

FALSE
NARRATIVE

A van at the scene of the Moscow concert hall attack had a Ukrainian license plate

The False Narrative

A white van at the scene of Crocus City concert hall attack in Moscow on March 22, 2024, which was used by the four suspected terrorists to arrive and flee in, carried a Ukrainian license plate.

The Facts

Contrary to claims in pro-Kremlin media, a white van near the site of the March 22, 2024, Moscow terrorist attacks at the Crocus Hall concert venue carried a Belarusian license plate, not a Ukrainian license plate.

After the shooting at the Moscow concert hall that killed 139 people — which the Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility for — social media users and websites shared a video of a white van that the four suspected gunmen reportedly used to arrive and flee the scene in. Social media claimed that the white van carried an old-style Ukrainian license plate, supposedly evidence of Ukrainian involvement in the Moscow attack.

In fact, as first noted by open-source intelligence analyst Oliver Alexander on X and independently confirmed by NewsGuard, a closer examination of the license plate reveals that the plate is actually Belarusian. While the first half of the license

plate is blurred with a watermark in the video, the second half of the license plate does not match the structure of Ukrainian plates.

In the video, the second-half, visible portion of the white van's plate ends in "94 IX-6." This is consistent with the structure of Belarusian license plates, which contain four numerals, two letters, followed by a hyphen and a single digit indicating the region that the vehicle was registered in, according to multiple online databases of license registration plates. The number "6" indicates that the plate was registered in the Mogilev Region of Belarus.

In contrast, the format of Ukrainian license plates consists of a two letter prefix, four digits, and a two letter suffix indicating where the vehicle was registered. A NewsGuard comparison of Ukrainian license plates and the plate of the white van in the video does not show any similarities in structure or format.

U.S. and Kyiv officials have denied that Ukraine was involved in the Moscow shooting. "ISIS bears sole responsibility for this attack," National Security Council spokeswoman Adrienne Watson said in a March 2024 statement to reporters. "There was no Ukrainian involvement whatsoever." In a March 2024 press release, Ukraine's Foreign Ministry said that Ukraine "categorically rejects the accusations" that Ukraine played a role, adding that such claims seek to "discredit Ukraine in the eyes of the international community."

How the False Narrative Emerged

The earliest appearance of the claim identified by NewsGuard was a March 22, 2024, Telegram post from Vladimir Solovyov, a host on the Russian state-owned Channel One. The post, which generated 530,000 views, included a video of the white van with the caption, "A suspicious white minibus with old Ukrainian license plates is being checked in the Crocus parking lot, media reports."

Approximately seven minutes later, the claim was picked up by the anonymously run pro-Kremlin X account @runews, which regularly shares Russian propaganda and whose false claims about the Russia-Ukraine war have previously received a

boost from platform owner Elon Musk, according to a February 2023 report by The Washington Post.

The post by @runews, which generated 2,300 interactions and 2 million views, said, “A suspicious white minibus with Ukrainian license plates is being checked in the parking lot near #CrocusCityHall.” A Community Note was later added to the post, stating in part, “This plate appears to follow the Belarus system.”

The claim then spread to X, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and Russian social network VK, and circulated in multiple languages including Chinese, English, Italian, Polish, Russian, and Spanish.

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Examples of this False Narrative [ⓘ]

FIRST APPEARANCE

03/22/2024

<https://t.me/SolovievLive/247722>

“ A suspicious white minibus with old Ukrainian license plates is being checked in the Crocus parking lot, media reports.”

VIEW ARCHIVED

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qy_GL_JRvHQ

“#ого #эксклюзив БЕЛЫЙ МИКРОАВТОБУС С УКРАИНСКИМИ НОМЕРАМИ ВОЗЛЕ КРОКУСА”

03/22/2024

VIEW ARCHIVED

- <https://twitter.com/runews/status/1771265339847795157>

↳

“A suspicious white minibus with Ukrainian license plates is being checked in the parking lot near #CrocusCityHall”

03/22/2024

VIEW ARCHIVED

- <https://twitter.com/MonitorX99800/status/1771274362655592802>

“! One of the Vehicles that the terrorists who attacked the Crocus Concert Hall in Moscow arrived in was a White Minibus with an old Ukrainian license plate”

03/22/2024

VIEW ARCHIVED

- <https://twitter.com/CuriousLuke93x/status/1771271255917809891>

“Would a group of (apparently very effective) Ukrainian terrorist really turn up outside a Moscow mall in this dirty, bust-up old mini-van with UA plates? #Moscow”

03/22/2024

VIEW ARCHIVED

- <https://ylilauta.org/satunnainen/133079293>

“BREAKING!!! Moskovon terroristit liikkui Ukrainan kilvissä olevilla pakettiautolla.
”

03/22/2024

VIEW ARCHIVED

- https://m.vk.com/video-49248213_456283602?list=714fb90de886301cec&from=wall-49248213_11908684

“Video by Ижевск Где Гай Стоят [ИГТС]”

03/22/2024

VIEW ARCHIVED

- https://www.replicaonline.ro/microbuz-cu-presupuse-numere-ucrainene-gasit-in-parcarea-crocus-city-hall-587159#google_vignette

“Microbuz cu presupuse numere ucrainene, găsit în parcarea Crocus City Hall”

03/22/2024

VIEW ARCHIVED

- <https://twitter.com/ltshijie/status/1771268068787847460>

“這種暗示很可疑，難道恐怖份子為了掩人耳目，會故意弄一個老式烏克蘭牌照嗎？”

03/22/2024

VIEW ARCHIVED

- <https://xbeibeix.com/video/BV1wH4y1W7Kn>

“俄安全人员检查现场一辆挂着老式乌克兰牌照的可疑白色汽车”

03/22/2024

VIEW ARCHIVED

- <https://www.facebook.com/100090481877566/posts/786222879598066/>

“Un "minibus bianco sospetto con targa ucraina" è stato trovato vicino a Krokus, si presume che gli assassini siano arrivati su di esso e che potrebbe essere stato minato”

03/22/2024

VIEW ARCHIVED

- <https://twitter.com/Fitek69/status/1771266875558683028>

“Właśnie znaleziono starego bus-a, zaparkowanego przy owym centrum, oczywiście na UKR tablicach.”

03/22/2024

VIEW ARCHIVED

- <https://ok.ru/video/7457215417046>

“Подозрительный белый микроавтобус с украинскими номерами проверяют на стоянке у Крокуса.”

03/22/2024

VIEW ARCHIVED

- <https://pskov-news.net/society/2024/03/22/102211.html>

“Подозрительный белый микроавтобус с номерами старого образца проверяют на стоянке у Крокуса”

03/22/2024

VIEW ARCHIVED

- <https://twitter.com/TuiteroMartin/status/1771269249517973708>

“5/4. Pero han tenido los cohonazos de poner una furgoneta con matrícula UKR?”

03/22/2024

VIEW ARCHIVED

- <https://www.instagram.com/oscarsalinas8114/p/C41E3lJu-Cg/>

“Según los reportes de algunos medios rusos, las autoridades están revisando una minivan blanca sospechosa con matrícula ucraniana en el aparcamiento de Crocus.”

03/22/2024

VIEW ARCHIVED

- <https://twitter.com/DarthPutinKGB/status/1771268228943139242>

“You can easily drive a bright, white minibus with Ukrainian plates on it around Russia & thru Moscow these days without arousing suspicion these days. ”

03/22/2024

VIEW ARCHIVED

Reliable Sources ⓘ

<https://twitter.com/oaalexanderdk/status/1771274967218319814>

<https://licenseplatemania.com/landenpaginas/witrusland.htm>

http://www.worldlicenseplates.com/world/EU_BELA.html

<https://www.olavsplates.com/belarus.html#Current>

<http://www.pl8s.com/b/bela.htm>

<https://licenseplatemania.com/landenpaginas/oekrain>

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/live-blog/moscow-concert-attack-live-updates-rcna144768>

<https://mfa.gov.ua/en/news/komentar-mzs-ukrayini-shchodo-strilyanini-u-pidmoskovnomu-krasnogorsku>

<https://www.logicallyfacts.com/en/fact-check/false-white-van-filmed-near-crocus-city-hall-has-a-belarusian-license-plate-not-ukrainian>

<https://maldita.es/malditobulo/20240325/hoaxes-misinformation-about-the-march-22-2024-attack-in-moscow/>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2023/02/22/russian-propagandists-said-buy-twitter-blue-check-verifications/>

Risk of Harm ⓘ

High

First Appeared ⓘ

March 22, 2024

Categories ⓘ

[Terrorism](#)

[Violence and Conflict](#)

Myth Locations ⓘ

Russia

Ukraine

Myth Spread Locations ⓘ

United States

Russia

China

Poland

Italy

Subject Tags ⓘ

[Crocus City Hall](#)

[Moscow concert hall attack](#)

Search Terms ⓘ

("White van" OR "white mini bus") AND "Ukrainian plates"

"БЕЛЫЙ МИКРОАВТОБУС" AND "УКРАИНСКИМИ НОМЕРАМИ"

Keywords and #'s ⓘ

#CrocusCityHall

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