

# How “fake news” became Russia’s excuse to end press freedom | The Washington Post

By Will Oremus

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Last week, Russia passed a law making it a major crime to publish what it deems “fake” news about the country’s military. Violators could face 15 years in prison.

And what is “fake” news, exactly? That’s up to Russian authorities. Reportedly, it will include any references to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine that call it an invasion, which would contradict the Kremlin’s insistence that it’s simply a “special military operation.” The Kremlin has also applied the term “fake news” to reports that a Russian airstrike hit a maternity hospital in Ukraine.

In other words, fake news means real news.

The law is part of a sweeping crackdown on freedom of expression in the country as President Vladimir Putin tries to cover up the indefensible: an unprovoked invasion of a peaceful neighboring country.

Russia’s Orwellian use of the word “фейки” — a phonetic translation of the English word “fake” — to criminalize truth is the logical endpoint of a years-long heel turn for the term “fake news.”

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