

## Russia: Cyber Focus, Issue 10

*Cyber Focus provides an overview of developments in the Russian-language Internet (or "Runet"). This edition includes the following sections:*

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### Snapshot



According to findings published by *Rumetrika.ru*, the research branch of Russian Internet search engine Rambler, Russian social networking sites dominate in popularity throughout both Russia and the former Soviet Union (FSU) countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. The networking sites *Vkontakte.ru* and *МойМир@mail.ru* placed first and second, respectively, in popularity in Russia itself, while the social networking site *Odnoklassniki.ru*

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took the lead over *Vkontakte.ru* and *MoyMir@mail.ru* in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. About 25 million Russians use social networking sites at least once a month.

<http://rumetrika.rambler.ru/review/2/4327/>

## **State Censorship & Control**

### **Russian Tycoon, Majority Party To Head Attempts To Combat Illegal Site Content**

An article in news website *Ruformator.ru* explained that the Russian Ministry of Communications recently appointed Yuriy Milner as curator of “online content projects” in the Runet. Milner’s new job will be to determine which websites contain illegal information -- the *Ruformator.ru* article used child pornography as an example -- and to determine the rate of spread of the illegal information. Milner will be expected to relay his findings to the ministry in August or September 2010.

Meanwhile, majority party United Russia has announced its own plans to combat illegal site content. Citing news website *Klerk.ru*, the *Ruformator.ru* article explained that the party’s project, entitled “Runet Development” will be aimed at using “legal means” to halt “Internet pornography, piracy, and online theft.” It is expected that State Duma deputy Robert Shlegel will head the new project.

<http://ruformator.ru/news/article06696/default.asp>

### **Article Chronicles Kremlin Interference in Online Groups Over Mine Disaster**

An article on the website of daily newspaper *Yezhednevniy Zhurnal* chronicled the shutdown of online groups devoted to exchanging information regarding the recent disaster at the Raspadskaya mine in Mezhdurechensk, in which more than 140 people lost their lives. Online groups, according to the article, have historically allowed Russian Internet users to gather and relay information more quickly than Kremlin-influenced news resources. Additionally, online groups have allowed Russians to organize more effectively and quickly than before. These two factors, according to the article, contributed to the formation of groups interested in the disaster at the Raspadskaya mine, and the ensuing interference by Moscow security services.

Two major groups devoted to discussions of news of the events that formed on the social networking sites *Vkontakte.ru* and *Mail.ru* attracted thousands of members -- eventually reaching memberships of 5,000 and 6,000, respectively. However, one group on popular social networking site *Vkontakte.ru* attracted the attention of branch “E,” the antiterrorism branch of the FSB, when, according to the article, discussions turned from “‘what is going on?’ to ‘what should we do?’” As a result, the group administrator was called in for questioning. The article alleged that security officials, apparently having obtained the administrator’s password during questioning, restricted access to the group’s site to allow only group members full use of it.

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Afterwards, all of the information posted by group members to *Vkontakte.ru* was deleted from the website.

*Yezhednevniy Zhurnal* reasoned that it would not be long before the Kremlin began to clamp down on all bloggers.

<http://www.ej.ru/?a=note&id=10115>

### **Crackdown on Army Soldier Seen as Move To Limit Internet Among Ranks**

An article in online newspaper *Grani.ru* predicted that the Russian Government, despite the call from president Dmitriy Medvedev to “move into the digital [age],” has initiated a crackdown on computer violations that is likely intended to result in the total “decomputerization” of the Internet among service members. The beginning of the crackdown, according to *Grani.ru*, was signaled by the heavy-handed response from legal authorities which stemmed from a computer malfunction, allegedly caused by a sailor who changed his desktop wallpaper, and configured his Internet browser to display a different homepage. As a result of the malfunction, the sailor, Semyon Grodnik, will be tried as a criminal for the “creation, use, and distribution of a malicious computer program.” The overblown charges, according to the article, may indicate that the military intends to improve information security in the Russian army by making an example out of Grodnik, so as to scare other service members away from using computers.

<http://grani.ru/War/m.178433.html>

## **Cyber Security**

### **Runet To Protect Domain Names**

The prevalence of DNS-changing malware -- programs that manipulate their victim’s Internet browser to redirect it to malicious websites -- has prompted the Russian Internet industry to adopt a system of defense which is expected to be complete by the end of 2011. The new defense system, called DNS.SEC, is expected to cost around \$100 million, and will protect the .su, .ru, and .pф domains from such malware as Kido and Conficker, which was responsible for millions of computer infections per month between December 2008 and April 2009.

<http://rbcdaily.ru/2010/05/14/media/477995>

### **Man Detained After Attempt To Steal Credit Information Through Infected ATMs**

According to Russian language news website *Newsru.com*, a homeless individual identified only as “Yuriy B” has been arrested and will be tried in a Saint Petersburg regional court on charges of creating and using a computer virus, as well as unauthorized access to sensitive

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banking information. These charges stem from an incident which occurred in spring 2009, when Moskomprivatbank, a Russian bank, alerted the local militsiya that an individual had illegally accessed one of its ATMs to obtain sensitive information such as the credit card numbers and PIN codes of clients. At the time, the regional militsiya threw out the case, citing a lack of sufficient evidence.

However, the regional public prosecutor recently overturned the militsiya's ruling, re-opened the case, and is currently holding Yuriy in custody. Citing Russian computer security company Doktor Veb, *Newsru.com* explained that the thief would have used the virus to force the ATM to provide print-outs of customer information, which would then be used to withdraw money. The article pointed out that although ATMs are not connected to the Internet, they can still become virus infected on a 'case by case basis' by people with sufficient access to the machine, and familiarity with its programming.

<http://hitech.newsru.com/article/06may2010/spbatmvirus>

### **Individuals Used Fliers, ICQ To Stoke Fears of Victory Day Terror Attack**

According to Russian news agency URA.ru, individuals spread fear in the city of Tyumen by announcing an impending terrorist attack, as well as the arrest of five terrorists, by posting fliers around town and through the Internet messenger service ICQ. Despite the rumors, the town still held its Victory Day parade, albeit with the presence of a security staff that numbered in the hundreds -- a fact which regional head of interior affairs Dmitriy Shilkovskiy explained as being motivated by the March 2010 Moscow metro bombings, rather than the threats against Tyumen. On 8 May, officials announced that they had discovered who was responsible for the hoax threats. The URA.ru article did not include a list of names of the individuals responsible.

<http://www.ura.ru/content/tumen/11-05-2010/1036255087.html>

## **Information Operations/Warfare (IO/IW)**

### **Article Laments Russia's Image as Cyber Threat**

A 26 May article featured on the website of business newspaper *Slon.ru* cited the results of a survey of "Western" news media to determine how Russia is portrayed as a cyber actor in foreign reporting. The survey, which was commissioned by the Russian Association of Electronic Communications (RAEC), found that Russia was generally portrayed as either a major source of cyber crime, or as a major cyber opponent in an ongoing cyber war. The article cautioned that such portrayals of Russia could affect how much foreign investment the country receives, as a threatening cyber power image could scare away potential investors. The article asserted that if Russian authorities continue to sit idly by and allow spamming and cyber crime to continue, then the country will have difficulty changing its poor image abroad.

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<http://www.slou.ru/blogs/amilitsky/post/397851/>

## **Telecoms & Mobile Telephony**

### **Opinion Poll Finds That Only 3% of Russians Use Mobile Internet Access**

Results from a recent opinion poll, published by Internet and computer news website *Cnews.ru*, showed that only 3 percent of Russians use mobile Internet -- a figure which includes accessing the Internet using a smart phone or other mobile device. Additionally, pollsters found that the majority of Russian mobile Internet users tended to be wealthier than average males between the ages of 18 and 30, and who have attended higher education.

<http://cnews.ru/news/line/index.shtml?2010/05/19/391888>

## **Social Networks**

### ***Vkontakte.ru* Allows Transfer of Video, Music Files**

On 15 May, popular Russian social networking site *Vkontakte.ru* announced improvements that would allow users to transfer video and music files and photographs to other users. These changes are accompanied by an improved video search function. Currently, *Vkontakte.ru* has a membership of about 75 million users, and received more than 10 million visits per day.

<http://lenta.ru/news/2010/05/17/vkont/>

## **E-Government**

### **Official Comments on Gov't Role in Runet, Internet's Future in Russia**

In an interview with Russian language news website *Chastniy Korrespondent*, vice director of the Ministry of Mass Communications Andrey Soldatov commented on the role that the Kremlin should play in Internet governance, and outlined his views on the role of the Internet in Russia. Asserting that the Internet needs governance, Soldatov explained that it is the government's responsibility to ensure the development of the Internet by "helping to overcome obstacles such as artificially inflated prices, local infrastructure monopolies, etc," as well as the education of the public in how to use the Internet. To that end, Soldatov recalled the Kremlin's "revolutionary" efforts to bring Internet connectivity to schools. Soldatov posited that the educational system should familiarize students with the Internet so that they, "armed" with an understanding of the Internet, could strengthen society.

Soldatov expected upcoming innovations such as IPv6 and vernacular URLs, as well as more far-flung innovations such as personalized URL systems, to bring about major changes in the

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Internet. He expressed his hope that the current growth of the Runet would continue into the future unabated, to allow for the Internet to become the foundation of a civil society.

[http://www.chaskor.ru/article/aleksej\\_soldatov\\_internet\\_kak\\_i\\_lyubaya\\_drugaya\\_organizovannaya\\_sreda\\_upravlyaetsa\\_zakonami\\_17264](http://www.chaskor.ru/article/aleksej_soldatov_internet_kak_i_lyubaya_drugaya_organizovannaya_sreda_upravlyaetsa_zakonami_17264)

### **Kremlin To Complete Online Document Resource by 2011**

On 12 May, Deputy Prime Minister Sergey Sobyenin announced that *Gosuslugi.ru*, a government website designed to be a one-stop resource for official forms that would allow Russian Internet users to complete documentation online, is expected to be complete by the year 2011. Since its inception in April 2009, the website has proven to be of only very limited use to Russians. According to a 13 May article in English language news website *The Moscow Times*, the website currently functions more as a “guide to documents and bureaucratic procedures, and does not relieve people from waiting in lines for hours to register property, apply for pension benefits, or open a business.”

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/e-government-to-be-finished-by-2011/405889.html>

### **Court of Auditors Opens *Youtube.com* Channel**

A new *Youtube.com* channel operated by Russia’s Court of Auditors is expected to increase government transparency. According to court head Sergey Stepashin, the new channel joins the ranks of governing bodies of other countries that have opened their own channels in the popular video sharing website, and follows the example set by President Dmitriy Medvedev in his bid to create a channel for the Russian presidency. In addition to hosting videos of court proceedings, the channel will also feature materials from the court’s official website (located at [www.ach.gov.ru](http://www.ach.gov.ru)), as well as a feed from their *Twitter.com* account (located at [www.twitter.com/ach\\_gov\\_ru](http://www.twitter.com/ach_gov_ru)).

<http://www.cnews.ru/news/line/index.shtml?2010/05/17/3911437>

## **Other**

### **Popularity of Internet News on the Rise in Russia**

An article published in Internet and computer news website *Cnews.ru* announced findings that news websites noticed a 30 percent up-tick in the amount of visitors in May 2010 versus May 2009. While the research indicated that online news resources had received 4 percent less visitors in April 2010 than in March 2010, they assumed that this had to do with normal seasonal influences such as the holidays, as well as the fact that there were fewer breaking news stories in April than there were earlier in 2010.

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<http://pda.cnews.ru/news/index/shtml?line/2010/05/391870>

***Yandex To Allow More Comprehensive Searches of “Foreign Internet”***

On 19 May, the search engine company Yandex announced the expansion of its service over the next two years to include a larger amount of foreign Internet sites. *Yandex* also features new search functions, which can be utilized in two ways -- either through entering Latin letters into the search bar located at the search engine's *.ru* address, *Yandex.ru*, or by accessing the engine's new website at *Yandex.com*. Currently, about 12-15% of searches run on Yandex are conducted using Latin-based alphabets.

<http://internet.cnews.ru/news/top/index.shtml?2010/05/19/391800>

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