

SPECIAL REPORT: Iranian TikTok Campaign Seeks to Shape War Perceptions Using AI

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Iranian TikTok Campaign Seeks to Shape War Perceptions Using AI

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On Thursday, 12 JUNE 2025, Israel launched an operation targeting Iranian nuclear facilities and military assets. In response, Iran initiated missile and drone attacks against Israel, though with limited success compared to the scale and precision of the Israeli offensive. In response, Iran and its affiliates have escalated their efforts in the information domain. This includes a surge in online propaganda, misinformation, coordinated influence operations, cyber-warfare and AI-generated disinformation—strategically deployed to shape public perception and project strength.



Figure 1: Areas of Activities - Iran's Information Warfare

This report highlights a segment of Iran's information warfare campaign since the war erupted, focusing on the use of AI-generated content distributed via TikTok.

Why TikTok?

TikTok has emerged as a central platform in Iran's disinformation campaign, due to its global reach, popularity among younger audiences, and algorithmic preference for emotionally engaging, visual content. These features enable rapid dissemination of AI-generated propaganda well beyond the immediate follower base.

The campaign's multilingual nature—spanning Farsi, Arabic, Hebrew, English, and multiple East Asian languages—reflects a calculated strategy to influence various target audiences. Arabic and Farsi content often promotes regional solidarity and anti-Israel sentiment; Hebrew-language videos focus on psychological pressure within Israel; English content appeals to global public opinion; and East Asian language material may aim to broaden exposure or exploit trending narratives in those regions.

Five Pro-Iranian Narratives on TikTok using AI

There are five main categories of AI-generated content distributed by Iran and pro-Iranian accounts in recent days via TikTok:



Figure 2: Five main categories of AI-generated content distributed by Iran and pro-Iranian accounts on TikTok

The first category of TikTok videos seeks to fabricate a perception of widespread destruction across Israeli cities. By leveraging generative AI tools, pro-Iranian actors manipulate ordinary street images, transforming them into scenes of apparent devastation. For example, one circulated video presents a "before and after" sequence of an Israeli street, falsely implying heavy bombardment.

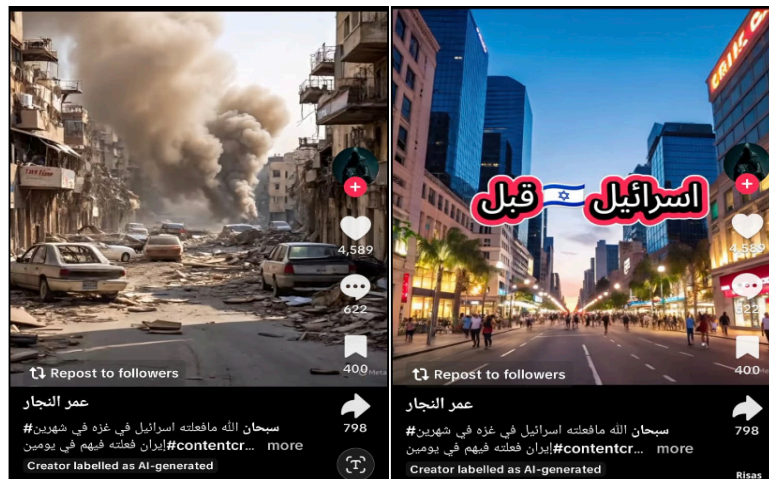


Image: AI post on TikTok of "before" and "after" sequence of an Israeli street, falsely implying heavy bombardment.

Other videos target national symbols and critical infrastructure, including fabricated footage of Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport allegedly struck by Iranian missiles. In one such video, an EL AL aircraft is shown in flames—an entirely artificial creation designed to erode public confidence and amplify the perceived success of Iranian military capabilities.

A second trend involves the use of AI-generated content to ridicule Israeli leadership while glorifying Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei. These videos frequently show scenes featuring Khamenei alongside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. President Donald Trump, portraying scenarios in which Khamenei symbolically humiliates or dominates one or both of the figures. This narrative seeks to create an image of Iranian strength and moral superiority while discrediting Israel and its allies in the eyes of regional and global audiences.



Image: Examples of AI posts on TikTok seemingly intending to ridicule Israeli and American leadership

A third category of AI-generated videos is designed to project Iranian dominance over Israel.

This includes footage of military preparations for missile launches. Or for example, symbolic imagery portraying Iran as a powerful lion looking down over a weakened Israel.

Such content seeks to enhance the perception of Iranian military strength, technological sophistication, and psychological superiority—both for domestic audiences and regional supporters.

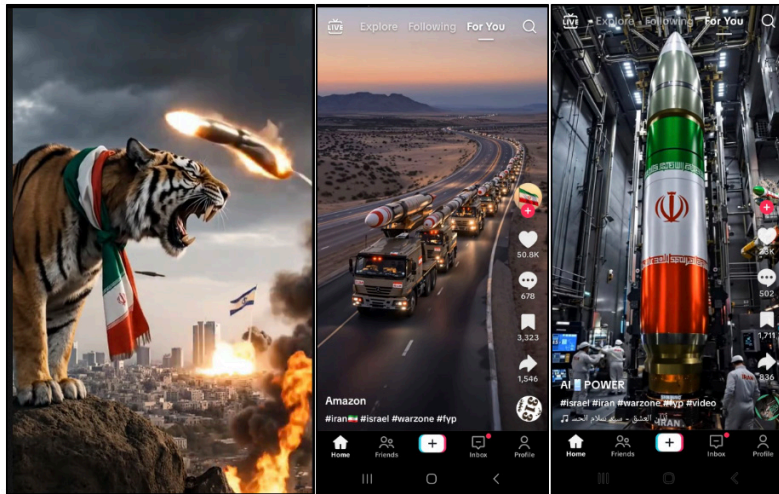


Image: Examples of AI posts on TikTok designed to project Iranian dominance over Israel

A fourth trend involves daily videos that allegedly show Iranian missile or aircraft attacks on Israeli targets. These videos are often posted under the recurring title "Iran Attacks Israel Today," presenting fictional assaults purportedly occurring each day since the outbreak of the war.

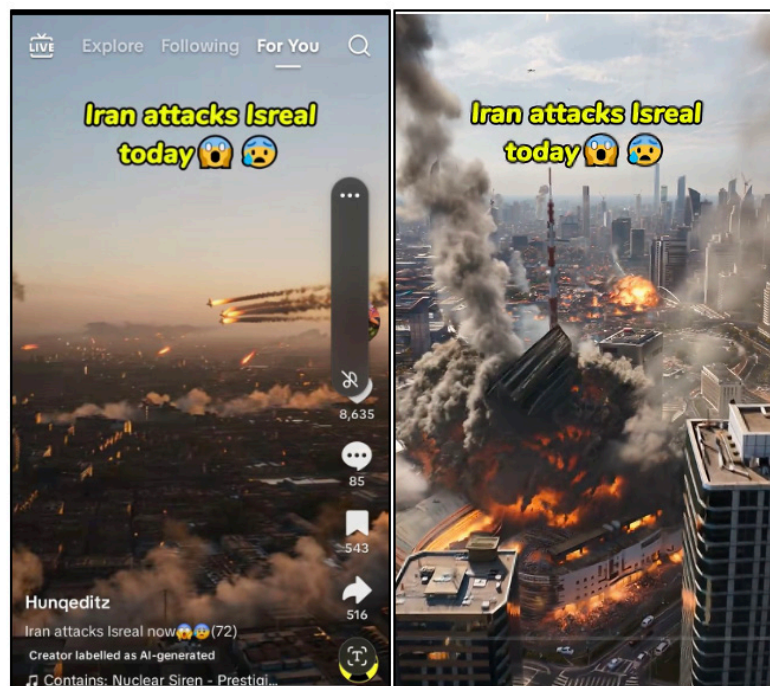


Image: Examples of AI posts on TikTok allegedly show Iranian missile or aircraft attacks on Israeli targets

A fifth trend involves the exploitation of fake news originating from Iranian sources, which are then "validated" using AI-generated content. One prominent example was a fabricated report claiming that an Israeli aircraft had been shot down by Iran and that a female Israeli Air Force pilot had been captured. To lend credibility to this false claim,

pro-Iranian accounts circulated AI-generated images depicting the alleged incident, illustrating how artificial intelligence is being weaponized to reinforce disinformation and manipulate public perception.

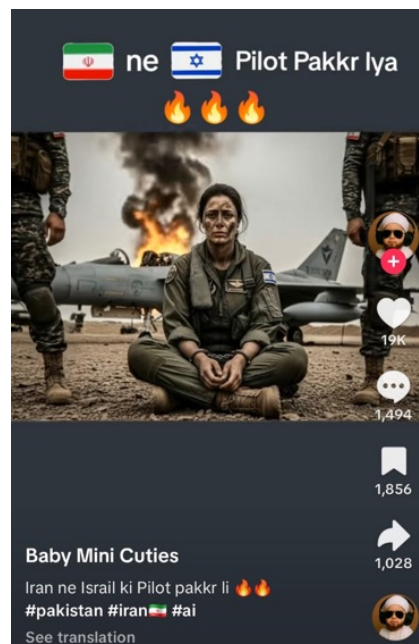


Image: Examples of AI posts on TikTok being used to reinforce false claims; here allegedly female Israeli Air Force pilot had been captured

Conclusion

The Iranian use of AI-generated content in the current conflict represents a strategic leap in both scale and sophistication compared to previous information warfare efforts, including those seen after the 7 OCTOBER 2023 Hamas-led attack. This evolution is driven not only by growing Iranian capabilities but also by the global use of AI tools, which are increasingly developing.

Iran's information operations extend beyond its military proxies to include digital assets (including bots) that operate with or without direct coordination. These actors serve as proxies in cyberspace, executing information warfare across multiple platforms. Despite these digital operations, Iran's traditional proxies have thus far shown limited military involvement on the ground. Most of them remain preoccupied with internal survival and the ongoing rehabilitation of their military capabilities.

A duality in Iranian media strategy has emerged. On one hand, Iran continues to flood platforms such as TikTok with more offensive content as well as conducting a traditional intimidation campaign via state-run media, particularly targeting the United States and Israel. On the other, it appears to have suffered a substantial strategic setback and is now signaling interest in negotiations, a position echoed by its diplomats on traditional platforms. This reflects Iran's desire to initiate negotiations even though it has not been accepted by the United States, as they demand a complete strategic surrender.

Looking ahead, it is likely that Iran will continue to integrate AI into its information

warfare operations—potentially at an even greater scale. AI technologies enable Iran to simulate battlefield victories, amplify disinformation, and manipulate perception at low cost, with minimal expertise and unprecedented speed. In an era of hybrid warfare, perception is power—and Iran is rapidly adapting to that reality.