

# Ukraine - Public War, Private Intelligence: How organizations are informed and protected by open-source intelligence.



*W Michael Susong*

2023 Joint NDIA/AIA Spring ISC

# Agenda

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01

Introduction

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02

Open-Source Intelligence Analysis

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03

Case study: Ukraine

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04

Conclusions

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# Open-Source Intelligence



- 30 centimeter spectral imagery
- Real time traffic flow
- Real time video and audio
- Language translation
- Pervasive Social Media



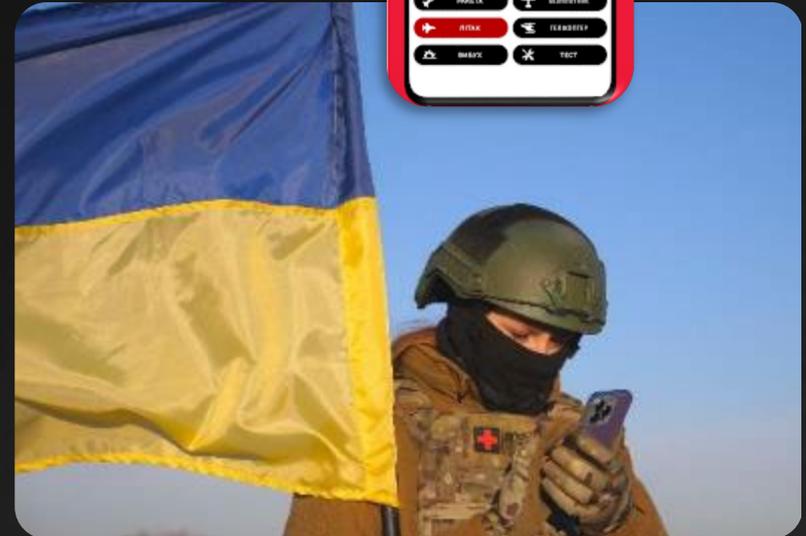
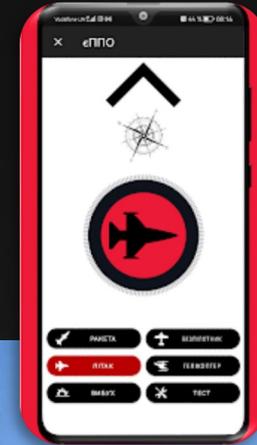
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# Evolution of Information Availability



- Every individual with a mobile phone can become a source
- Information can be broadcast live world-wide
- Wisdom and distortion of the crowd
- Geometric growth of data, not information or intelligence
- Operational Security impact
- Pressure for govt information sharing



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# Increases in Analyst skills and Sources

*No longer the domain of governments*



Huge increase in

- Knowledgeable and passionate amateurs
- Govt experts migrating to the private sector
- SMEs opining across mediums
- Governments releasing intelligence assessments
- New and traditional media embracing new OSINT
- Countering Propaganda, fake news, extremism

Defence Intelligence

UPDATE ON UKRAINE  
6 March 2023

### INTELLIGENCE UPDATE

- The Russian military has continued to respond to heavy armoured vehicle losses by deploying 60-year-old T-62 main battle tanks (MBT). There is a realistic possibility that even units of the 1st Guards Tank Army (1 GTA), supposedly Russia's premier tank force, will be re-equipped with T-62s to make up for previous losses. 1 GTA had previously been due to receive the next-generation T-14 Armata MBT from 2021.
- In recent days, Russian BTR-50 armoured personnel carriers, first fielded in 1954, have also been identified deployed in Ukraine for the first time.
- Since summer 2022, approximately 800 T-62s have been taken from storage and some have received upgraded sighting systems which will highly likely improve their effectiveness at night. However, both these vintage vehicle types will present many vulnerabilities on the modern battlefield, including the absence of modern explosive reactive armour.

**Aric Toler, the Bellingcat analyst helped *The New York Times* Find Suspected Pentagon Leaker Jack Teixeira...then the FBI calls.**



**The New York Times**

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# Forward Observer yesterday

...find, fix and track the enemy



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# Forward Observer today

...but not on a school night!



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# Russians with Fitness trackers at Donetsk Ukraine airport

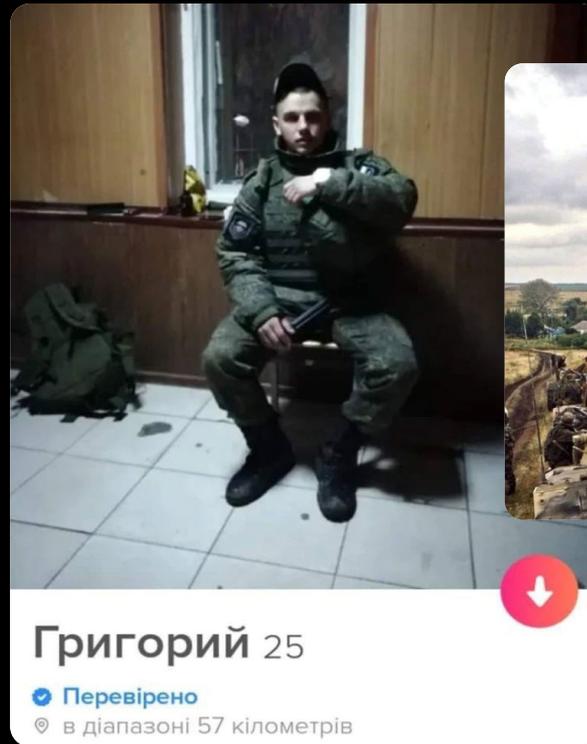


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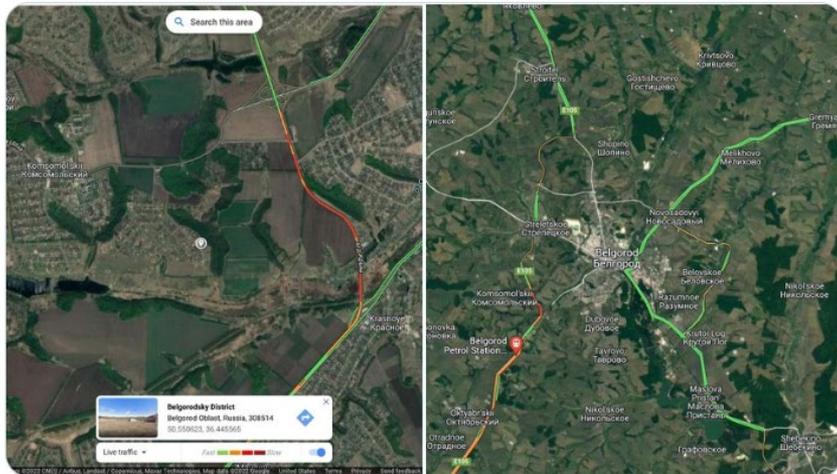
# Russian soldiers on Tinder, VK and Telegram ...forgot to turn off geotagging!



# Google traffic jam the night of the invasion of Ukraine



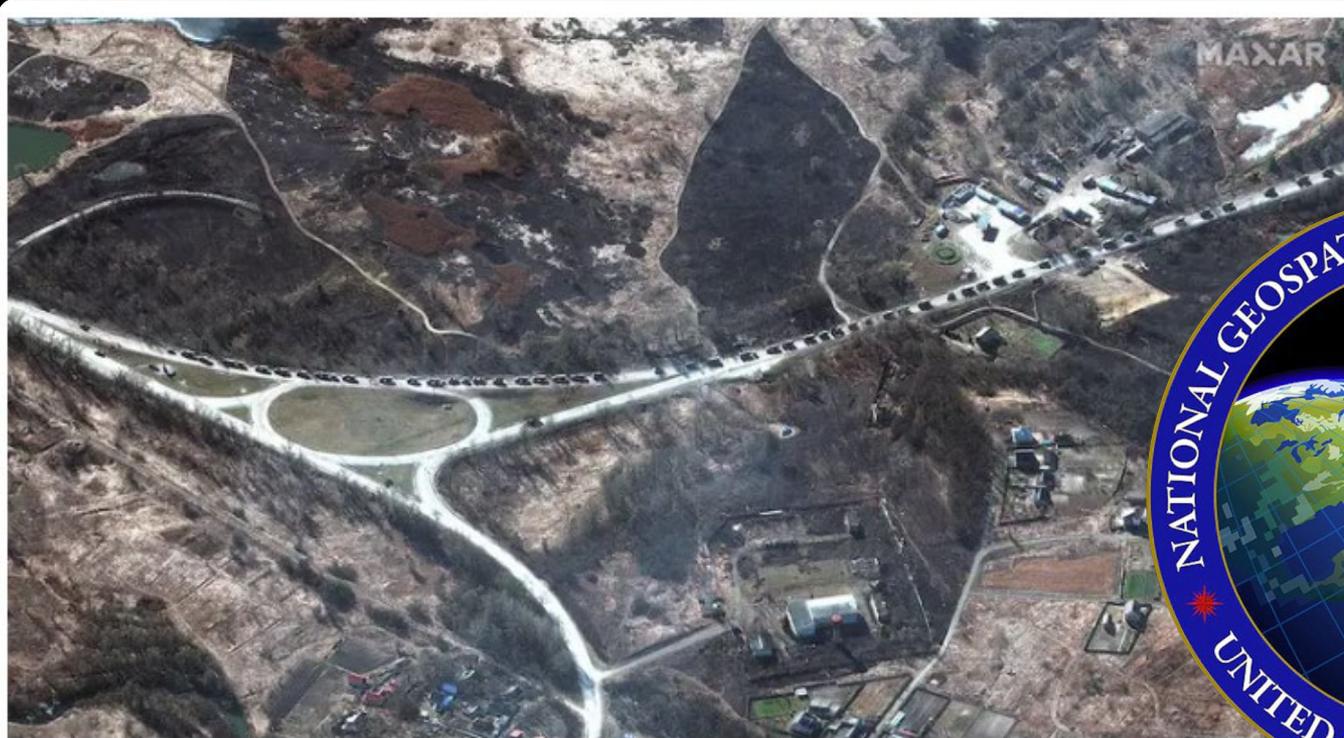
According [@googlemaps](#), there is a "traffic jam" at 3:15 in the morning on the road from Belgorod, Russia to the Ukrainian border. It starts \*exactly\* where we saw a Russian formation of armor and IFV/APCs show up yesterday. Someone's on the move.



8:26 PM · Feb 23, 2022

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# \$100 dollars and you're the NGA...



Part of the Russian military convoy near Ivankiv, Ukraine, on Feb. 28.

Satellite image ©2022 Maxar Technologies

# Smartphone + public satellite imagery = HIMARS target



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# Find five differences. Private Geopolitical intelligence is...



✓ **Faster**

✓ **Cheaper**

✓ **Multinational**

✓ **No security clearance**

✓ **No dress code**



# Conclusion



- The Ukraine conflict has legitimized and highlighted the value of OSINT
- Commercial companies can provide high quality near real time intelligence
- Most OSINT tools are inexpensive or require modest skills training
- AI enabled OSINT will accelerate this change
- Creates nation state comparable commercial geopolitical analysis capabilities
- Governments are slowly embracing OSINT capabilities
- Possibly solves the public-private sharing classification challenge



# Thank you

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