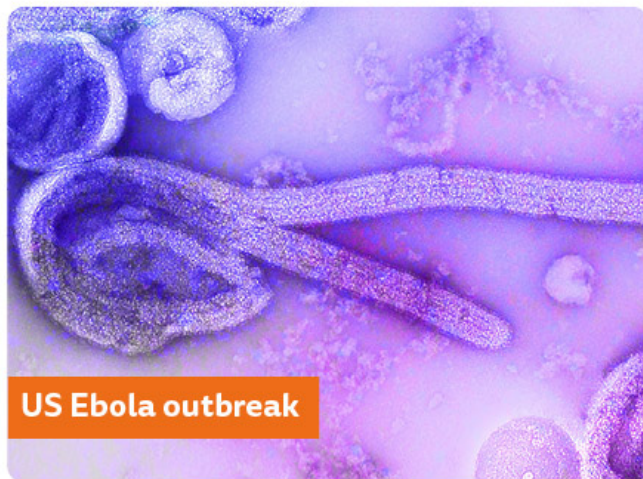


 theday.co.uk/russia-spread-bedbug-panic-claims-france-4



Invented content: Four examples of fake stories that have appeared in recent months.

Is false news getting worse? French newspapers are full of headlines about bedbugs. But now French officials think that Russia may have spread false stories to create panic.

What's happening?

The politicians stared in horror as Mathilde Panot held up a tube full of bed bugs. The insects, she claimed, were appearing “in all daily living spaces: hospitals, schools, workplaces, retirement homes, prisons, trains and even cinemas”.

A “**plague**” of bed bugs has caused panic in France. But Aldo Massaglia, who runs a Paris pest-control company, says there has been no big rise in cases.

Now it has been found out that fake stories about bedbugs have been spread on social media. French intelligence agents think that Russia is behind the fakes.

Find out more

The stories look as if they have come from French newspapers. Two suggest that the bedbugs were brought by Ukrainian **refugees**. But the newspapers say they are not real.

After the **Hawaii** wildfires in August it was claimed that 2,000 children had gone missing. In fact 97 people went missing. Only one was a child.

In September reports suggested **Ebola** had spread at a festival in the USA. This was supported by a “screenshot” of a document from the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. But the screenshot was a fake.

Another story was about the death of **Barack Obama's** personal chef, Tafari Campbell, who was found drowned in July. When Obama was photographed with plasters on two of his fingers, it was suggested that he had injured them while murdering Campbell.

But Obama has been photographed with plasters on his fingers for years, because he often gets blisters from playing golf.

Is false news getting worse?

Some say

1. Quoted in [*The Daily Telegraph*](#).

Some people say

"A lie can travel half way around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes."

Charles Spurgeon (1834 – 1892),
English clergyman

What do you think?

Six steps to discovery

1. **Connect**

How do you feel about this story? - Do you like creepy-crawlies?

2. **Wonder**

What questions do you have? - For example: How bad is a bedbug bite?

3. **Investigate**

What are the facts? - Pick out one thing we know for certain from this story and one thing we cannot say for sure.

4. **Construct**

What is your point of view? - You meet a time traveller from the 18th Century who claims that news was more reliable in his day. Think about what you would say.

5. **Express**

What do others believe? - What is the weirdest story you have ever heard? Talk about it with your classmates.

6. **Reflect**

What might happen next? - Imagine you are asked to help set up a website spotting false news. Come up with a name and logo for it.

Yes! New technology means it is easier than ever before to spread false stories. By spreading stories about bedbugs, another country could seriously harm France's **economy**.

Others think

No! False news has always spread. It took place as long ago as the **American Revolution**, when politicians shared false stories to make their enemies look bad.

Glossary

Plague - A deadly disease that spreads between people.

Refugees - Anyone fleeing conflict or persecution is defined as a refugee by the UN as a refugee, regardless of where they are from.

Hawaii - Situated in the Pacific Ocean, it was made a US state in 1959 and is the only island state.

Ebola - A highly infectious disease causing internal and external bleeding. A vaccine against it has recently been developed.

Barack Obama - The Democrat US president between 2008 and 2016.

Economy - The way that money flows through a country, which affects wages and the cost of living.

American Revolution - An 18th Century war in which 13 British colonies in North America won independence and went on to form the USA.