# RUSSIAN SITES OF HYBRID WAR

As hybrid war is on the rise - war involving both physical military strategies and information/cyber tactics - new kinds of information/ cyber strategies will continue to emerge. The authors, after an in-depth investigation of a case of hybrid war, suggest **to introduce cyber-related sanctions that could ban the provision to Russia** software updates by EU and USA through IT companies.

The authors found several previously unknown centers of activity related to online propaganda, in locations near Russian military and security services installations. They also refer to a finding by a blogger who found several Russian small towns with abnormally high interest in contentious political matters in 2015. Specifically, he found that, according to the Google Trends, many small Russian towns have higher or comparable interest in searching Google on such contentious political terms as "Maidan" (symbol of Ukrainian pro-democracy revolution), "sanctions", "referendum", "NATO" (after 2013), "Poroshenko", as big Russian cities. This aligns with and supports assertions that at least some of the Russian hacking is likely the work of state-sponsored Russian operatives.

Figure 1:   Location of Suspicious Russian Towns
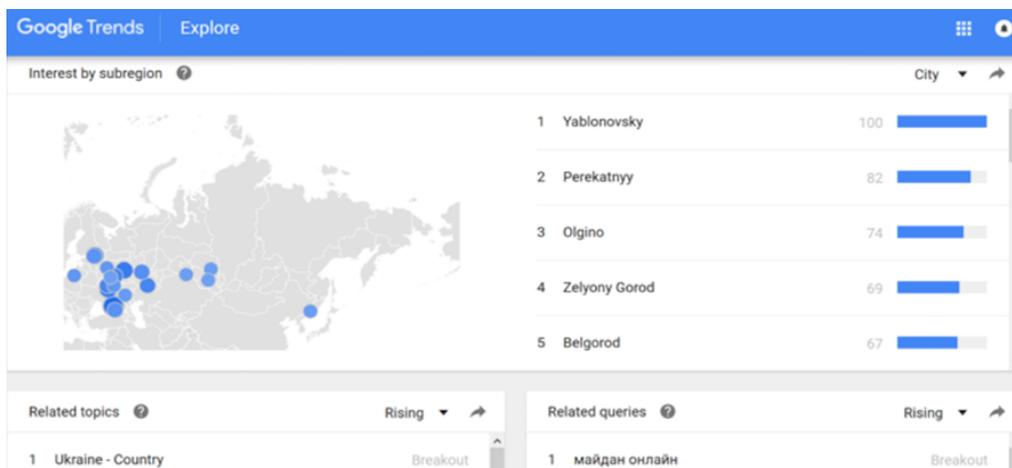
Russian cybertroops are not only paid civilians, but are also the full-time military and FSB personnel scattered around these rural towns. The authors identify and provide visualization of some of what they suggest are Russian information warfare sites.

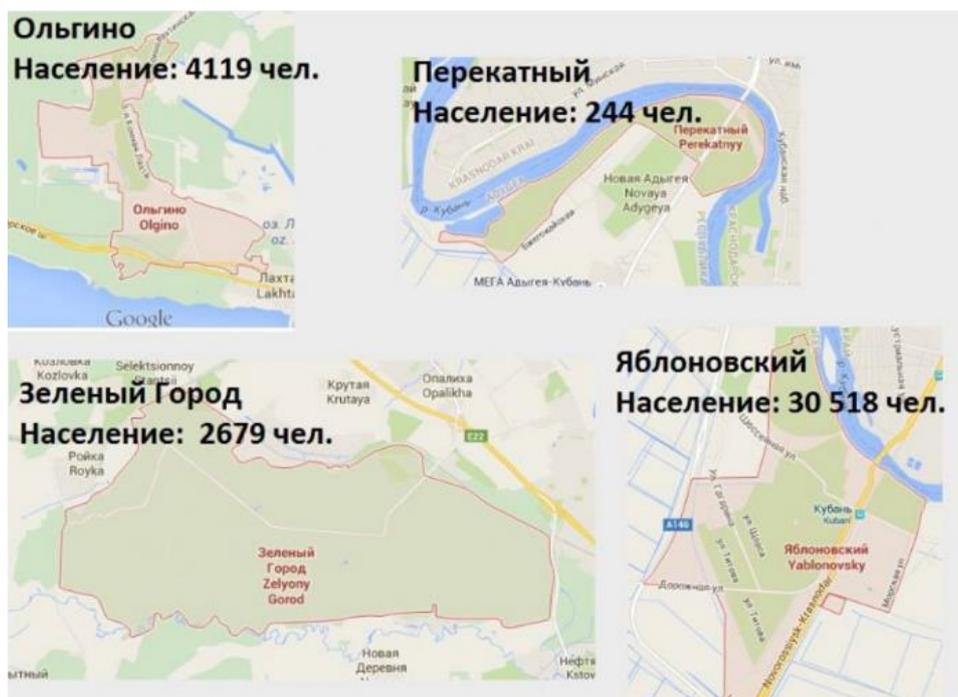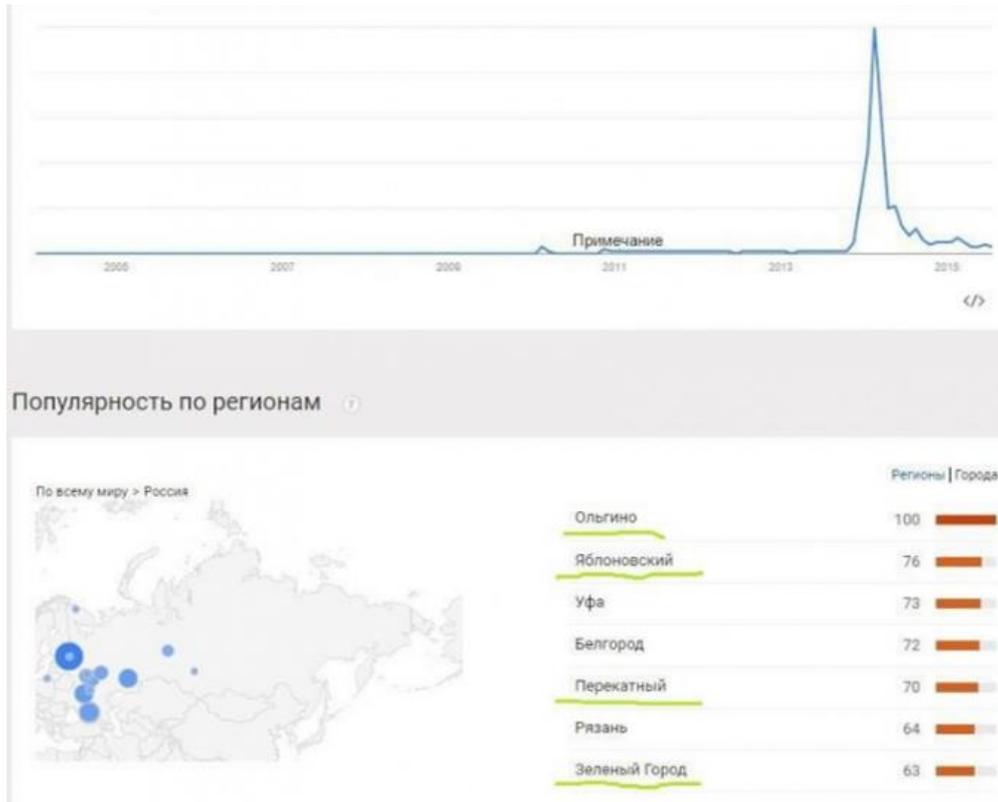**Figure 2: More Details about Suspicious Russian Towns**

Figure 3: Term "Maidan" in Google Search in Selected Russian Cities and Towns

They checked "abnormal" town, Zelyony Gorod, on Google Maps. They found it in close proximity to the FSB (Federal Security Service): specifically, the Nizhniy Novgorod FSB Institute. This institute is likely causing the anomaly in politically focused digital traffic.

Figure 4: High Internet Traffic and Russian Security Services
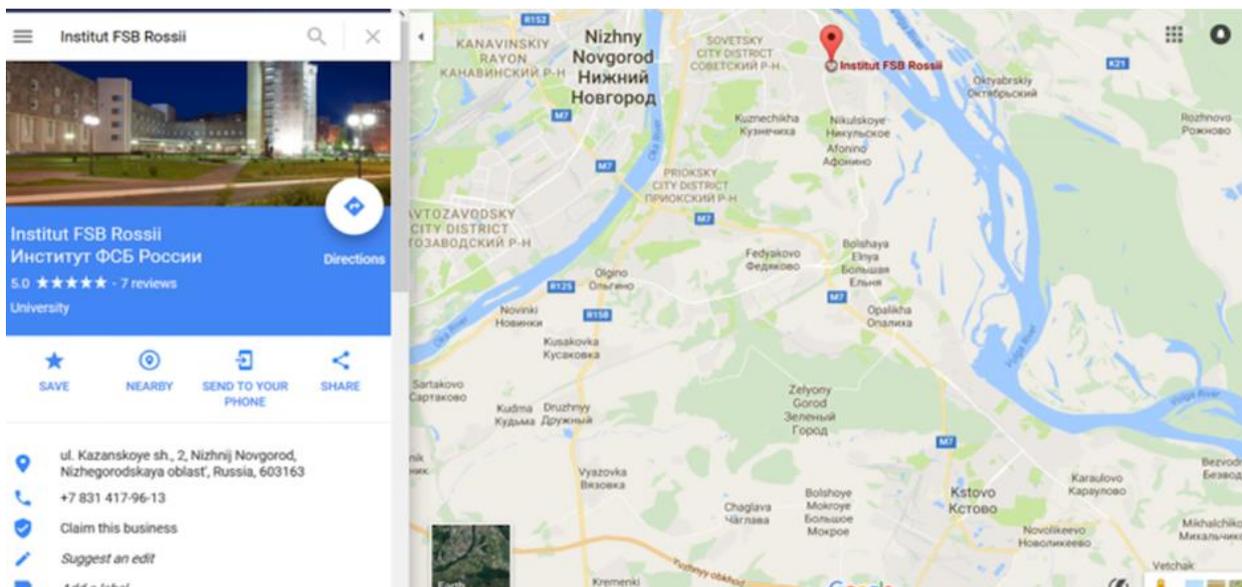
Of course, Russian information troops are located not only next to or around these four small towns. Probably, they are also located near or inside larger Russian cities, so their Internet traffic is "hidden" by that generated by the population of those cities.