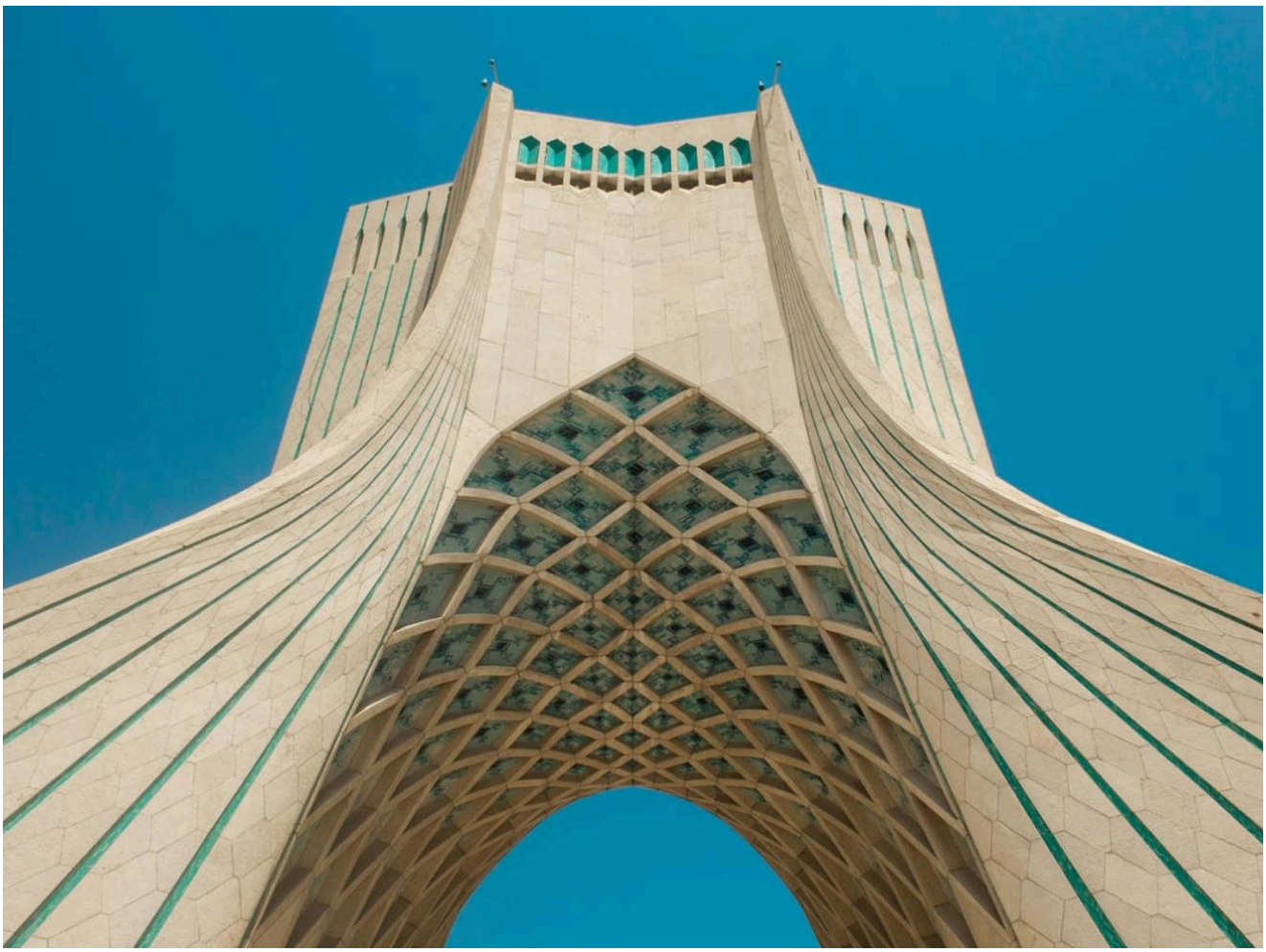
ANALYTICAL BRIEF

# Iranian disinformation

## Hijacking the LEGO aesthetic as an influence vector



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# 1 Executive summary

**Since June 2025, a pro-Iranian influence operation has systematically combined the LEGO aesthetic with generative artificial intelligence (AI) to spread state propaganda narratives** aimed at younger generations in the West and at international public opinion. The campaign was **launched in June 2025**, during the Twelve-Day War. It was **abruptly scaled up into industrial production starting in February 2026**, as the war broke out, **reaching 145 million views within a few weeks**. **Its central actor, *Explosive Media* (formerly *Akhbar Enfejari*),** is a documented case of influence infrastructure that combines industrial-scale production, a multi-account architecture and ties to Iranian officials.

KEY FINDINGS

01 **A documented shift in Iranian doctrine**: the operation partly abandons the centralized control model in favor of outsourcing to semi-independent producers who are paid or commissioned. This shift shows that Iranian doctrine now factors in platform moderation constraints, and it also offers a way to make up for a capability gap.

02 **Two distinct phases that reveal a two-stage doctrine**: the initial phase (June 2025) served as a period for testing and calibrating the format on non-Iranian audiences; the industrialization phase (February 2026) is a deployment triggered by the US-Iran war, which potentially points to pre-positioned infrastructure awaiting activation rather than an improvised response.

03 **A documented and resilient *Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior (CIB)* architecture**: the combination of pre-positioned backup accounts, dormant channels that were bought or reactivated, and synchronized behavior (hashtag stuffing, copy-pasta) is a strong *CIB* signal. The immediate reactivation after suspensions confirms operational preparedness for moderation.

04 **Cognitive exploitation of the LEGO format as the core mechanism**: the LEGO aesthetic defuses emotional reactions and shifts how the content is perceived, from propaganda to satire. This mechanism is reinforced by the growing imitation of the format by third parties (activists, NGOs, independent creators), which blurs attribution and gives the operation lasting, high-volume noise to hide behind.

05 **A partially admitted link to the Iranian state**: "*Mr Explosive*" (Explosive Media's anonymous representative) told the BBC (in an interview published on April 13, 2026) that he had been "directly commissioned" by Iranian officials and had so-called "journalist internet" access granted by the government, while still claiming editorial independence.

06 **A shifting transnational network of amplifiers**: the campaign simultaneously draws on institutional amplifiers (some Iranian embassies), ideological ones (the Western anti-imperialist left, Global South activists), media outlets (RT, Sputnik) and opportunistic ones (compromised accounts, creators), with a notable source of academic legitimacy in a Turkish AI researcher.

07 **Convergence among adversarial states: toward a coordinated effort to destabilize the United States from within?** The same channels that spread Iranian propaganda have begun posting pro-Russian, pro-Chinese and pro-North Korean content that directly targets US domestic politics and explicitly calls for an American "awakening." This raises the possibility that the operation is evolving into a coordinated domestic destabilization effort among aligned actors.

# 2 Context

## 2.1 Strategic objectives

**The Iranian influence campaign pursues different strategic objectives in each phase**, and the way these fit together reveals a two-stage operational rationale that goes beyond a mere reaction to events.

**In its initial phase (June 2025)**, the campaign mainly sought to build a narrative presence in Western digital spaces by portraying Iran as a resilient and legitimate actor facing external aggression, while testing how receptive non-Iranian audiences were to the LEGO/AI format.

**In its industrialization phase (February to May 2026)**, the campaign shifted to more offensive and better-targeted objectives: undermining the legitimacy of US military involvement in the eyes of the American public itself, strengthening the cohesion of the Axis of Resistance by staging its solidarity, and exploiting political divisions within the United States (anti-Trump sentiment, isolationism, lingering scandals such as Epstein) to heighten the perception that the conflict is illegitimate. The fact that production scaled up at the very moment the US-Iran conflict broke out suggests pre-positioned accounts awaiting activation, combined with organic growth. This hypothesis is supported by the existence of backup accounts that were already operational before the first suspensions in March 2026.

**A third objective emerged in May 2026**: the same vectors began producing and spreading pro-Chinese, pro-Russian and pro-North Korean content that explicitly calls for an American “awakening” against the country's own institutions, pointing to **an internal subversion effort that goes beyond the scope of** conventional geopolitical **propaganda**.

## 2.2 A doctrinal shift

**This operation departs from the traditional model of Iranian online propaganda, which relied on a centralized apparatus**: *Press TV*, *IRNA*, *Tasnim*, *Fars News* and the like. These official outlets were the primary vectors, amplified by proxy networks that were often identifiable and linked to, or directly controlled by, the MOIS or the IRGC. This model suffered from a major structural rigidity: Iranian state media are instantly recognizable and discredited among young Western audiences, often banned from app stores and mainstream social networks, and their institutional look flags them as propaganda before the content is even consumed.

**The *Explosive Media* operation marks a pivot toward a model in which part of the influence function is outsourced.** The Ministry of Intelligence of the Islamic Republic of Iran (MOIS) and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) no longer exercise direct editorial control; instead, they benefit from social media virality and from spontaneous, decentralized distribution. They **commission, equip or pay producers who present a façade of independence and a digital-native aesthetic**. This doctrinal shift offers several major operational advantages: it **lends the content credibility through its packaging** (a viral content creator looks spontaneous where a state outlet looks institutional), and it **ensures resilience to moderation** (a suspended independent account is easier to replace with new accounts, and its suspension does not directly hit state infrastructure).

This greater tolerance for semi-independent producers, whose ideological loyalty varies but is sufficient, therefore marks a notable change in operational strategy.

This strategic shift, and Iran's ambition to penetrate Western digital spaces, show how well Iranian agencies have adapted, absorbing the success factors of such an operation: **spontaneity, virality and a humorous tone**.

# 3 Technical analysis

## 3.1 The original and central actor: Explosive Media

### 3.1.1 Digital footprint

**Explosive Media**'s digital footprint reflects a **structured strategy of multi-platform ubiquity**. The handle @ExplosiveMediaa (or a variant of it) is used across all platforms, showing a **deliberate effort at brand consistency**.

| PLATFORM | HANDLE | CREATED | COMMENT |
|---|---|---|---|
| **X** | @ExplosiveMediaa | Mar 10, 2026 | Located in Iran |
| **TikTok** | @ExplosiveMediaa | Mar 12, 2026 | Located in the Netherlands (likely VPN) |
| **Instagram** | @explosivemediaa<br>(formerly akhbar_enfejari) | Feb 1, 2026 | |
| **Telegram** | Channel @ExplosiveMedia<br>(and profiles @akhbarenfejarinom and @EXPLOSIVEAdmin) | Jun 25, 2025 | Post-rebrand display name, a sign of identity transition. Switched from Persian to English on March 22, 2026. |
| **YouTube** | @explosivemediaaa<br>(blocked in March 2026)<br>@Explosive_News<br>(backup channel blocked in April 2026) | Before 2026 | |
| **Rumble** | ExplosiveMediaa | Mar 30, 2026 | |
| **Pinterest** | ExplosiveMediaa | | |
| **Linktree** | explosivemediaa | | Link aggregation |
| **Lnk.Bio** | explosivemediaa | | Link aggregation |
| **Email** | explosivemediaa@proton.me<br>explosivemediaa@protonmail.com<br>explosivemediaa@protonmail.ch | Jul 31, 2024 (.me)<br>Jul 27, 2024 (.com)<br>Dec 24, 2024 (.ch) | |
| **Facebook** | @ExplosiveMediaa | Jan 1, 2026 | |
| **Spotify** | Explosive Media | | |
| **SoundCloud** | Explosive Media | April 2026 or earlier | |
| **UpScrolled** | @ExplosiveMedia | | |
| **Threads** | @explosivemediaa | Feb 1, 2026 | |
| **Bluesky** | @explosivemedia.bsky.social | Apr 20, 2026 | |
| **Ble.ir** | @akhbarenfejari | | |

#### 3.1.1.1 Account creation timeline and identity switch

The account creation timeline shows a **switch in the first quarter of 2026**: before then, the group operated under the Persian-language identity *akhbar_enfejari* (Persian for "Explosive News"), still visible on Telegram (created on June 25, 2025) and Ble.ir (a local Iranian platform).

The **rebrand to "Explosive Media" took place between January and April 2026** (Facebook Jan 1, Instagram and Threads Feb 1, X Mar 10, TikTok Mar 12, Rumble Mar 30, Bluesky Apr 20), with a **striking language switch from Persian to English on Telegram on March 22, 2026**. This change of identity signals a **strategic shift** toward a Western

audience. At the same time (April 2026), calls for donations began to appear in English, via cryptocurrencies, and the profile of the donors identified on-chain (KYC-verified payers using Binance, OKX or Robinhood from Western or Asian jurisdictions) confirms the change in audience.

**Three ProtonMail addresses** (.me, .com, .ch) registered **between July and December 2024 bear the entity's name** (more than a year before the public rebrand, and more than nine months before the BTC donation wallet went live on April 15, 2026). The choice of ProtonMail (VPN service access, end-to-end encryption, Swiss jurisdiction, anonymous sign-up) potentially indicates that the communication infrastructure was **prepared in advance** for the campaign's activation.

**This operational rigor is not consistent across Explosive Media's infrastructure.** While the actor is disciplined in some respects, it completely neglects security on the cryptocurrency side of its finances. In practice, it publicly posts its receiving addresses without ever rotating them, which makes all of its transactions traceable. It also uses a mainstream wallet with no advanced protection. Finally, it converts its cryptocurrency into fiat through exchanges (Upbit, which requires identity verification tied to the Korean banking system, and HTX) without trying to cover its tracks: it uses no transaction-mixing tools (CoinJoin, mixers), no anonymizing transfers between blockchains (cross-chain bridges), and no other mechanism to conceal the origin or destination of the funds.

#### 3.1.1.2 Inconsistent declared locations and circumvention infrastructure

The platform places Explosive Media's X account in Iran, whereas TikTok places it in the Netherlands, which points to the **likely use of geographic circumvention infrastructure (VPNs, proxies)**. This supports the hypothesis of an actor operating from Iran while projecting false locations to get around platform rules.

The same pattern applies to the financial side. The main cash-out route goes to **Upbit (47% of outflows), which is subject to South Korea's *real-name banking* system** (a strict, mandatory link between the exchange account and a named Korean bank account). This is **strongly at odds with the account holder residing in Iran**, and necessarily implies either a **Korean nominee**, **VPN/proxy access to get around Upbit's geographic controls**, or an **operational relay in South Korea** working on behalf of the Iranian actor.

#### 3.1.1.3 Interest in Nostr: a potential boost to digital resilience

The replies under the donation appeal post show that the **group is explicitly interested in the Nostr protocol**.




Post by @EhrmannFrank raising the possibility of sharing the actor's media via Nostr, X, April 15, 2026

This decentralized protocol, built on a client-relay architecture and cryptographic key-pair authentication, makes any centralized takedown of content technically difficult. If adopted, it would allow the group to **store its media output durably** while redistributing it through third-party relays acting as passive amplifiers, **without depending on a centralized platform that can moderate it**.

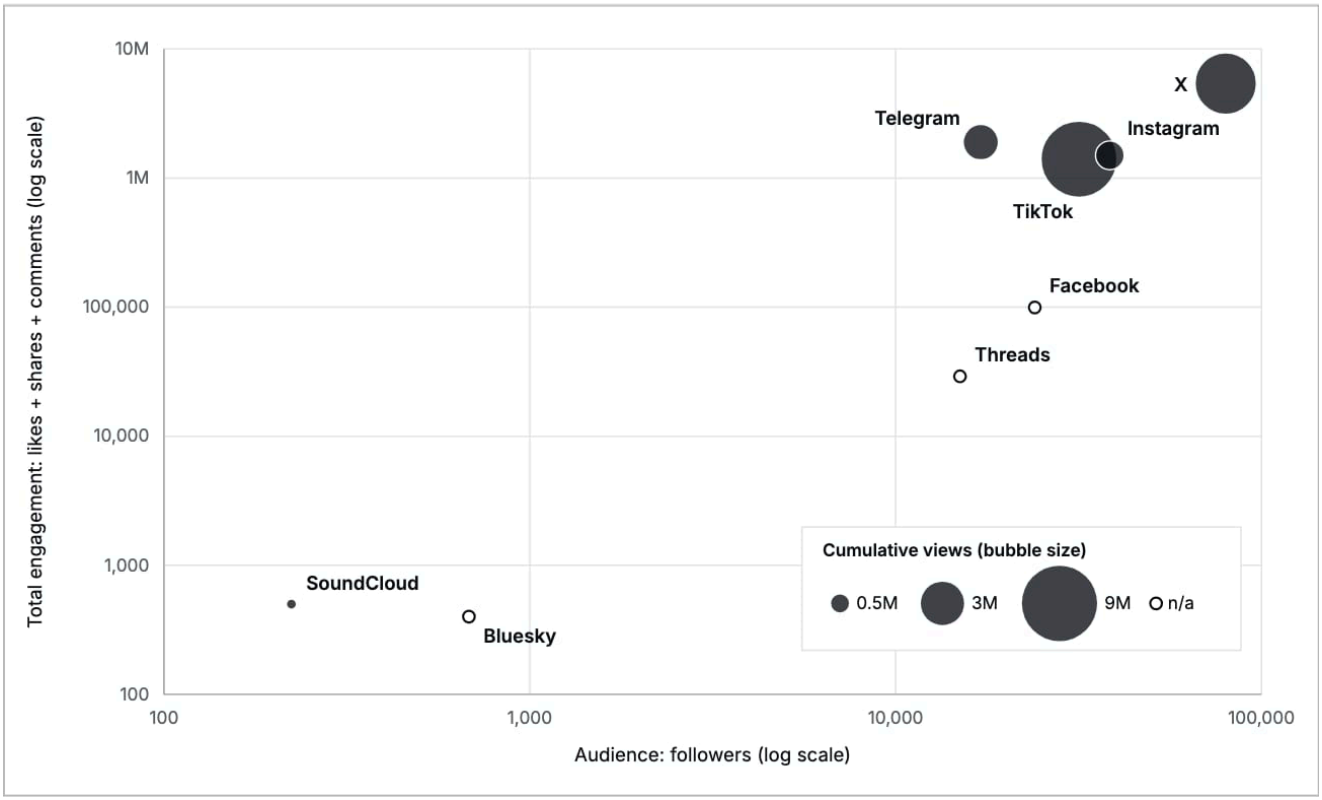
If confirmed, this move would **further increase the campaign's digital resilience**, adding to the redundancy already seen in its YouTube setup and its spread across multiple platforms.

In addition, **Nostr is natively integrated with the Bitcoin/Lightning Network ecosystem**, which could eventually **bring the crypto monetization infrastructure and the distribution infrastructure together** within a single decentralized protocol. This weak signal is a potential development worth monitoring as an indicator of how **the campaign and its main actor's methods** are evolving.

### 3.1.2 Activity and audience impact

Explosive Media thus runs a **multi-platform setup of fourteen official accounts** spanning all the major Western ecosystems (X, Meta, TikTok, YouTube), secondary Western platforms (Threads, Bluesky, Pinterest, Rumble, UpScrolled), messaging and broadcast channels (Telegram), music platforms (Spotify, SoundCloud, Apple Music) and **Ble.ir, an Iranian microblogging platform**. Together, the accounts total **about 282,000 followers**, **more than 20 million views** and **more than 10 million engagements** (likes, shares, comments), figures that place the actor in the **influencer** category.

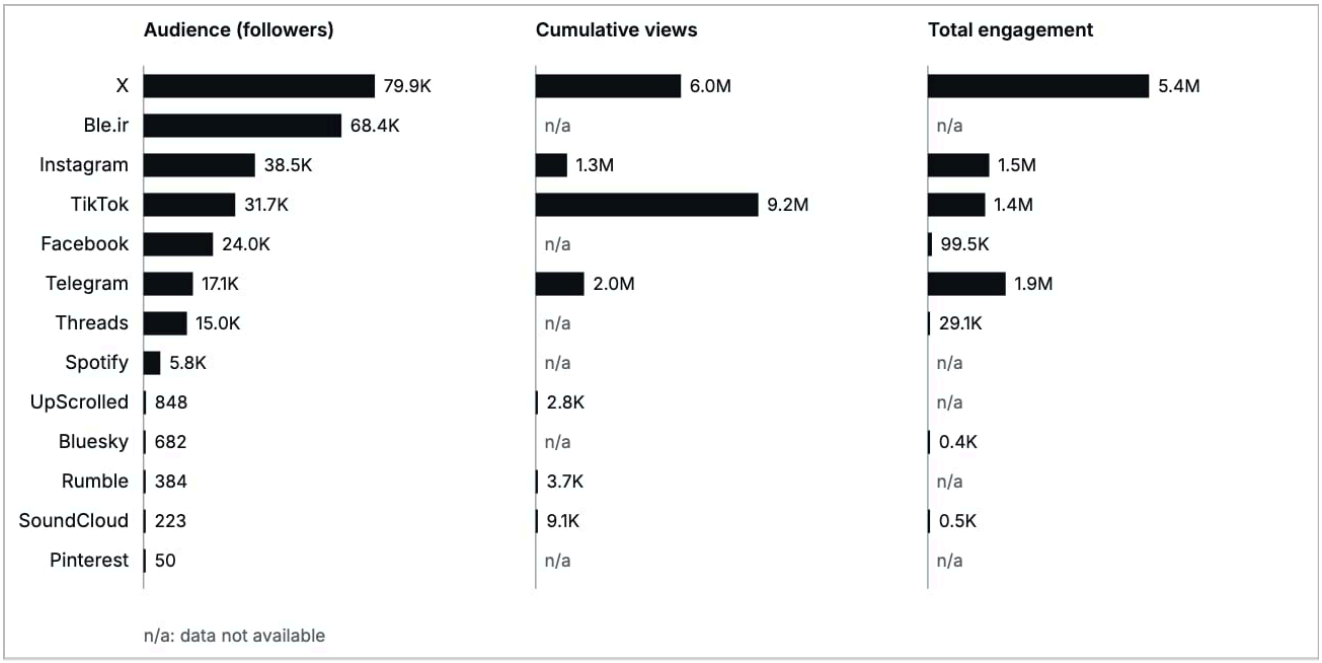
Multi-platform portfolio map. Bubble size ∝ view volume




Mapping the accounts reveals a **core of five platforms that account for most of the impact**: X (79.9K followers, 6M views, 5.4M engagements), Instagram (38.5K / 1.3M / 1.5M), TikTok (31.7K / **9.2M views**, the highest view count / 1.4M), Telegram (17.1K / 2M / **1.9M engagements**, the highest engagement-to-audience ratio in the setup) and Facebook (24K / 99.5K engagements).

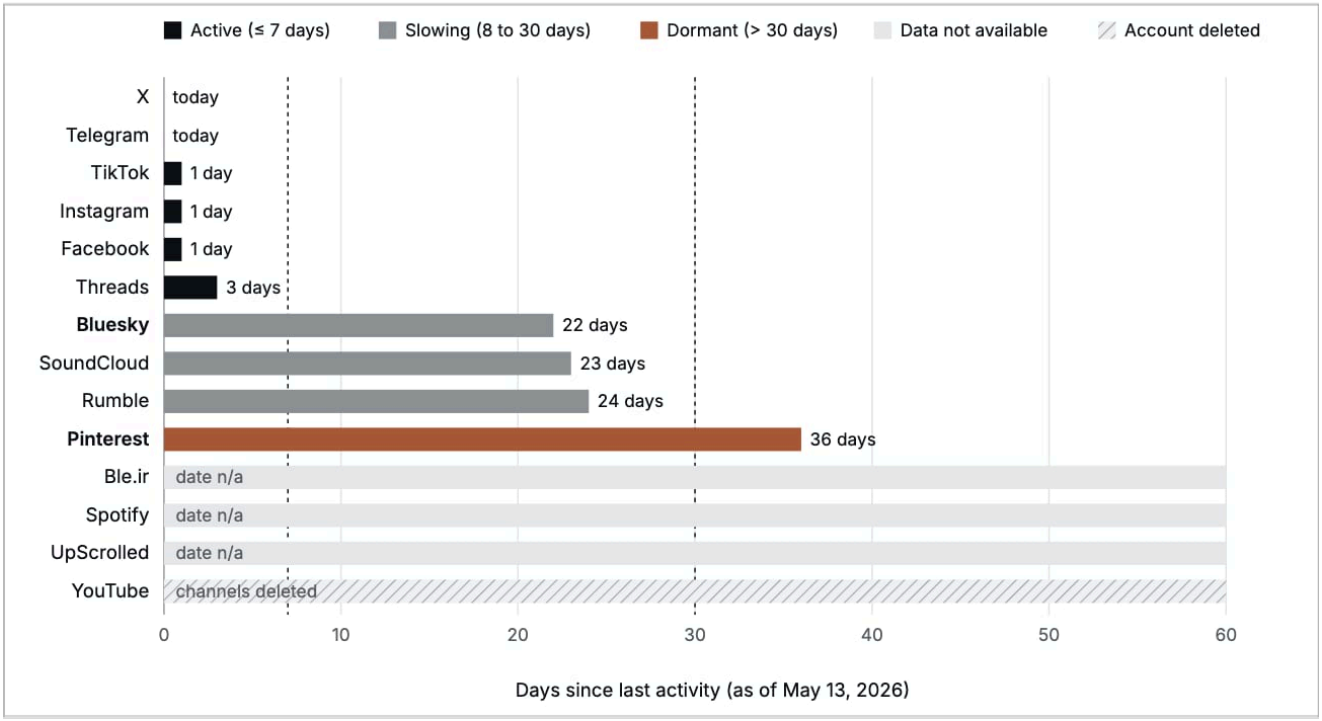
**X** serves as the **lead platform**, a status reinforced by the **platform's verification of the account since March 31, 2026**, which boosts the account's perceived credibility and authority in recommendation algorithms. **TikTok** acts as the **virality platform** (1.5 times as many views as X with half the audience), while **Telegram** serves as a **retention platform with strong engagement** (an engagement-to-follower ratio of **111**, unmatched by any other account). Threads (15K), Ble.ir (68.4K) and Spotify (5.8K followers but 38.4K monthly listeners) form a **second tier of accounts** that serve as relays and maintain a presence. The remaining accounts (Rumble, Pinterest, UpScrolled, SoundCloud, Bluesky) act as **reserve or redundancy accounts** with very small audiences.

Comparison of metrics by platform




Comparing account metrics across platforms shows that **audience and engagement are not correlated**. For example, the **Telegram account clearly outperforms**: with an audience 4.6 times smaller than that of X, it generates engagement equal to 35% of X's, reflecting a **highly mobilized community (typical of the platform)**. On the audio side, **Spotify shows notable impact**: only 5.8K followers, but **38,400 monthly listeners** and one track peaking at **208,500 plays**, with **listening concentrated in the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and the United States**. This English-speaking footprint contrasts with the presence on Ble.ir and **confirms the campaign's international ambitions**.

Last activity by platform




The timeline of latest activity (as of May 13, 2026) shows **daily activity**: **six platforms posted within the last three days** (X, Telegram, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook and Threads), pointing to an **industrial and probably coordinated production pace** on the core platforms. Conversely, **the secondary platforms have slowed down**: Bluesky (22 days),

SoundCloud (23 days), Rumble (24 days) and, above all, **Pinterest, which has gone dormant (36 days)**.

Finally, several signals **point to a structured influence operation**. First, the active use of **"trend" mechanisms on Bluesky, inviting the audience to reuse the music,** shows a **participatory amplification strategy**. Second, **the combination of Spotify (original music), TikTok (highest view volume) and calls for remixes on Bluesky** suggests a **production-distribution-reappropriation loop** familiar from influence playbooks.

### 3.1.3 Links to the Iranian state apparatus

The evidence linking *Explosive Media* to the Iranian state apparatus is both direct and circumstantial, and taken together it forms a converging body of evidence.

Explosive Media's first YouTube and Telegram content consisted of to-camera videos of a young Iranian man, soon joined by a young woman, commenting on Iranian and international politics in Persian. The same set elements (LED lighting in the colors of the Iranian flag, typical of the outlet's early videos) appear in the BBC interview with a certain "*Mr Explosive*," whose face was blurred and whose identity was withheld.




Screenshots of the BBC interview with "*Mr Explosive*" published on April 12, 2026, and of one of Explosive Media's first videos posted on Telegram (2025)

The main figure in the outlet's early videos also appears in photos dated January 3, 2024. These images were published in an article on the Iranian website of the Hozeh Honari Satire Bureau (دفتر طنز حوزه هنری) about the fourth session of a satirical writing gathering for young people ("طنزخوانه") that the bureau organized. The bureau is a government-affiliated Iranian cultural institution dedicated to promoting satirical literature. It supports young writers through workshops and writing events.



Screenshots of the main figure in Explosive Media's early videos (2025) and a photo of him at the Satire Bureau event (January 2024)

In every interview given to Western media since March 2026, the organization denied any dependence on the Iranian government, describing itself as nothing more than an anonymous team of students with a background in social activism. But the most explicit admission comes from "*Mr Explosive*" himself: in Instagram messages sent before his BBC interview, he said he had been "directly commissioned for multiple projects by Iranian officials." In the BBC interview, he confirmed this relationship, saying it was "honourable to work for the homeland," and acknowledged having "journalist internet" access granted by the Iranian government. That last point matters: under Iran's strict internet censorship, unfiltered access to Western platforms is a privilege granted by the state and reserved for actors approved by the authorities.

Circumstantial evidence reinforces this attribution: the production pace (about 24 hours after an event), which is hard to reconcile with small-scale resources, implies funding or infrastructure supplied from outside, and the prominent coverage of the content by Iranian state-controlled media such as *Press TV* is a potential sign of a link or of institutional endorsement.

While formal attribution to a specific Iranian intelligence body such as the MOIS or the IRGC would be premature, a body of converging evidence supports a highly probable attribution to an actor under Iranian influence or working on Iranian commission.

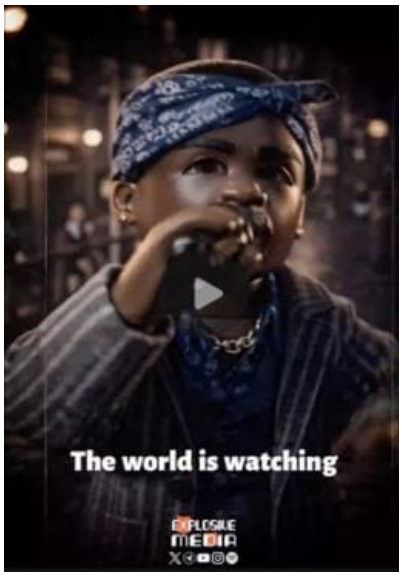
## 3.2 How the ecosystem is organized and behaves

### 3.2.1 Production and pace

*Explosive Media*'s production capacity is documented at about 24 hours from an event to the release of a finished video, including scripting, AI-generated LEGO visuals and sound editing (music, narration). This pace is incompatible with small-scale production by a single person and implies a structured pipeline with a division of labor.

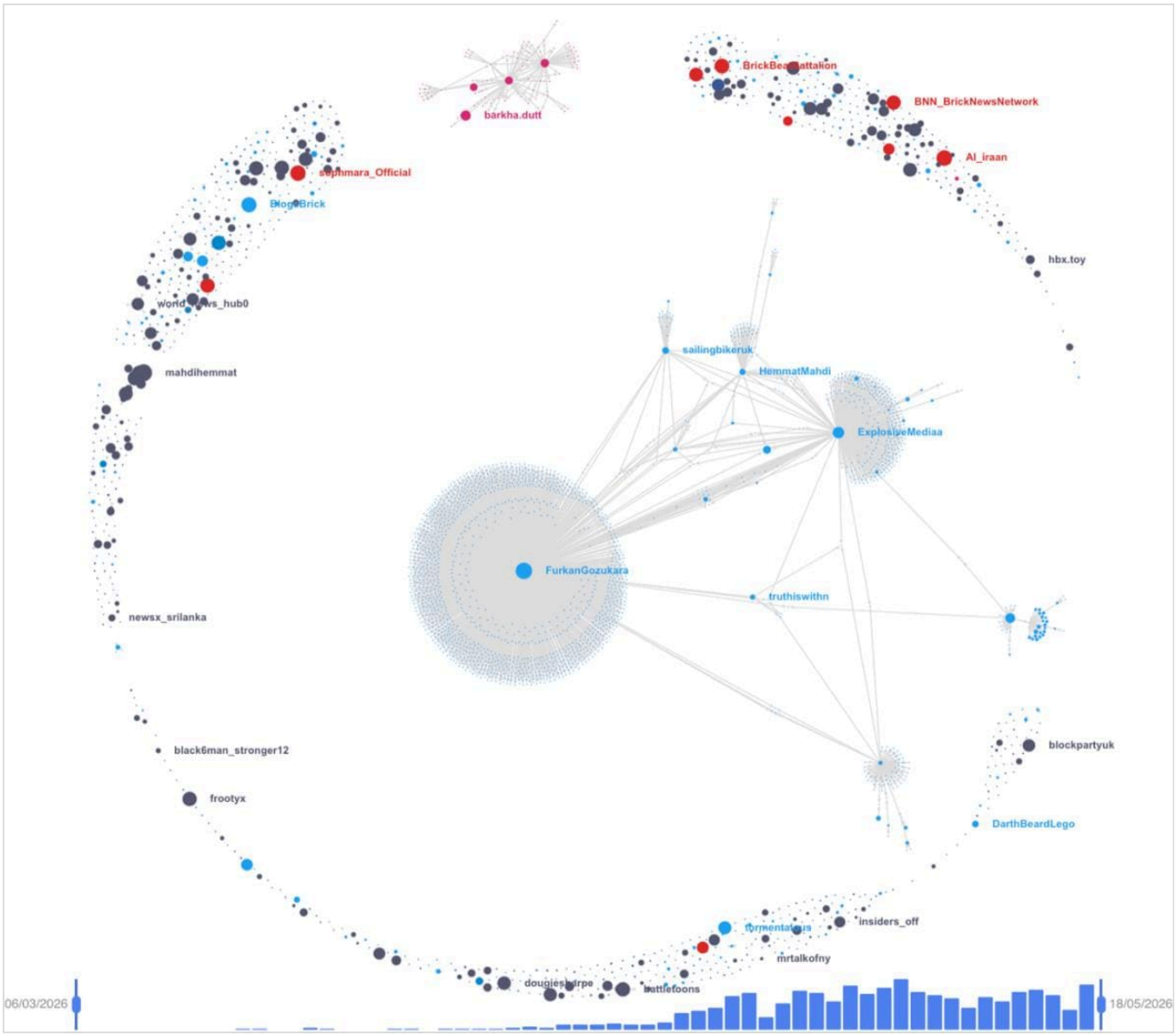
Generative AI acts here as an industrial accelerator: it makes it possible to produce consistent animated sequences without the time and cost of traditional animation, while keeping a recognizable aesthetic that works as a brand signature. This in turn allows many satellite actors to generate and publish their own similar content, in the same style and with the same storytelling.

The LEGO format, combined with Western cultural references (Toy Story, Trump/Netanyahu figures, Epstein, rap), is deliberately calibrated to maximize resonance with English-speaking audiences, while remaining visually accessible to non-English-speaking audiences through the sheer power of the image and the simplicity of the stories.




Music video attacking D. Trump, @explosivemediaa (Facebook), April 20, 2026

### 3.2.2 Types of actors in the ecosystem




Ecosystem of accounts in the Iran-LEGO campaign, March 6 to May 18, 2026. Source: Cobalt. *(Nodes colored by account platform; node size based on cumulative engagement)*

#### 3.2.2.1 Satellite creators: Brick Beat Battalion and Mahdi Hemmat

The YouTube channel *Brick Beat Battalion* operates as a narratively distinct node that complements *Explosive Media*. *Brick Beat Battalion* grounds its narrative in history, for example by referencing the downing of Iran Air Flight 655 (July 3, 1988), the assassination of Qassem Soleimani (January 3, 2020) and the sanctions reimposed under the US maximum-pressure policy (February 2025), presented as milestones in a systematic American aggression against a 7,000-year-old Iranian civilization standing up to an American empire. Its productions combine rap with a narrative of civilizational resistance that seeks legitimacy over the long term rather than through immediate reaction to the news. This makes it a narrative complement to *Explosive Media*, which relies more on urgency and mockery.

The accounts of Mahdi Hemmat, under the name *PersiaBoi Studios*, represent yet another type of profile within the campaign. An Iranian-American based in the United States, he describes himself as a nurse by day and a voice of the resistance by night, and styles himself a "Lego Journalist." His American roots give him a claim to authenticity that neither *Explosive Media* nor *Brick Beat Battalion* can make: he speaks from inside American society, as a native English speaker, from personal accounts active since 2015 (Instagram, 45.6K followers), 2022 (TikTok, 1.1M likes, 77.6K followers) and April 2026 (X, 2.5K followers). His abrupt pivot to pro-Iranian LEGO content on April 4, 2026, simultaneously on TikTok and Instagram and through a YouTube channel created the following day (April 5, 2026) that probably belongs to him (ID: UClCgW4M3IeViwM07tt9XL8Q, 472 subscribers, 38K views), exactly mirrors

the synchronized switch observed among the satellite accounts. The interview he gave RT on April 13, 2026, with his face shown (254,000 views, 11,000 likes, 2,600 shares) is a strong signal that he is integrated into this influence ecosystem.

#### 3.2.2.2 Iranian state media

*Tasnim News Agency* and *Press TV* are the most direct institutional amplifiers. *Press TV*'s reposting of *Explosive Media* content and its interview with one of the members confirm at least tacit editorial coordination between at least one Iranian state outlet and the operation (*5 reposts between March 15 and April 20*, totaling 5,527 likes, 1,853 shares and 197,600 views). The captions on these posts, such as *"Iran's LEGO Animations: Creative Iranian youth portray realities of US-Israeli war on Iran,"* show that *Press TV* does more than relay the videos: it endorses the campaign and the narrative it promotes.




Example of Explosive Media content reposted by Tasnim News (source: X)

#### 3.2.2.3 High-reach influencers: a source of academic legitimacy

The X profile @FurkanGozukara is a central amplifier in the campaign. Furkan Gözükara is a Turkish academic specializing in generative AI (PhD in Computer Engineering, Assistant Professor level, affiliated with Toros University in Mersin and Istanbul Arel University), with an audience of 273.5K followers built on his professional reputation in AI.

Between April 26 and May 10, 2026, he shared 34 pro-Iranian LEGO propaganda videos, covering productions by *Explosive Media*, *Brick Beat Battalion*, *thestoryofthingss*, *LegoGeopolitica369* and *Rock ID* and generating 1,391,366 interactions.

Within the campaign, this profile plays more than the role of an ordinary activist influencer. An AI academic who shares AI-generated propaganda at scale lends it scientific legitimacy, whether unwittingly or deliberately: his audience appears to mix activists and tech enthusiasts who consume this content as "innovative AI satire" without questioning its substance. His particular role as a bridge between X and the YouTube channels increases the visibility of the creators' content.

#### 3.2.2.4 The anti-imperialist left and Western crossover

Barkha Dutt's interview with the *Explosive Media* team (@BDUTT, 688 likes, 165 reposts, more than 123,000 views) once again provides journalistic cover. A leading figure in anti-imperialist Indian journalism, Dutt gives the campaign editorial legitimacy that opens the door to "Global South" audiences: a public heavily mobilized around US imperialism and Palestinian resistance. This type of amplifier strips away the state propaganda label: the content is presented as a creative expression of legitimate resistance, vouched for by an independent journalist.

The account @YourBlueChannel (a US influencer who identifies as "Democratic/Progressive/Liberal" and has been resharing the content since April 19, 2026) illustrates the spread to Western progressive audiences who share the anti-Trump framing without identifying with Iran. This type of amplifier lets Iranian propaganda reach audiences that would reject content clearly labeled as such, by slipping into information feeds focused on US politics.

#### 3.2.2.5 Russian amplifiers and international convergence

The involvement of Russian state media is one of the operation's key signals in terms of international distribution. RT's X account (@RT_com) reposted its first piece of this kind on June 27, 2025: a *Fars News* video titled "Iran declares VICTORY over Israel in LEGO-style war video," which drew 41,300 views. After a period of silence, the outlet reposted content from PersiaBoi (Mahdi Hemmat) on April 13, 2026, and content bearing the *Explosive Media* logo on March 8, 2026 (172,000 views, 6,000 likes, 1,900 shares), then stepped up its activity on the topic with several posts a week, and at times daily. *Sputnik International*, on X (@SputnikInt) and Telegram (t.me/SputnikInt), has also been amplifying *Akhbar Enfejari* content since March 27, 2026 (16,000 views, 470 likes on X).

RT's timeline is telling: its first repost (June 2025) predates the Iranian industrialization wave, showing Russian media's willingness to capitalize on and amplify the format before it had even become more structured. This early interest may point to active monitoring for exploitable anti-American content, rather than prior coordination with the Iranian team.

This convergence of anti-American narratives deepened starting in early May 2026, when the same YouTube channels that had until then posted only pro-Iranian content began publishing pro-Russian, pro-Chinese and pro-North Korean content: @BNN_BrickNewsNetwork (2.35 million views), @KashMusikFanMadeMusic, @sophmara_Official and @creedlow-fanmademusic. This development signals either active infrastructure pooling among aligned state influence apparatuses, or the adoption of a shared doctrine for exploiting the LEGO/AI format.

### 3.2.3 A resilient multi-platform architecture and Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior (CIB)

**The campaign's account architecture shows multi-platform resilience planned in advance.** The main channel @explosivemediaaa was blocked on YouTube in March 2026, followed by the backup channel @Explosive_News in April 2026. Replacement accounts (@explosivemediaa_backup, @explosive_news and potentially @AI_iraan) were activated immediately after these blocks. These accounts appeared to have been prepared in advance, indicating that ways around moderation had been planned ahead. The same redundancy rationale also explains the use of more permissive platforms: a Rumble account was created as early as March 30, 2026, before the first suspensions.

**Furthermore, the deliberate scattering of the digital footprint across niche networks** (Pinterest (about 50 followers), UpScrolled, Bluesky, Rumble) and across platforms with different formats (Spotify, SoundCloud, Apple Music, Substack) **has a twofold effect**: **maximizing the number of indexable footprints for search and overall visibility, while spreading the risk of censorship**.

**Keeping Ble.ir active under the original handle @akhbarenfejari preserves a channel dedicated to Iranian audiences**, while centralizing links through Linktree and Lnk.Bio, aggregators associated with content creators, makes the whole setup look like a media outlet rather than a clandestine operator.

Source and amplifier accounts in the ecosystem of pro-Iranian, AI-generated LEGO-style propaganda that show signs of CIB (non-exhaustive):

| ACCOUNT | PLATFORM | STATUS | CIB SIGNAL |
|---|---|---|---|
| **@ExplosiveMediaa** | Multiple (8+, see digital footprint) | Active | Hub account, verified on X since Mar 31, 2026 |
| **@explosivemediaa_backup** | Instagram | Active | Pre-positioned backup, post-suspension |
| **@explosive__news** | Instagram | Active | Workaround variant |
| **@Explosive_News** | YouTube | Post-suspension | Resilience relay |
| **@IranLegoDaily** | YouTube | Active | Thematic relay |
| **@AI_iraan** | YouTube | Active | Dormant (created Jan 10, 2025), activated Apr 2, 2026; 3 videos, 1.89M views |
| **@BNN_BrickNewsNetwork** | YouTube | Active | Created Apr 16, 2026, 2.35M views; pro-Russian switch in May 2026 |

| ACCOUNT | PLATFORM | STATUS | CIB SIGNAL |
|---|---|---|---|
| **@cryptozcloud** | YouTube | Active | Dormant for 4 years, LEGO pivot on Apr 14, 2026 |
| **@Jubinell** | YouTube | Active | Piano channel since 2006 (French-language description), LEGO pivot in April 2026 |
| **@KashMusikFanMadeMusic** | YouTube | Active | Created Apr 18, 2026, 5.67M views, music camouflage |
| **@sophmara_Official** | YouTube | Active | Created Mar 27, 2026, 4.3M views, music camouflage |
| **@creedlow-fanmademusic** | YouTube | Active | Created Apr 5, 2026, 960K views, music camouflage |
| **@MBorchert54292** | X | Inauthentic | Systematically promotes LEGO YouTube content |
| **@sailingbikeruk** | X | Suspicious | 36 coordinated #iranlego comments, <50 views per post |
| **@Tarikdzdz** | X | Suspicious | Created April 2026, German-language descriptions, likely VPN |
| **@RoyaYahyav9966** | X | Suspicious | Systematically promotes pro-Iranian content |
| **@LordWhistleD973** | X | Suspicious | Systematically promotes pro-Iranian content |

**The network of amplifier accounts completes this architecture by adding a layer of artificial amplification. Two categories stand out:**

- **on the one hand, clearly inauthentic accounts run for coordinated promotion**, such as @MBorchert54292 on X, which systematically promotes LEGO videos with no consistent profile, or @Tarikdzdz, created in April 2026 with German-language descriptions and probably using a VPN, revealing an attempt to hide the operator's location;
- **on the other hand, purchased or reactivated channels**, which are more significant, including @cryptozcloud, dormant for four years, with only crypto content, before abruptly pivoting to LEGO content on April 14, 2026, and @Jubinell, a **piano channel active since 2006 with a French-language description** (a potential sign of a strategy to target French-speaking audiences through authentic-looking channels), which made the same pivot at the same time.

The profile of Ndra Frahara (Indonesia, West Java) illustrates another subtype of account. A rock musician on YouTube since 2016 (@Rockidofficial, 85,000 subscribers), he posted his first pro-Iranian LEGO/AI video on March 30, 2026, which quickly drew 424,000 views and 18,000 likes. His secondary channel @darkwaves01 posted a single LEGO video on April 3, 2026, which reached 797,000 views and 26,000 likes: an extraordinary ratio of performance to content that suggests outside amplification. Coordinated cross-posting between his two channels is a technique for multiplying reach from the same production base. A first LEGO/AI-style video on his Instagram account as early as November 28, 2024 (very short, with no reference to Iran) suggests he had already taken up the format. However, his involvement in a coordinated campaign remains uncertain; this may instead be opportunistic amplification.

These abrupt switches are a well-documented influence operation technique: **by inheriting a "clean" account history and real followers, these channels reduce the risk of algorithmic detection while blurring the link to the campaign's central infrastructure.**

**Several additional CIB markers support this analysis: synchronized language across accounts, coordinated posting times in the form of simultaneous cross-posting across platforms, and intensive multilingual hashtag stuffing.** Since April 2026, #iranlego has been used 459 times, #legonews 453 times, #legoanimation 193 times and #explosiveiran 104 times on X, Facebook, Telegram, TikTok, Instagram, Bluesky, Threads and YouTube.

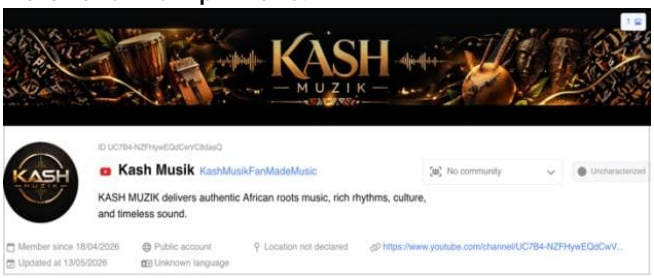
The account @sailingbikeruk alone displays several of these markers: its profile as an ordinary British user with fewer than 50 views per post contrasts with 36 identical comments tagged #iranlego, often posted less than 5 minutes apart, despite near-zero engagement, which makes it a good example of low-profile astroturfing.

| Message | User | | | | Date | Images |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| @sanambna #IranLego | sailingbikeruk | 0 | 0 | 0 | 494 11/04/2026 06:29 | |
| @TomthunkitsMind #IranLego | sailingbikeruk | 0 | 0 | 0 | 63 10/04/2026 12:27 | |
| @alifarhat79 #IranLego | sailingbikeruk | 0 | 0 | 0 | 84 10/04/2026 12:27 | |
| @RyanRozbiani #IranLego | sailingbikeruk | 0 | 0 | 0 | 48 10/04/2026 12:25 | |
| @JOKAQARMY1 #IranLego | sailingbikeruk | 0 | 0 | 0 | 34 10/04/2026 12:24 | |
| @AdameMedia #IranLego | sailingbikeruk | 0 | 0 | 0 | 145 11/04/2026 08:15 | |
| @FurkanGozukara #IranLego | sailingbikeruk | 0 | 0 | 0 | 105 10/04/2026 12:34 | |
| @Paddystinian #IranLego | sailingbikeruk | 0 | 1 | 1 | 87 10/04/2026 12:27 | |
| @21WIRE #IranLego | sailingbikeruk | 0 | 0 | 0 | 82 10/04/2026 12:26 | |
| @ZadeSmith4 #IranLego | sailingbikeruk | 0 | 0 | 0 | 36 10/04/2026 12:25 | |

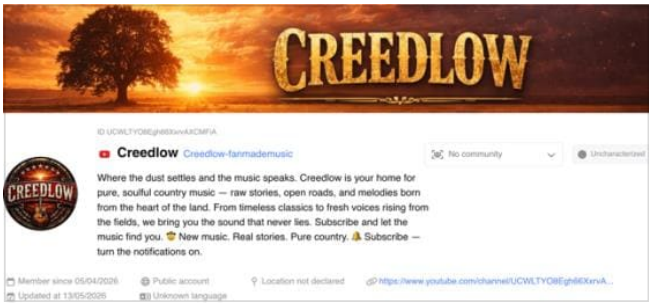
Copy-pasta and hashtag stuffing as part of a content virality strategy, carried out on X by the account @sailingbikeruk (April 10–11, 2026). Source: Cobalt

### 3.2.4 Aesthetic camouflage: "Western music" accounts

**The emergence of YouTube channels posing as Afro, Gospel and American Country music accounts** is another striking feature of the ecosystem under review. The channels @KashMusikFanMadeMusic (5.67 million views), @sophmara_Official (4.3 million views) and @creedlow-fanmademusic (960,000 views) were all created between **late March and mid-April 2026**.

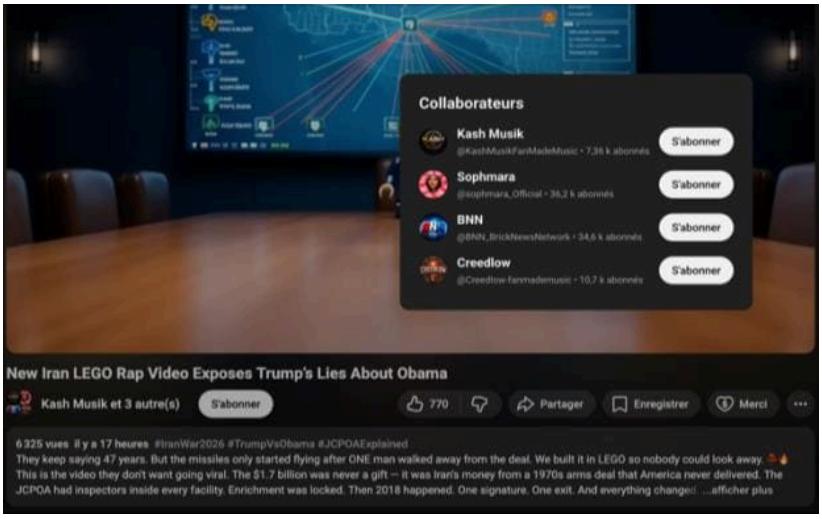



YouTube channel @KashMusikFanMadeMusic. Source: Cobalt




YouTube channel @Creedlow-fanmademusic. Source: Cobalt

**These accounts co-publish the same pro-Iranian LEGO/AI music videos with the @BNN_BrickNewsNetwork account**, already identified in the ecosystem. This **aesthetic and behavioral camouflage** (themed hashtags such as #GospelSongs and #ChristianMusic in the descriptions of propaganda videos) differs from simply reactivating dormant accounts: the aim is not to recycle an existing audience but to **build an appearance of cultural legitimacy**.




Example of a propaganda video cross-posted on YouTube by the accounts @KashMusikFanMadeMusic, @sophmara_Official, @BNN_BrickNewsNetwork and @Creedlow-fanmademusic, May 13, 2026. Source: YouTube

Traditional African music genres, Gospel and Country are generally associated with African, African American and conservative American communities. These audiences are lower-priority targets, or naturally less receptive to pro-Iranian propaganda. This points to a **strategy of bypassing the usual distrust filters and an attempt to break into new algorithmic bubbles**.

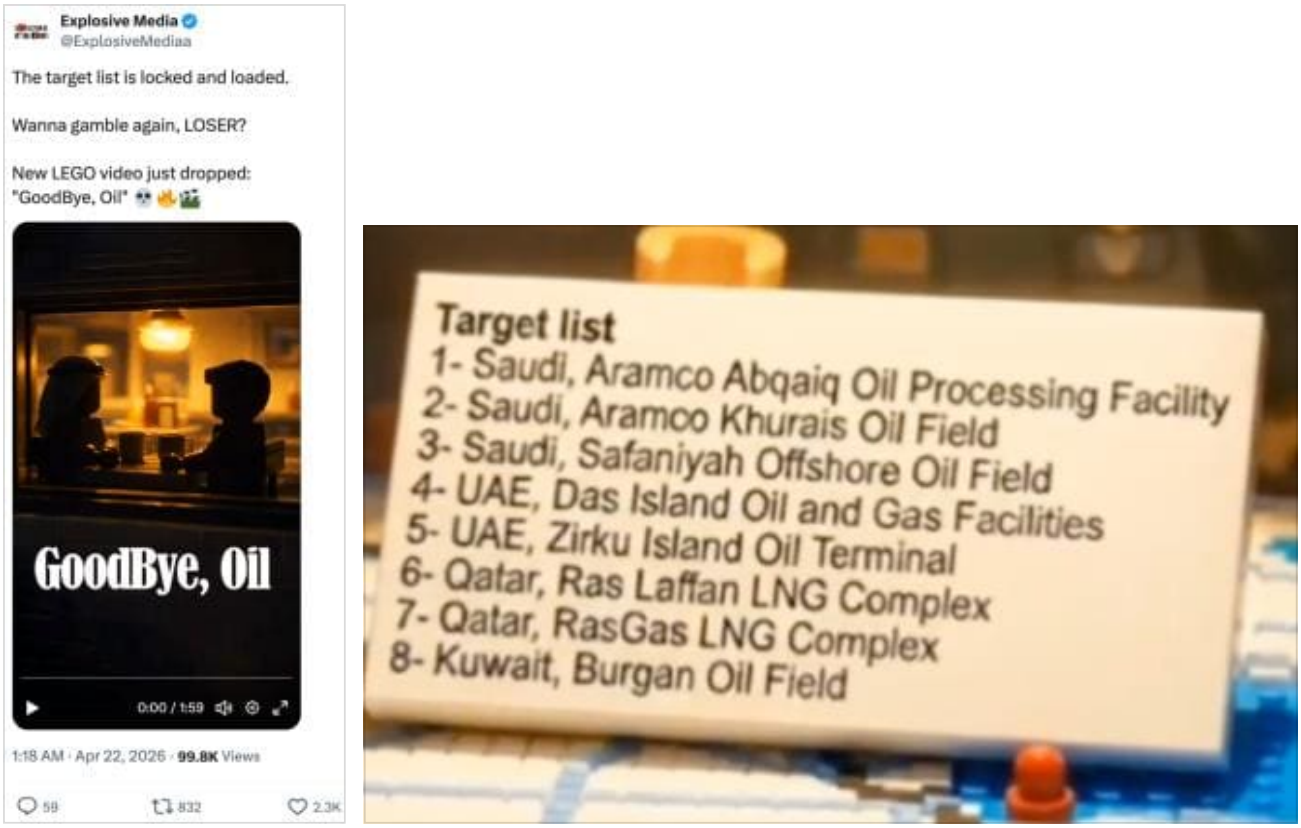
The narrative in these videos is **pro-Iranian but mostly focused on US domestic political issues** (the Epstein files, fentanyl, trust in institutions and so on). The videos speak directly to Americans: in a tone of solidarity, they call on them to “wake up” and rise up against the government.

The **publication in early May 2026 of pro-Russian, pro-Chinese and pro-North Korean content** by these same accounts suggests that this camouflage strategy is not meant to stay limited to promoting Iranian messages but is shifting toward spreading propaganda for a range of aligned actors.

# 4 Narrative mapping

## 4.1 Narrative matrix

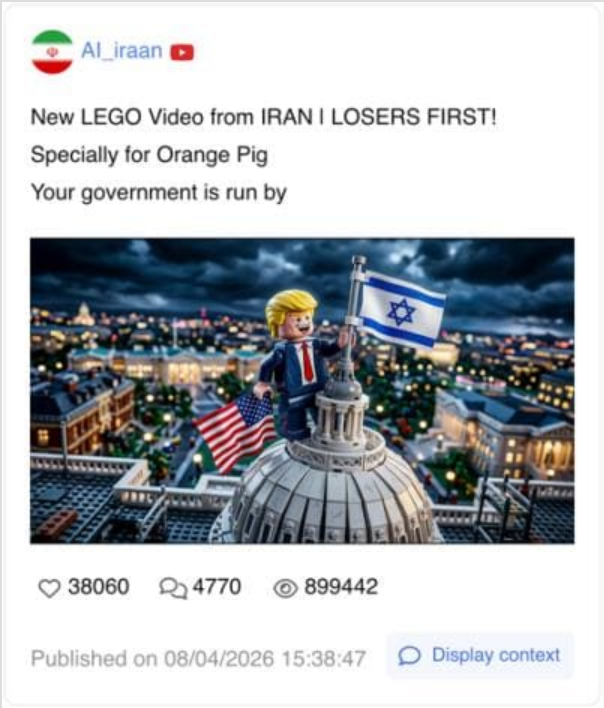
| NARRATIVE | KEY MESSAGE | INFLUENCE GOAL | PRIORITY AUDIENCE |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Glorification of Khamenei / the IRGC** | “Another Khamenei rises” | Personify the regime as an infallible defender | Iranian base, Shia sympathizers |
| **Unity of the Axis of Resistance** | Iran + Hezbollah + Houthis + Hamas standing together and interconnected | Project strength through visual solidarity | Shia audiences, pan-Islamists, anti-imperialists |
| **Anti-Zionist delegitimization** | Israel as an aggressor or a US puppet, suffering symbolic defeat | Frame the conflict as a moral asymmetry | Global South, Muslim diaspora, radical left |
| **Mockery of the US / Trump** | Trump & Netanyahu as clumsy figures (Epstein, ridicule) | Discredit through humor and meme culture | Western youth, isolationists, conspiracy theorists |
| **Aesthetics of martyrdom** | Soleimani and Nasrallah as an eternal inspiration | Turn loss into a rallying legacy | Shia and pro-resistance activist bases |
| **Military and ballistic prowess** | Iranian strikes presented as precise defensive triumphs | Counter narratives of Iranian military weakness | National pride, international deterrence |
| **Victimhood and the right to deterrence** | Iran repeatedly attacked but resilient | Justify retaliation, win international sympathy | Moderate international opinion |
| **Pan-Islamic solidarity** | Sunni-Shia unity against Western “evil” | Broaden the base beyond Shia Islam | Muslim audiences worldwide |
| **Civilization vs. short-lived empire** | 7,000 years of Iranian civilization against a temporary American empire | Legitimize Iran through history, delegitimize the United States through longevity | Iranian nationalists, Global South sympathizers |
| **Weaponized historical grievances** | Flight 655, the JCPOA, the Soleimani assassination, sanctions as proof of aggression | Build a narrative continuity of legitimate victimhood | Western progressive audiences, international opinion |
| **Call for an American awakening** | Direct appeal to Americans against their own institutions | Internal subversion, exploiting US political divisions | US progressives, isolationists, anti-establishment audiences |
| **Explicit strategic threat** | Lists of oil targets in the Gulf | Signal coercive capability, put pressure on regional allies | US regional partners, energy markets |




Screenshots of the post and the video published by @ExplosiveMediaa on April 22, 2026

**Example 1: threats against Gulf oil facilities (@ExplosiveMediaa, April 22, 2026).** This post, published simultaneously on X, TikTok, Instagram and Telegram, goes beyond conventional narrative propaganda and crosses into explicit strategic threats, with a geolocated list of target facilities in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait. Spreading such a list through an account that is nominally a "content creator" shows how porous the line is between an influence operation and signaling coercive capability: the message is aimed at both public opinion and regional governments, with a potential deterrent effect on US partners in the Gulf. This type of content marks a turning point in the operation's primary function, which now includes a coercive dimension. The video also highlights past "military successes": Saudi Aramco's Abqaiq and Khurais sites had been hit on April 7 and 8, 2026. In Qatar, the **Ras Laffan** site, targeted by missile and drone attacks attributed to Iran on March 2 and 18, 2026, suffered significant damage that halted production.

**Example 2: AI-generated anti-Trump rap song (@AI_iraan, April 8, 2026).** With 725,000 views, 34,300 likes and 4,400 comments, this video is the most viral production documented in the corpus. By addressing Trump directly and casting him as a tyrant in his own country, it precisely exploits America's political divide, using a framing likely to resonate with progressive US audiences who have no direct connection to Iran. The profile of the host channel (created on January 10, 2025, inactive until April 2, 2026, then devoted exclusively to LEGO propaganda, with three videos totaling 1.89 million views) is one of the clearest signs of influence operation infrastructure in the corpus. The channel published no calibration content and went through no audience-building phase: it went straight from dormancy to producing propaganda.




Screenshot of the video published by @AI_iraan on April 8, 2026.
Source: Cobalt

**Example 3: post-ceasefire military preparation video (April 21, 2026).** This video, cross-posted simultaneously on five channels (Facebook, X, Instagram (2), TikTok, Telegram), depicts Iranian forces preparing to resume strikes. The simultaneous release confirms the existence of a coordinated publishing protocol and illustrates the strategic deterrence messaging role that the operation plays beyond mere narrative influence.

| ACCOUNT | NETWORK | SHARES | LIKES | COMMENTS | VIEWS | DATE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **ExplosiveMediaa** | Facebook | 1,633 | 13,851 | 307 | 0 | Apr 21, 2026, 19:31 |
| **ExplosiveMediaa** | X | 2,262 | 8,973 | 133 | 237,467 | Apr 21, 2026, 19:09 |
| **explosivemedia** | Telegram | 0 | 0 | 0 | 35,500 | Apr 21, 2026, 19:56 |
| **explosivemedia.tiktok** | TikTok | 50 | 951 | 28 | 14,163 | Apr 21, 2026, 19:59 |
| **explosivemediaa_backup** | Instagram | 0 | 487 | 28 | 2,617 | Apr 21, 2026, 19:23 |
| **explosivemediaa** | Instagram | 0 | 8,537 | 389 | 54,332 | Apr 21, 2026, 19:16 |

Cross-network posting of the Explosive Media video on April 21, 2026. Source: Cobalt

## 4.2 The cognitive effects of the format

**Using LEGO imagery** for geopolitical propaganda **is not an Iranian innovation**. In **2020, *New China TV* (a state outlet) released *"Once Upon a Virus,"*** a LEGO-animated video (2.3 million views on YouTube) that denounced the US handling of Covid-19 and praised China's warnings and response. Technically basic and made without generative AI, **this production nonetheless reflects the same idea: the LEGO aesthetic lowers the audience's critical defenses and maximizes reach in Western digital spaces**. The Iranian campaign of 2025–2026 can be seen as a direct refinement of this model: by adding generative AI, musical styles and Western cultural references, it industrializes and perfects a formula whose viral potential had been demonstrated six years earlier.

**The choice of the LEGO aesthetic is the campaign's central cognitive mechanism.** By pairing propaganda messages with childlike, playful and globally recognized imagery, the campaign **defuses emotional reactions**. Viewers who first see a humorous animated clip approach it as entertainment rather than political information. The **ideological message**

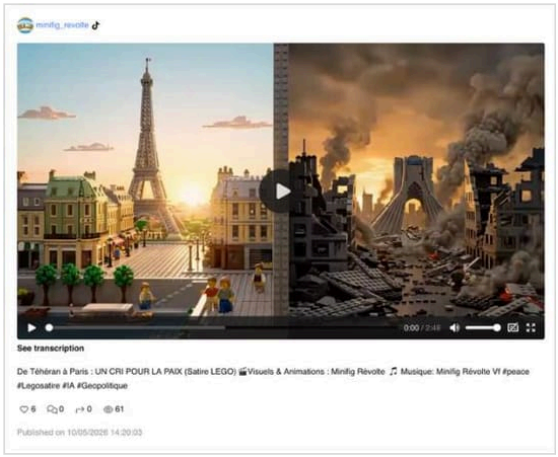
**therefore bypasses the critical defenses that content clearly identified as propaganda usually triggers**. Mr Explosive himself explicitly acknowledges this mechanism: in his BBC interview (published April 12, 2026), he explains the aesthetic choice by describing LEGO as "a world language."

**The format shifts attention to form (LEGO, AI, humor, rap) and away from the human consequences of war**, contributing to an apparent depoliticization of the content that makes it easier for non-activist audiences to share. **The combination of AI, LEGO and Western cultural references** (Trump, Toy Story, rap, pop, country, Western dress codes) **illustrates a form of cognitive warfare that exploits internal divisions in the United States**: anti-Trump American progressives can consume and share the content without realizing that they are relaying Iranian state propaganda.

**This mechanism is reinforced by the growing imitation of the format by third parties: activists and opportunistic content creators.** These copies **create an ecosystem of secondary content that effectively obscures the trail back to the original source** and makes each instance exponentially harder to attribute. This gives Explosive Media a lasting operational benefit, even without explicit coordination with the imitators.

## 4.3 Language breakdown

The **campaign is overwhelmingly in English** (84.6% of the messages collected in the dataset), confirming that its **main target is not Iran's domestic audience but Western digital spaces** and the global English-speaking public. The **Persian-language content** (1% of the dataset) serves to **maintain symbolic legitimacy at home**. The emergence of **at least one French-language account, @minifig_révolte** (TikTok and YouTube (channel blocked), with a declared location in Côte d'Ivoire), is a weak signal of a possible geographic spread of the phenomenon to French-speaking audiences. The creation of this type of account appears mainly opportunistic, potentially driven by the engagement observed on social media, by coverage in French media (*Franceinfo*, *Le Monde*, etc.) and by the large French- and Arabic-speaking diaspora communities from North and West Africa.




TikTok post by the French-language account @minifig_revolte, May 10, 2026. Source: Cobalt