

TikTok Ukraine War Videos Raise Questions About Spread of Misinformation | The New York Times

By Sheera Frenkel

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Bre Hernandez used to scan TikTok for videos of makeup tutorials and taco truck reviews. Since Russia invaded Ukraine, the 19-year-old has spent hours each day scrolling the app for war videos, watching graphic footage of Ukrainian tanks firing on Russian troops and civilians running away from enemy gunfire.

“What I see on TikTok is more real, more authentic than other social media,” said Ms. Hernandez, a student in Los Angeles. “I feel like I see what people there are seeing.”

But what Ms. Hernandez was actually viewing and hearing in the TikTok videos was footage of Ukrainian tanks taken from video games, as well as a soundtrack that was first uploaded to the app more than a year ago. The footage and soundtrack were traced back to their original sources in a New York Times analysis of the videos.

TikTok, the Chinese-owned video app known for viral dance and lip-syncing videos, has emerged as one of the most popular platforms for sharing videos and photos of the Russia-Ukraine war. Over the past week, hundreds of thousands of videos about the conflict have been uploaded to the app from across the world, according to a review by The Times. The New Yorker has called the invasion the world’s “first TikTok war.”

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