

CALL FOR PAPERS:

NEED-TO-KNOW XIV

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Need to Know XIV: In a world of mirrors. Intelligence and Disinformation

Cracow, November 27–28, 2025

Many view the Cold War as the peak of intelligence battles and disinformation campaigns. Nevertheless, in recent years, suspicions of Russian influence on the politics of other nations has sparked a resurgence in discussions on deception, influence operations, disinformation, and societal resilience. Sometimes, these operations are intended 'only' to mislead enemy special services; sometimes, they target governments and politicians, and those aimed at entire societies, states, and nations, or even global public opinion, are considered the most dangerous. The names for this phenomenon are plentiful: Denial and deception (D&D), Hybrid Warfare, Subversion, Active Measures, Political Ideological Diversion, and Psychological Warfare. The exact definitions are often blurred and overlapping but have in common the mingling of foreign intelligence services in political and (dis)information struggles.

To intelligence scholars, security authorities, and societies, the correlation between intelligence services and disinformation constitutes a significant challenge. The complicated question is when foreign intelligence services disseminate malign information and when other actors are involved. The consequences of this dilemma are not just academic, as they determine whether disinformation needs to be handled secretly by counterintelligence organisations or whether it is openly addressed by other societal institutions or even by individual citizens. During the Cold War, both the East and the West favoured the first variant, albeit on different scales. In the current situation, the options still seem open.

At this year's Need to Know conference, we address topics such as.:

- Examples of Intelligence Services' actual D&D/active measures operations
- Intelligence Services countering similar covert measures
- The use of true or false information for covert campaigns
- Long-time effect of disinformation
- Biases in judging the role of Intelligence Services' role in disinformation
- Consequences of misunderstanding covert disinformation
- The agent of influence and front organisations
- Media and conduits of disinformation

The Need to Know conferences stimulate research and discussions on intelligence history, focusing on the 20th and 21st Centuries. A core focus is to explore new information and interpretations following the opening of archives in the East and West.

The papers should be based on firm empirical documentation.

The conference's language is English.

The deadline for proposals is September 1, 2025.

The submission should include an abstract of 500–700 words in English and a biographical note listing significant professional accomplishments (250 words in English). The conference Programme Committee will notify selected speakers by September 15, 2025.

Accommodation and meals will be covered for presenters and invited chairpersons. Due to budget constraints, the organisers do not cover travel costs.

Submissions and additional questions should be sent to:

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The conference is jointly organised by the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation (IPN, HQ in Warsaw and Kraków Branch, Poland) and The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (ÚSTR, Prague, Czechia) in cooperation with the Center for Cold War Studies of the University of Southern Denmark (Odense, Denmark); King's Centre for the Study of Intelligence, King's College London (UK), Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for the Research on Consequences of War (Graz, Austria), and in partnership with the "International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence" and "Aparat Represji w Polsce Ludowej 1944-1989".

