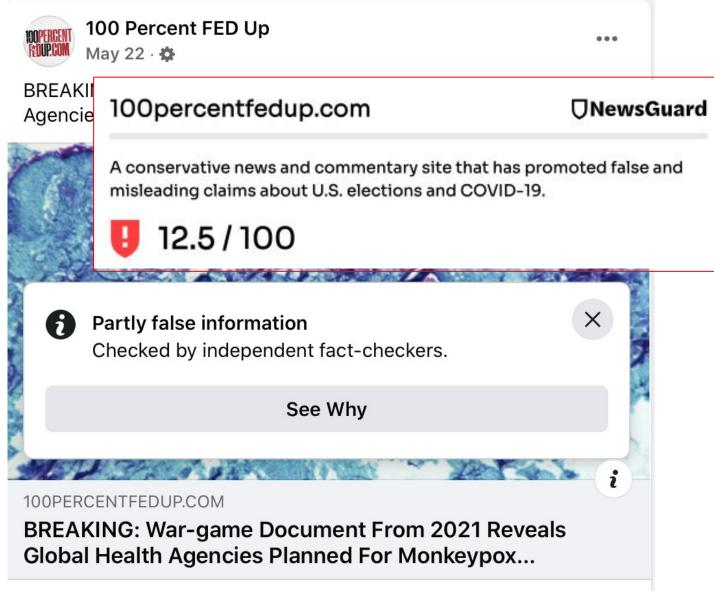
20 / 100

Twitter account 48,000 followers

False claim: The 2022 monkeypox outbreak was predicted in a simulation conducted in March 2021, which proves that, much like the COVID-19 pandemic, the outbreak was planned.

Source was the official
 Facebook page of Red-rated
 site 100PercentFedUp.com.
 1.56 million followers

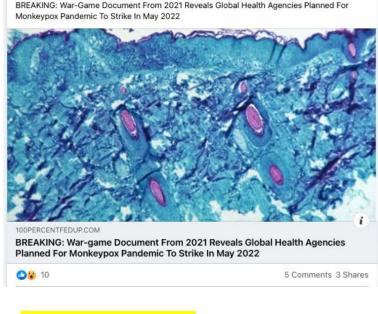
(The post was flagged as "Partly false" by Facebook, but only several days after the post was published.)



May 22, 2022







### Facebook page 171,000 followers

On the same day, the 100PercentFedUp.com article was shared on multiple Facebook pages linked to the site, all of which have large followings. All these posts were flagged as partially false by Facebook.

- Source was a Facebook page with a disclaimer stating that the late conservative political commentator Rush Limbaugh "does not operate this page."

The disclaimer is signed "Unafraid truth tellers."

- 286,000 followers

Facebook page 174,000 followers

Fed Up Americans

May 22 at 12:37 PM - @

May 22, 2022

May 22, 2022

Public group - 59.8K members

### Pierre Poilievre for Leader of our Party and Country

About Discussion Topics People Events Media Files

Shared a link.

May 22 at 10:02 AM · ③

#### expose-news.com

A website that has repeatedly published false or misleading claims about the COVID-19 pandemic and COVID-19 vaccines.



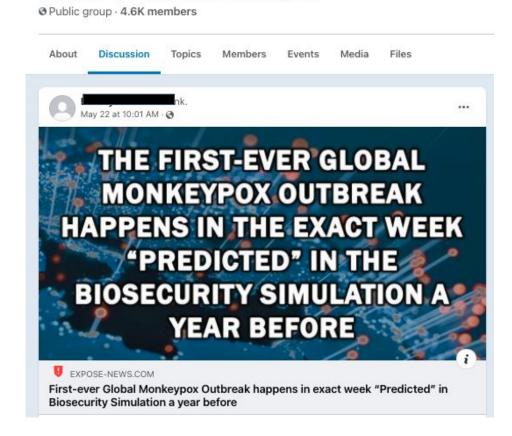
7.5 / 100



Facebook group 59,800 members

The same claim, coming from a different Red-rated source, was also shared within several Facebook groups in Canada. This time, it was not flagged by Facebook.

#### Forum For Canadian Sovereignty



Facebook group 4,600 members

The claim was also shared on Twitter by Kyle Becker, the founder and CEO of BeckerNews.com, which NewsGuard has rated Red for being untrustworthy.

#### beckernews.com

**□NewsGuard** 

A conservative commentary site named after former Fox News producer Kyle Becker, which has repeatedly published false and misleading claims about U.S. politics and COVID-19.



25 / 100

Twitter account 237,100 followers



WILDFIRE.

"[T]he exercise scenario portrayed a deadly, global pandemic involving an unusual strain of monkeypox... [it] concludes with more than three billion cases and 270 million fatalities globally."

They planned for monkeypox to strike in May 2022.



thekylebecker.substack.com

Global Health Agencies Planned for Monkeypox Pandemic to Strike in May 202...

"The exercise scenario concludes with more than three billion cases and 270 million fatalities globally."

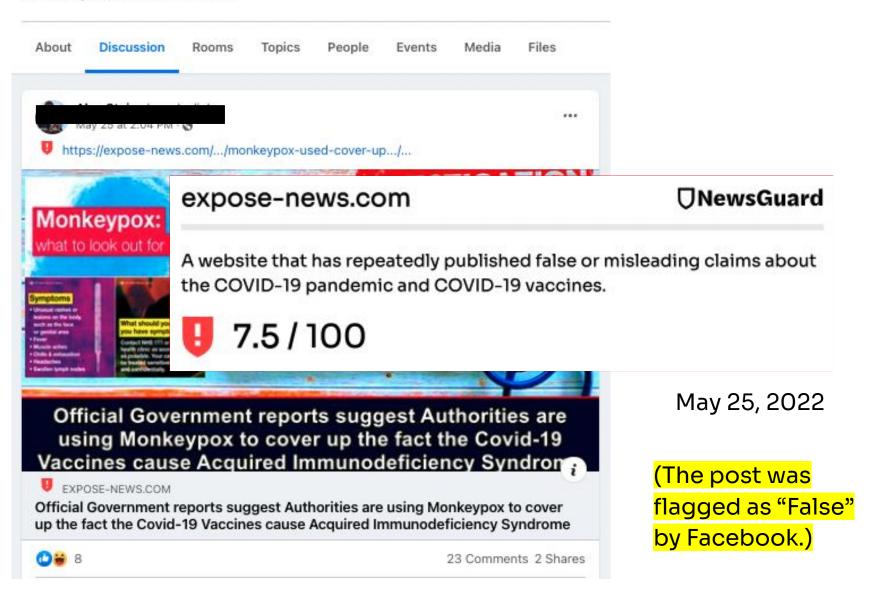
May 21, 2022

#### **Covid 19 Adverse Reactions Group**

O Public group · 20.2K members

False claim: Monkeypox cases are a cover-up for an autoimmune disease caused by COVID-19 vaccines.

- Facebook group
- <mark>- 20,200 members</mark>
- The group's stated goal is to "tell us about possible adverse reactions you may have had due to having the Vaccine."



This false claim was also shared on a Canadian Facebook group. This time, it was not flagged as false by Facebook.

Facebook group 7,500 members



**U** BREAKING NEWS

Official Government reports suggest Authorities are using Monkeypox to cover up the fact the Covid-19 Vaccines cause Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

BY U THE EXPOSÉ ON U MAY 25, 2022 • ( U 24 COMMENTS)

Print Friendly, PDF & Email

The new evolving hysteria surrounding the alleged emergence of 'monkeypox' in Western nations is not what it appears to be. We are not witnessing the monkeypox virus run rampant across first world countries for the first time ever.

Instead, we are witnessing the latest attempt to advance Draconian biosecurity policies through a monumental coverup of the devastating damage done to the immune systems of people who have had the Covid-19 vaccine. Damage so severe that it can be likened to Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome.

And we can prove it...

# French-language misinformation

<u>False claim</u>: The virus responsible for the 2022 monkeypox outbreak was manipulated and/or created in a lab.



Deux études suggèrent maintenant que le virus de la variole du singe en circulation a été manipulé dans un Biolab - L'une d'elles est de Jean-Claude Perez et Valère Lounnas du Laboratoire européen de biologie moléculaire.



**Translate Tweet** 

#### expose-news.com



A website that has repeatedly published false or misleading claims about the COVID-19 pandemic and COVID-19 vaccines.



7.5 / 100

Twitter account 26,900 followers

### TWO STUDIES NOW SUGGEST THE CIRCULATING MONKEYPOX VIRUS HAS BEEN MANIPULATED & EDITED IN A BIOLAB

expose-news.com ?

Two Studies now suggest the circulating Monkeypox Virus has been manipulate... Recently we revealed how a study published by Portugal's Institute for Health had found abnormal mutations among the alleged circulating monkeypox virus ...

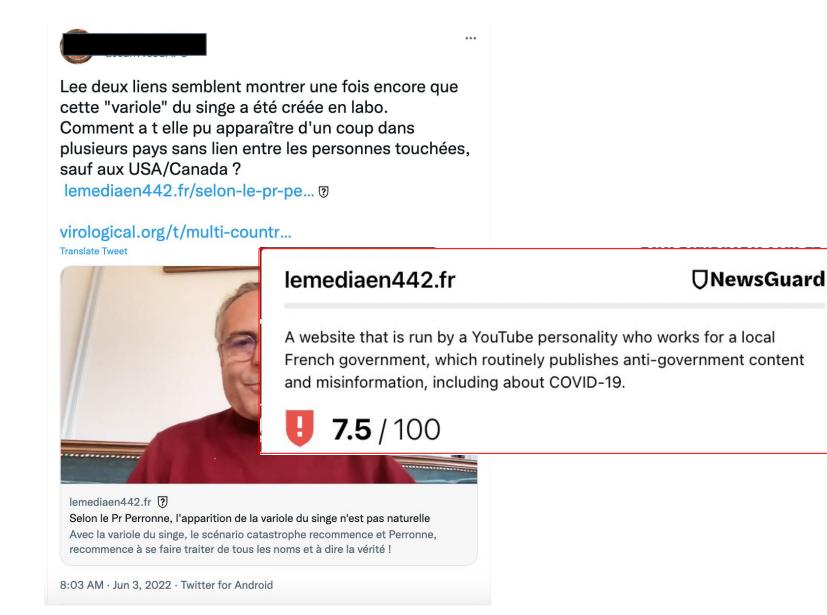
3:57 PM · Jun 4, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

657 Retweets 30 Quote Tweets 643 Likes

June 4, 2022

This tweet shared two links, including one to Red-rated site LeMediaEn442.fr, and said: "The two links seem to show once more that this 'monkeypox' was created in a lab. How could it appear all of the sudden in several countries with no relationship between the people affected, except for the U.S. and Canada?"

Twitter account 10,300 followers



June 3, 2022

<u>False claim</u>: the 2022 monkeypox outbreak was predicted in a simulation.

#### beckernews.com

A conservative commentary site named after former Fox News producer Kyle Becker, which has repeatedly published false and misleading claims about U.S. politics and COVID-19.



25/100

Facebook group 22,100 members

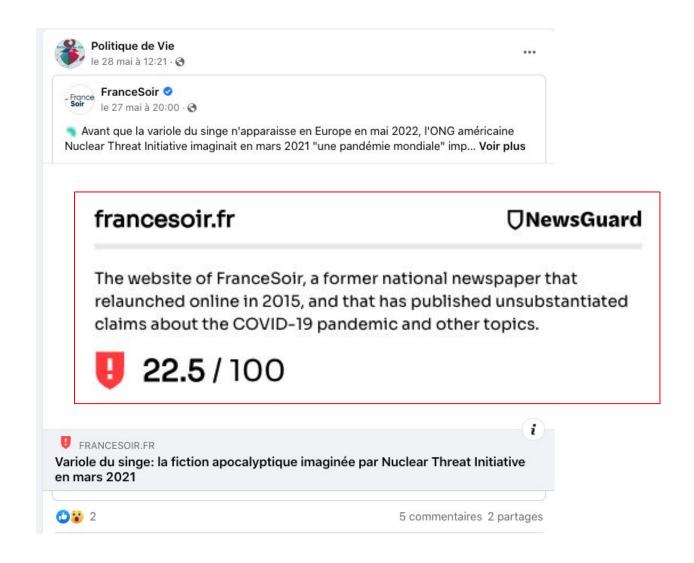
(The post was flagged as "Partially False" by Facebook.)





May 22, 2022

- Source was a Facebook page which says its goal is to "accompany the euthanasia of the Fifth Republic" (France's current political regime.)
- 6,800 followers



May 28, 2022

False claim: the 2022 monkeypox outbreak was part of a plan to impose new vaccines on the world's population.

Twitter account 2,900 followers



June 6, 2022

18

### Twitter account 41,100 followers

This tweet said: "Monkeypox: what does the French National Authority for Health recommend? ... to vaccinate contact cases I guess... the vaccine is already recommended all around... strange... it already exists? the vaccine was created before the outbreak started... troubling... a dream, no?"



Variole du singe : que recommande la Haute autorité de Santé ? ....de vacciner les cas contacts je présume...le vaccin est ressorti à toutes les sauces...étrange...il existe déjà ? le vaccin est créé avant la survenue de l'affection....troublant..un rêve ,non?

**Translate Tweet** 

6:54 AM · May 25, 2022 · Twitter Web App

727 Retweets 23 Quote Tweets 1,831 Likes

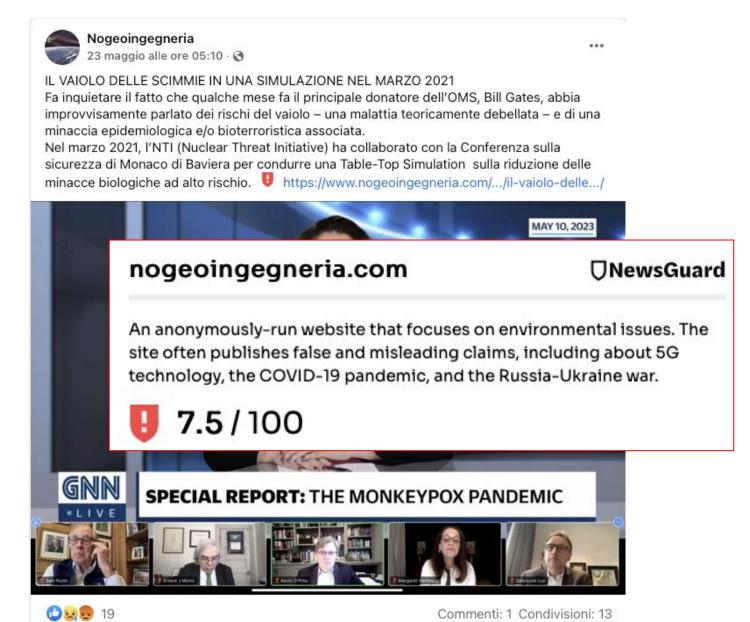
May 25, 2022

# Italian-language misinformation

<u>False claim</u>: The 2022 monkeypox outbreak was predicted in a simulation.

This Facebook post said: "MONKEYPOX IN A SIMULATION IN MARCH 2021. It is unsettling that a few months ago the main donor of the WHO, Bill Gates, suddenly spoke of the risks of smallpox - a theoretically eradicated disease and of an associated epidemiological and/or bioterrorist threat. In March 2021, the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) partnered with the Munich Security Conference to conduct a Table-Top Simulation on reducing high-risk biological threats."

Facebook page 12,600 followers



May 23, 2022

"Another case of planned terrorism," said this Facebook post, sharing the same claim, but coming from another Red-rated website.



May 27, 2022



Imola Oggi
7 giugno alle ore 05:01 · •

Vaiolo delle scimmie. Un'altra epidemia prevista dai soliti "profeti".

Le cosiddette 'élite' sono dotate di una preveggenza da far invidia al divino Otelma.

https://www.imolaoggi.it/.../vaiolo-delle-scimmie.../



**□NewsGuard** 

A right-leaning news website that publishes false and misleading content that advances nationalist and anti-immigrant views.



♠ 153

**12.5** / 100



Commenti: 56 Condivisioni: 47

Vaiolo delle scimmie. Un'altra epidemia prevista dai soliti "profeti".

Le cosiddette 'élite' sono dotate di una preveggenza da far invidia al divino Otelma.

Translate Tweet

imolaoggi.it

Vaiolo delle scimmie. Un'altra epidemia prevista dai soliti "p... Un'altra epidemia prevista, le cosiddette 'élite' sono dotate di una preveggenza da far invidia al divino Otelma.

5:02 AM · Jun 7, 2022 · Twitter Web App

9 Retweets

3 Quote Tweets

32 Likes

On June 7, Red-rated site Imolaoggi.it posted an article with this claim on its official Facebook page and Twitter account, to its more than 68,400 followers in total. Both posts started with these words: "Monkeypox. Another epidemic predicted by the usual 'prophets."

This Facebook post shared the same claim, coming from yet another Red-rated website.



LA NUCLEAR THREAT INIZIATIVE AVEVA PREVISTO TUTTO: "A MAGGIO 2022 INIZIERA' UNA NUOVA PANDEMIA"

"La Nuclear Threat Initiative aveva previsto tutto: in un'esercitazione sui pericoli di una nuova pandemia, condotta a marzo del 2021, aveva infatti indicato il 15 maggio 2022 come data in cui avrebbe potuto iniziare una nuova pandemia, causata stavolta dal vaiolo delle scimmie

La NTI, come spiega il suo sito (https://www.nti.org/about/), è un'organizzazione senza scopo di lucro a tutela della sicurezza globale, nata per contrastare le minacce nucleari e biologiche che mettono in pericolo l'umanità.

Riprendiamo ancora dal sito ufficiale (https://www.nti.org/.../strengthening-global-systemsto.../): "Nel marzo 2021, la NTI, in collaborazione con la Conferenza sulla sicurezza di Monaco. ha condotto un'esercitazione simulata sulla riduzione delle minacce biologiche ad alto rischio".

"La simulazione ha esaminato le lacune nelle architetture nazionali e internazionali relative alla biosicurezza e al contrasto di una pandemia, esplorando le opportunità per migliorare le capacità di prevenzione e risposta ad avvenimenti biologici ad alto rischio. Tra i partecipanti, 19 leader e autorevoli esperti provenienti da Africa, Americhe, Asia ed Europa con decenni di esperienza nella sanità pubblica, nell'industria delle biotecnologie, nella sicurezza internazionale e nella filantropia" (sic).

La simulazione prevedeva una "pandemia globale nata da un ceppo insolito di vaiolo delle scimmie", innescata da un attacco terroristico condotto in un Paese immaginario dell'Africa (Brinia), nel quale i terroristi usano un "agente patogeno ingegnerizzato in un laboratorio con biosicurezza inadeguata e con poco controllo. La simulazione si conclude con più di tre miliardi casi e 270 milioni di morti a livello globale".

In calce all'articolo riportiamo la figura dello studio nel quale viene riportata la data dell'attacco terroristico che innesca la pandemia di vaiolo delle scimmie che si trova a pagina 10 dello stesso: 15 maggio 2022, appunto.

Per il resto, la simulazione riferisce come si sviluppa la pandemia, come si contrasta, etc. Chi volesse approfondire, rimandiamo alla descrizione della simulazione in questione, che si può leggere cliccando qui.

La NTI non è nuova a profezie similari. Fondata dal senatore Sam Nunn e da Ted Turner, mitico fondatore della Cnn, fu profetica - in uno studio condotto in collaborazione con il Johns Hopkins Center - nell'allarmare su una possibile, disastrosa, pandemia

Un allarme che era stato riportato dal Washington Post il 14 ottobre del 2019, prima cioè dell'epifania del Covid-19, e rilanciato il giorno dopo, tramite tweet, da Joe Biden, non ancora asceso alla Casa Bianca, il quale aveva evidentemente compreso la portata dell'allarme.

Ad allarmare sul vaiolo, senza specifiche riguardanti le scimmie, anche Bill Gates, nel novembre dello scorso anno (Piccolenote: https://piccolenote.ilgiornale.it/.../il-vaiolo-e-la... ). Un allarme che allora risuonò del tutto bizzarro, essendo stato il vaiolo eradicato dall'umanità, con gli ultimi virus custoditi solo in due biolaboratori di massima sicurezza (uno negli Usa e uno in Russia). Infatti, nessuno poteva immaginare che il vaiolo delle scimmie, finora innocuo, potesse diventare una potenziale minaccia.

Ma al di là. resta la simulazione della NTI e la sua accurata preveggenza, sia per quanto riguarda il virus potenzialmente pandemico, che nella tempistica della sua insorgenza, azzeccata quasi al giorno. Più che nel campo scientifico sembra che la NTI si muova nel campo della stregoneria.

L'Europa ha certamente qualcosa di cui preoccuparsi. Dopotutto, ad un'infezione non si può dare l'ordine di fermare la sua offensiva. Con la malattia non si possono trovare accordi. La questione è che non si tratta solo del coronavirus, ma anche di nuovi ceppi di peste, colera,

Le armi biologiche sono più pericolose delle armi nucleari. Se gli americani avessero usato contro il Giappone non armi nucleari, ma armi biologiche della stessa potenza, quali sarebbero state le conseguenze sull'umanità? E dov'è la garanzia, ora, che dei vecchi pazzi globalisti non arrivino ad usare armi biologiche, rendendosi conto che il loro dominio è giunto al termine naturale?

Evidentemente la comunità mondiale dovrebbe fermare la follia biologica americana. Non solo le scorte nucleari, ma anche le strutture biologiche degli Stati Uniti dovrebbero passare sotto il controllo di strutture internazionali per la loro successiva distruzione, nella consapevolezza che le avventure geopolitiche dei "campioni del mondo unipolare" potrebbero costare troppo all'umanità intera.



U LANTIDIPLOMATICO.IT

La Nuclear Threat Initiative aveva previsto tutto: "a maggio 2022 inizierà una nuova pandemia"

#### lantidiplomatico.it



Condivisioni: 25

A news site covering foreign affairs from a far-left perspective that frequently publishes false content.



25/100

May 23, 2022

Facebook page 30,000 followers The claim, coming from Red-rated site Databaseltalia.it, was also widely shared on Facebook.

#### databaseitalia.it

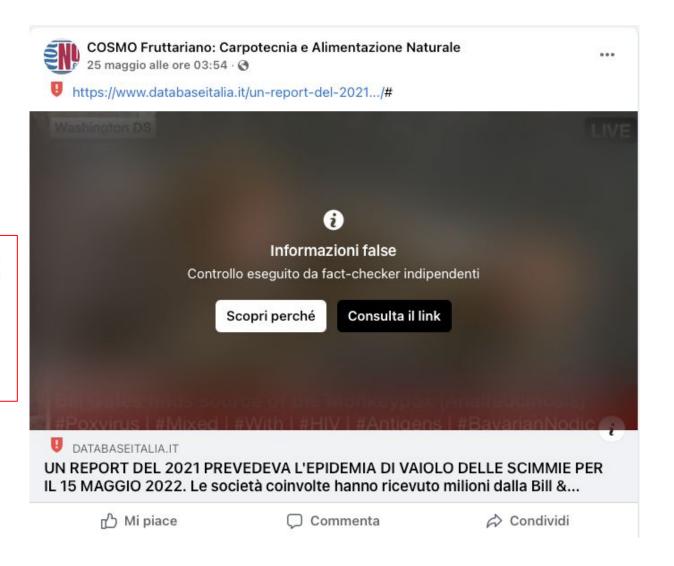
A news and information site that has published false content on the COVID-19 pandemic and other topics. The site also shares QAnon conspiracy theories and has published Russian disinformation.



25/100

Facebook page 37,000 followers

(Although the article shared here contained the same false claim as the other posts, which were not flagged by Facebook, this specific post was flagged as "False.")



May 25, 2022



#### Vaccinati e non Vaccinati Uniti

•••

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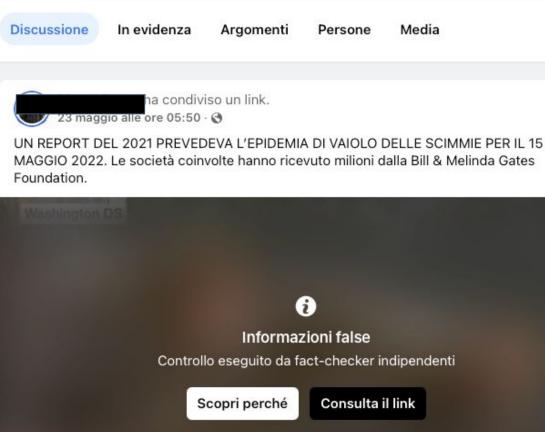
Home

Eventi

Facebook group

19,400 members

(This post was also flagged as "False" by Facebook.)



U DATABASEITALIA.IT

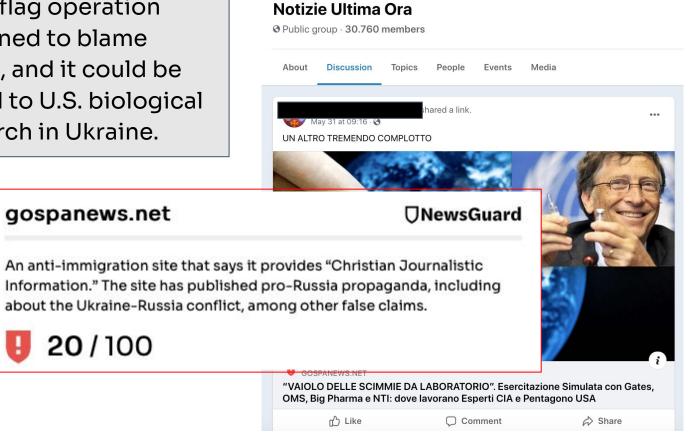
UN REPORT DEL 2021 PREVEDEVA L'EPIDEMIA DI VAIOLO DELLE SCIMMIE PER IL 15 MAGGIO 2022. Le società coinvolte hanno ricevuto milioni dalla Bill &...

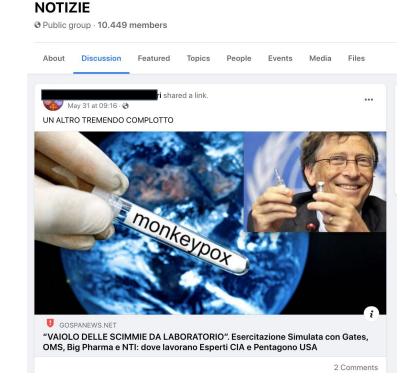
**⊕**₩ 5

Commenti: 2 Condivisioni: 6

False claim: The 2022 monkeypox outbreak could be the result of a false-flag operation designed to blame China, and it could be linked to U.S. biological research in Ukraine.

May 31, 2022





Facebook group 30,700 members

Facebook group 10,400 members

False claim: Monkeypox cases are a "cover-up" for an autoimmune disease caused by COVID-19 mRNA vaccines.



ilsimplicissimus2.com

The blog of the journalist Alberto Capece that frequently publishes false information about COVID-19, vaccines, the Russian-Ukraine conflict, and climate change.



20/100

Vaiolo delle scimmie per copire i danni da vaccino? | il Simplicissimus

Viviamo in un mondo dove ogni santo giorno che passa dobbiamo imparare a mettere insie...

June 1, 2022

Facebook page 37,700 followers

# German-language misinformation

False claim: A Portugal study said that the 2022 monkeypox outbreak was caused by a lab-manipulated virus.



Zwei wissenschaftliche #Studien haben weitere #Merkwürdigkeiten über das #Affenpocken-#Virus zutage gefördert. Arbeiten gewisse Kreise schon am nächsten #Lockdown?

Translate Tweet

#### compact-online.de

**□NewsGuard** 

The website of Compact, a monthly German magazine that publishes false content to advance right-wing views of the AfD party, along with Russian disinformation.



20/100

Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic journalistic standards.

- Source was the official Twitter account of Red-rated site Compact-Online.de.
- 32,700 followers



compact-online.de

Affenpocken: Die nächste Biowaffe aus dem Labor? - COMPACT

Zwei wissenschaftliche Studien haben extreme Anomalien in der Gensequenz des derzeit grassierenden Affenpocken-Virus gefunden. Also wieder ein ...

2:52 PM · Jun 8, 2022 · Twitter Web App

June 8, 2022

<u>False claim</u>: Bill Gates predicted the 2022 monkeypox outbreak.



Ist das "Krieg" gegen die eigen Völker?

Juni 12, 2022

Wir werden für dumm verkauft! Neil Oliver und die plötzlichen, unerwarteten Todesfälle.

Translate Tweet

#### sciencefiles.org

A website covering politics, health, and gender that has published false claims about climate change and the COVID-19 virus.



7.5 / 100

Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic journalistic standards.

- Source was the Twitter account of someone who describes himself as a "Krav Maga Instructor."
- 2,800 followers



sciencefiles.org

Wir werden für dumm verkauft! Neil Oliver und die plötzlichen, unerwarteten To... Okay, wir haben Neil Oliver etwas vernachlässigt. Aber, aufgeschoben ist bekanntlich nicht aufgehoben. Deshalb nehmen wir unsere Tradition, die ...

11:44 AM · Jun 13, 2022 · Twitter Web App

1 Retweet 4 Likes

June 13, 2022

<u>False claim</u>: The 2022 monkeypox outbreak was predicted in a simulation conducted in March 2021, which proves that the outbreak was planned.



report24.news

**□NewsGuard** 

An Austrian news site that has repeatedly published false claims, especially relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.



12.5 / 100

Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic journalistic standards.

Facebook group called Völker dieser
 Welt erheben sich !! ("People of this world rise up !!")

- 19,000 members



May 21, 2022





Comment

journalistenwatch.com

□NewsGuard

A website that has relied on misleading or unsubstantiated claims to back an undisclosed far-right, anti-Islam viewpoint in its coverage of journalism and of national and international news.

I

20/100

Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic journalistic standards.

- Source was the Facebook group Glaub nicht alles! (Don't believe everything!,) which states that "People should know what is really important.
Enlightenment beyond the mainstream."

- 65,600 members

June 7, 2022

n' Like

1 Share

A Share

False claim: The 2022 monkeypox outbreak is linked to COVID-19 mRNA vaccines.

#### May 27, 2022



- Source was the Facebook group Neuwahlen für Österreich Demokratie JETZT ("New elections for Austria Democracy NOW") - 20,500 members May 31, 2022

May 30, 2022



#### wochenblick.at

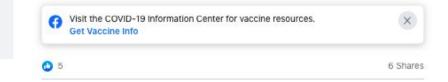
**□NewsGuard** 

The website of the right-wing Austrian weekly newspaper Wochenblick, which has published false content that advances nationalist and pro-FPÖ views, including about COVID-19.

U

7.5 / 100

Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic journalistic standards.



- Source was the Facebook group Völker dieser Welt erheben sich !! ("People of this world rise up !!") - 19,000 members - Source was the Facebook group Weltweiter Widerstand ("Worldwide resistance") - 16,300 members

34

1 Comment 2 Shares





#### pravda-tv.com

**□NewsGuard** 

A site by author Nikolas Pravda that regularly publishes false political and health claims, including about COVID-19 and the Ukraine war. The site has claimed that members of the British royal family are actually reptiles.



25/100

Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic journalistic standards.

- Source was the Facebook group Ungeimpft, Gesund und Glücklich ("Unvaccinated, Healthy and Happy") - 6,500 members

PRAVDA-TV.COM

Erzbischof: Die Globalisten werden flüchten müssen um nicht gelyncht zu werden



0 2

June 10, 2022

This report was produced using two proprietary datasets from NewsGuard:

- The Misinformation Fingerprints dataset, a catalogue of data about top misinformation narratives, contains related keywords and search terms for all of the top misinformation and disinformation narratives spreading online produced using human intelligence but designed for use with AI/ML/NLP tools to identify content matching specific false claims. NewsGuard analysts used the Misinformation Fingerprints dataset to identify relevant searches related to misinformation narratives about monkeypox.
- The second dataset used was the News Website Reliability Ratings, which consists of credibility ratings for over 7,500 news and information website that account for 95% of online engagement with news in the U.S., U.K., France, Germany, Italy, and Canada. Each site's rating is based on nine basic, apolitical journalistic criteria. Based on the criteria, each site receives an overall designation of green (generally trustworthy) or red (generally not trustworthy) and a trust score of 0-100. NewsGuard's analyst used the News Website Reliability Ratings dataset to identify misinformation sources that appeared in the results for searches conducted as part of the analysis.
- Examples selected for the report represent an illustrative, but by no means exhaustive, list of false claims shared on social media. Both the Misinformation Fingerprints and the News Website Reliability Index are available to be licensed for research and other purposes.