

RUSSIA RECRUITS YOUNG MIGRANT WOMEN FROM LATIN AMERICA TO BUILD IRANIAN DRONES

BY MARIA RIOFRIO AND MAX LESSER

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Young women are being lured to a remote region of Russia with false promises of high wages and practical education. When they arrive, they are put to work — reportedly in grueling conditions — as part of the Kremlin’s war machine, building drones that Russia uses to attack Ukraine. By putting a stop to this abuse of human rights, the United States has an opportunity to disrupt the supply of weapons that Moscow needs for its war of aggression.

The United States has already imposed sanctions on Russia’s Special Economic Zone Alabuga (SEZ Alabuga), where factories produce Iranian-designed drones. The U.S. Treasury Department has also sanctioned several of SEZ Alabuga’s subsidiaries and associated officials.¹ Nevertheless, Moscow continues to expand its foreign-labor pipeline. After focusing initially on Africa,² Russia is turning to Latin America as a source of labor to boost its production of drones, especially the Geran-2, which is based on the Iranian-designed Shahed-136 kamikaze drone. The Geran-2 is a series of one-way attack drones produced under a license agreement between Russia and Iran. Moscow uses these drones in large-scale barrages against Ukrainian critical infrastructure, defense-industrial sites, and other targets.³ The Alabuga plant, Russia’s main producer of Geran-2 drones, also makes the turbojet-powered Geran-3 and the Gerbera series of drones.⁴ The latter typically serve as decoys.

This memo documents the launch this year of a rapid and coordinated labor recruitment drive targeting women ages 18 to 22 across at least 12 Latin American countries. This campaign is part of Alabuga Start, which presents itself as an international career-development exchange program, offering airfare, housing, health insurance, and Russian-language courses to entice applicants. In reality, the program serves as a pipeline into SEZ Alabuga, 600

1. U.S. Department of the Treasury, Press Release, “On Second Anniversary of Russia’s Further Invasion of Ukraine and Following the Death of Aleksey Navalny, Treasury Sanctions Hundreds of Targets in Russia and Globally,” February 23, 2024. (<https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy2117>)

2. “Russia: Women from Africa recruited via ‘Alabuga Start’ programme on social media to work in weapons factories; incl. cos responses & non-responses,” *Business and Human Rights Resource Center*, November 25, 2024. (<https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/russia-women-from-africa-recruited-via-alabuga-start-programme-on-social-media-to-work-in-weapons-factories-incl-cos-responses-non-responses>)

3. Spencer Faragasso and David Albright, “Youth Exploited for Military Drone Production at the Alabuga Special Economic Zone,” *Institute for Science and International Security*, July 1, 2024. (https://isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/documents/Alabuga_SEZ_Foreign_Outreach_and_Student_Exploitation_Report_July_1_2024.pdf)

4. Anthony Deutsch and Tom Balmforth, “Exclusive: Russia produces kamikaze drone with Chinese engine,” *Reuters*, September 13, 2024. (<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-produces-new-kamikaze-drone-with-chinese-engine-say-european-intel-2024-09-13>)

miles east of Moscow in the Republic of Tatarstan, where recruits reportedly work in harsh conditions assembling the Geran-2 and other drones.⁵ The Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD) has outlined the role of SEZ Alabuga in Russia's domestic drone production and the relationship among Alabuga Start, Alabuga Polytech, and JSC Alabuga.

Alabuga Start's recruitment in Latin America has scaled up rapidly in both scope and sophistication. The program uses social media platforms — including TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, X, Telegram, and RuTube (a Russian video platform) — to drive this expansion, relying on promotional videos generated by artificial intelligence (AI), dedicated regional pages, and influencer partnerships. FDD has identified Alabuga Start's primary recruiter in Latin America, along with local recruiters in Brazil, Mexico, and Bolivia. This memo profiles those individuals and presents a country-by-country review of the program's presence in 13 Latin American countries.

Not only does the Alabuga Start program likely qualify as human trafficking and forced labor, it also feeds Russian aggression in Ukraine.⁶ As part of its drive to defang Moscow, the U.S. government — alongside Europe and other partners and allies — should broaden its sanctions to encompass those who facilitate Alabuga Start's recruiting, including vocational colleges and individual recruiters. Washington should also increase diplomatic engagement with Latin American governments to counter recruitment and should press online platforms to remove accounts involved in these operations. The chance to disrupt Alabuga Start's recruitment networks provides the United States and its partners with a practical way to diminish Russia's defense-industrial output, limit its capacity to wage war, and protect thousands of young women from exploitation.

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5. "Russia: Women from Africa recruited via 'Alabuga Start' programme on social media to work in weapons factories; incl. cos responses & non-responses," *Business and Human Rights Resource Center*, November 25, 2024. (<https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/russia-women-from-africa-recruited-via-alabuga-start-programme-on-social-media-to-work-in-weapons-factories-incl-cos-responses-non-responses>); Spencer Faragasso and David Albright, "Youth Exploited for Military Drone Production at the Alabuga Special Economic Zone," *Institute for Science and International Security*, July 1, 2024. (https://isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/documents/Alabuga_SEZ_Foreign_Outreach_and_Student_Exploitation_Report_July_1_2024.pdf)

6. Angela Howard, "Russia's shortage of workers is so severe that it is luring foreigners into sweatshops," *The Hill*, October 17, 2025. (<https://thehill.com/opinion/international/5558495-russias-shortage-of-workers-is-so-severe-that-it-is-luring-foreigners-into-sweatshops>)

Table of Contents

THE EXPLOITATION OF WORKERS AND STRUCTURE
OF THE SEZ ALABUGA CORPORATE WEB 4

THE PROMISES OF ALABUGA START..... 8

HOW SOCIAL MEDIA HAS SERVED AS A VEHICLE FOR ALABUGA
START’S EXPANSION IN LATIN AMERICA..... 10

INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED WITH ALABUGA
START’S RECRUITMENT EFFORTS IN LATIN AMERICA 11

 Alejandro Venegas: A Key Representative in Alabuga Start’s
 Latin American Past Recruitment Efforts..... 12

 Henrique Dominguez: Program Ambassador in Brazil.....14

 Damaris Hoyos: Program Ambassador in Mexico.....16

 Sara Valentina Enriquez: Recruiter in Bolivia.....17

EVOLUTION OF ALABUGA START’S LATIN AMERICA RECRUITMENT 17

 Brazil.....19

 Ecuador.....20

 Venezuela.....21

 Mexico.....23

 Argentina.....23

 Costa Rica.....24

 Bolivia.....24

 Dominican Republic 25

 Nicaragua and El Salvador.....25

 Colombia, Peru, and Panama 25

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS 26

CONCLUSION: ALABUGA START AND THE INTERSECTION
OF NATIONAL SECURITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS 28

APPENDIX A: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SEZ ALABUGA, JSC ALABUGA,
ALABUGA POLYTECH, AND ALABUGA START.....28

APPENDIX B: SHARED TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURE BETWEEN JSC ALABUGA,
ALABUGA POLYTECH, AND ALABUGA START.....30

THE EXPLOITATION OF WORKERS AND STRUCTURE OF THE SEZ ALABUGA CORPORATE WEB

Alabuga Start attracts young women with promises of education, professional development, and work opportunities in Russia. Alabuga Start recruiters closely coordinate recruits' travel to Russia, requiring applicants to remain in constant contact with HR throughout the journey, send photos of boarding passes and in-flight selfies, and report at multiple checkpoints until they are met by company representatives upon arrival.⁷ Participants describe being told that the program offered work-study or scholarship tracks in fields such as hospitality, catering, and general manufacturing.⁸ Once foreign recruits arrived in Tatarstan, however, Alabuga staff immediately assigned them to produce Shahed-136 drones and offered no alternatives.⁹ The Institute of Science and International Security reported that up to 90 percent of Alabuga Start recruits end up working in drone production.¹⁰ Several participants said they did not learn they would be working on weapons systems until they entered the drone factory on their first day. Such deceptive recruiting is a key component of the legal definition of forced labor and human trafficking. The testimony of the women who have participated in Alabuga Start indicates the extent to which manipulation and control are an integral part of the program.

Alabuga Start keeps participants under close surveillance and limits their ability to communicate with anyone outside the facility.¹¹ The Associated Press has reported that managers monitor messages, restrict phone access, and require permission for conversations with outsiders.¹² Alabuga also requires participants to sign nondisclosure agreements that forbid them from telling even their families the true nature of their work.¹³ Both the dormitories and factory floors stay heavily monitored with facial-recognition access and constant camera surveillance.

Working conditions inside the drone plants expose recruits to significant health and safety risks. Women reported handling chemicals that burned their skin, causing peeling, irritation, and even holes on their cheeks.¹⁴ One participant in particular reported repeated nosebleeds, while another claimed recruits were “maltreated like

7. “Alabuga Start,” *Alabuga Start*, accessed September 4, 2025. (<https://ghostarchive.org/archive/mbLcC>)

8. Julia Stanyard, Brian Lee, Fedir Sydoruk, Ken Opala, Michael McLaggan, Bektour Iskender, and Roman Romanovskiy, “Who Is Making Russia’s Drones? The Migrant Women Exploited for Russia’s War Economy,” *Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime*, May 2025. (https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Who-is-making-Russias-drones_-The-migrant-women-exploited-for-Russias-war-economy-GI-TOC-May-2025.v2.pdf)

9. Mayeni Jones, “‘My skin was peeling’ — the African women tricked into making Russian drones,” *BBC* (UK), November 5, 2025. (<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cdrzdp058o>)

10. Spencer Faragasso and David Albright, “Youth Exploited for Military Drone Production at the Alabuga Special Economic Zone,” *Institute for Science and International Security*, July 1, 2024. (https://isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/documents/Alabuga_SEZ_Foreign_Outreach_and_Student_Exploitation_Report_July_1_2024.pdf)

11. Julia Stanyard, Brian Lee, Fedir Sydoruk, Ken Opala, Michael McLaggan, Bektour Iskender, and Roman Romanovskiy, “Who Is Making Russia’s Drones? The Migrant Women Exploited for Russia’s War Economy,” *Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime*, May 2025. (https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Who-is-making-Russias-drones_-The-migrant-women-exploited-for-Russias-war-economy-GI-TOC-May-2025.v2.pdf)

12. Emma Burrows and Lori Hinnant, “Africans recruited to work in Russia say they were duped into building drones for use in Ukraine,” *Associated Press*, October 10, 2024. (<https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-war-drones-shahed-africans-11602ab837f0ff4635926d884b422185>)

13. Mayeni Jones, “‘My skin was peeling’ — the African women tricked into making Russian drones,” *BBC* (UK), November 5, 2025. (<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cdrzdp058o>)

14. Emma Burrows and Lori Hinnant, “Africans recruited to work in Russia say they were duped into building drones for use in Ukraine,” *Associated Press*, October 10, 2024. (<https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-war-drones-shahed-africans-11602ab837f0ff4635926d884b422185>)

donkeys, being slaved.”¹⁵ Despite a Ukrainian drone strike that injured at least 12 workers in April 2024, recruits continued working as before and could not opt out of drone production.

Foreign recruits also face financial penalties that make it difficult to leave the program. Multiple women have reported 12-hour shifts, irregular days off, and wage penalties for minor infractions, such as accidentally setting off a fire alarm while cooking.¹⁶ Alabuga also deducts the cost of housing, transportation, Russian-language classes, and medical care, leaving workers with a small fraction of their promised pay.¹⁷ One woman expected to earn \$600 per month but received only one-sixth of that.¹⁸

After several women left the program following a Ukrainian strike, program staff confiscated the passports of those who remained.¹⁹ Others who attempted to resign were required to complete notice periods while continuing to work in the factory. Women who try to leave are told they must pay a fine for withdrawing.²⁰

Bloomberg reported in April 2025 that Interpol had begun investigating Alabuga Start for human trafficking in Botswana.²¹ While no country or international body has yet accused Alabuga Start of human trafficking, the program’s recruitment practices align with key elements of international definitions of trafficking and forced labor.²² The United Nations defines trafficking as recruitment that uses “fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability.”²³ Both the testimony of recruits and the accounts compiled by journalists indicate that Alabuga Start engages in precisely these practices.

THE SEZ ALABUGA CORPORATE WEB

The Ministry of Land and Property Relations of the Republic of Tatarstan wholly owns Joint Stock Company (JSC) Alabuga, the corporate entity associated with SEZ Alabuga.²⁴ Established in 1998, the zone provides tax breaks, customs exemptions, and infrastructure to companies operating within its boundaries.

JSC Alabuga has partnerships with vocational colleges, which it brands as “Alabuga Polytech.” These partnerships form “education and production centers” under the Russian state’s “Professionalism” program — a broader initiative to modernize its domestic workforce (see Appendix A). Several Russian scholars have noted the importance of

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15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Mayeni Jones, “My skin was peeling’ — the African women tricked into making Russian drones,” *BBC* (UK), November 5, 2025. (<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cdrzdp058o>)

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Julia Stanyard, Brian Lee, Fedir Sydoruk, Ken Opala, Michael McLaggan, Bektour Iskender, and Roman Romanovskiy, “Who Is Making Russia’s Drones? The Migrant Women Exploited for Russia’s War Economy,” *Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime*, May 2025. (https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Who-is-making-Russias-drones_-The-migrant-women-exploited-for-Russias-war-economy-GI-TOC-May-2025.v2.pdf)

21. Antony Sguazzin and Fasika Tadesse, “Russia Expands Global Outreach for Program Linked to Drone Production,” *Bloomberg*, April 5, 2025. (<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-04-25/russia-expands-outreach-for-youth-work-program-linked-to-drone-production>)

22. Angela Howard, “Russia’s shortage of workers is so severe that it is luring foreigners into sweatshops,” *The Hill*, October 17, 2025. (<https://thehill.com/opinion/international/5558495-russias-shortage-of-workers-is-so-severe-that-it-is-luring-foreigners-into-sweatshops>)

23. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime,” 2001. (https://www.unodc.org/res/human-trafficking/2021the-protocol-tip_html/TIP.pdf)

24. This paper uses the term SEZ Alabuga to refer to the industrial park itself and JSC Alabuga to refer to the associated corporation. In essence, however, both terms refer to the same legal entity (see Appendix A).

these centers — 506 of which exist across Russia — for attracting youth to Russia’s military-industrial complex.²⁵ Alabuga Polytech trains teenagers and young adults in drone assembly, with some students receiving instruction in Tehran on manufacturing Shahed airframes.²⁶

Leaked correspondence and corporate records show that JSC Alabuga controls key subsidiaries driving drone manufacturing and production site build-out, including Alabuga Machinery LLC — explicitly identified as a subsidiary of JSC Alabuga — which procured metals, equipment, and tooling for the Geran program through Generation Trading FZE, an intermediary in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).²⁷ In parallel, Alabuga Development, another subsidiary of JSC Alabuga, managed major construction to expand worker housing and related infrastructure, later joined by a related contractor.²⁸

In early 2023, JSC Alabuga signed a \$1.75 billion contract with Iranian company Sahara Thunder to provide the Russian military with thousands of drones.²⁹ The company has provided JSC Alabuga with the technology and expertise needed throughout the manufacturing process.³⁰ The Russian government reportedly helped finance the contract through loans to Alabuga Machinery.³¹ That company maintains direct ties to the Russian Ministry of Defense, both as a supplier and as a recipient of state funding for its drone program.³²

JSC Alabuga’s recruitment drive also serves the nearby Albatros LLC plant, which manufactures M5 reconnaissance drones largely for civilian use but also in limited quantities for the Russian military in Ukraine. Albatros, which

25. O.V. Trofimov and A.G. Saakyan, “Производственно-образовательные кластеры для кадрового обеспечения предприятий оборонно-промышленного комплекса в современных условиях [Industrial And Educational Clusters For Staffing Defense Industry Enterprises In Modern Conditions],” *Creative Economy*, June 2022. (<https://1economic.ru/lib/114876#en>; <https://ghostarchive.org/archive/Qb1dJ>); “Профессионалитет,” *Профессионалитет* [Professionalism], accessed October 2, 2025. (<https://япроф.ru>; <https://web.archive.org/web/20251002191836/https://xn--n1abdr5c.xn--p1ai>)

26. Clare Sebastian, Vasco Cotovio, Allegra Goodwin, Victoria Butenko, and Darya Tarasova-Markina, “Russia is intensifying its air war in Ukraine. A secretive factory is ramping up drone production to fuel the offensive,” *CNN*, December 27, 2024. (<https://edition.cnn.com/2024/12/27/europe/russia-ukraine-war-drones-alabuga-factory-intl-invs>); Spencer Faragasso and David Albright, “Youth Exploited for Military Drone Production at the Alabuga Special Economic Zone,” *Institute for Science and International Security*, July 1, 2024. (https://isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/documents/Alabuga_SEZ_Foreign_Outreach_and_Student_Exploitation_Report_July_1_2024.pdf)

27. Omar Al-Ghusbi and Conrad Rousseau, “Airborne Axis: Inside The Deal That Brought Iranian Drone Production to Russia,” *C4ADS*, 2025. (<https://c4ads.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/SaharaThunder-FinalLayout.pdf>)

28. David Albright, Spencer Faragasso, and the Good ISIS Team, “Major Developments at SEZ Alabuga Point to Significant Expansion in Military Drone Production,” *Institute for Science and International Security*, July 28, 2025. (<https://isis-online.org/isis-reports/major-developments-at-alabuga-sez-point-to-significant-expansion-in-military-drone-production>)

29. David Albright, Dr. Igor Anokhin, Sarah Burkhard, Victoria Cheng, and Spencer Faragasso, “Alabuga’s Greatly Expanded Production Rate of Shahed 136 Drones,” *Institute for Science and International Security*, May 10, 2024. (<https://isis-online.org/isis-reports/alabugas-greatly-expanded-production-rate-of-shahed-136-drones>); U.S. Department of the Treasury, Press Release, “Treasury Targets Networks Facilitating Illicit Trade and UAV Transfers on Behalf of Iranian Military,” April 25, 2024. (<https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy2295>)

30. “Iranian, Russian Defense Companies Collaborating on Drone Production,” *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, May 30, 2025. (<https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2025/05/30/iranian-russian-defense-companies-collaborating-on-drone-production>)

31. Julia Stanyard, Brian Lee, Fedir Sydoruk, Ken Opala, Michael McLaggan, Bektour Iskender, and Roman Romanovskiy, “Who Is Making Russia’s Drones? The Migrant Women Exploited for Russia’s War Economy,” *Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime*, May 2025. (https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Who-is-making-Russias-drones_-The-migrant-women-exploited-for-Russias-war-economy-GI-TOC-May-2025.v2.pdf)

32. Ibid.

likewise requires additional workers, functions as both a beneficiary of and a cover for JSC Alabuga's broader effort to staff its drone factories.³³

In February 2024, the U.S. Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control sanctioned JSC Alabuga, Alabuga Machinery, Alabuga Development, Albatros, and top company officials for their role in producing Iranian-designed drones, noting the exploitation of underage students from an affiliated polytechnical institution to assemble drones.³⁴ The vocational colleges that participate in the "Alabuga Polytech" initiative have not been sanctioned.

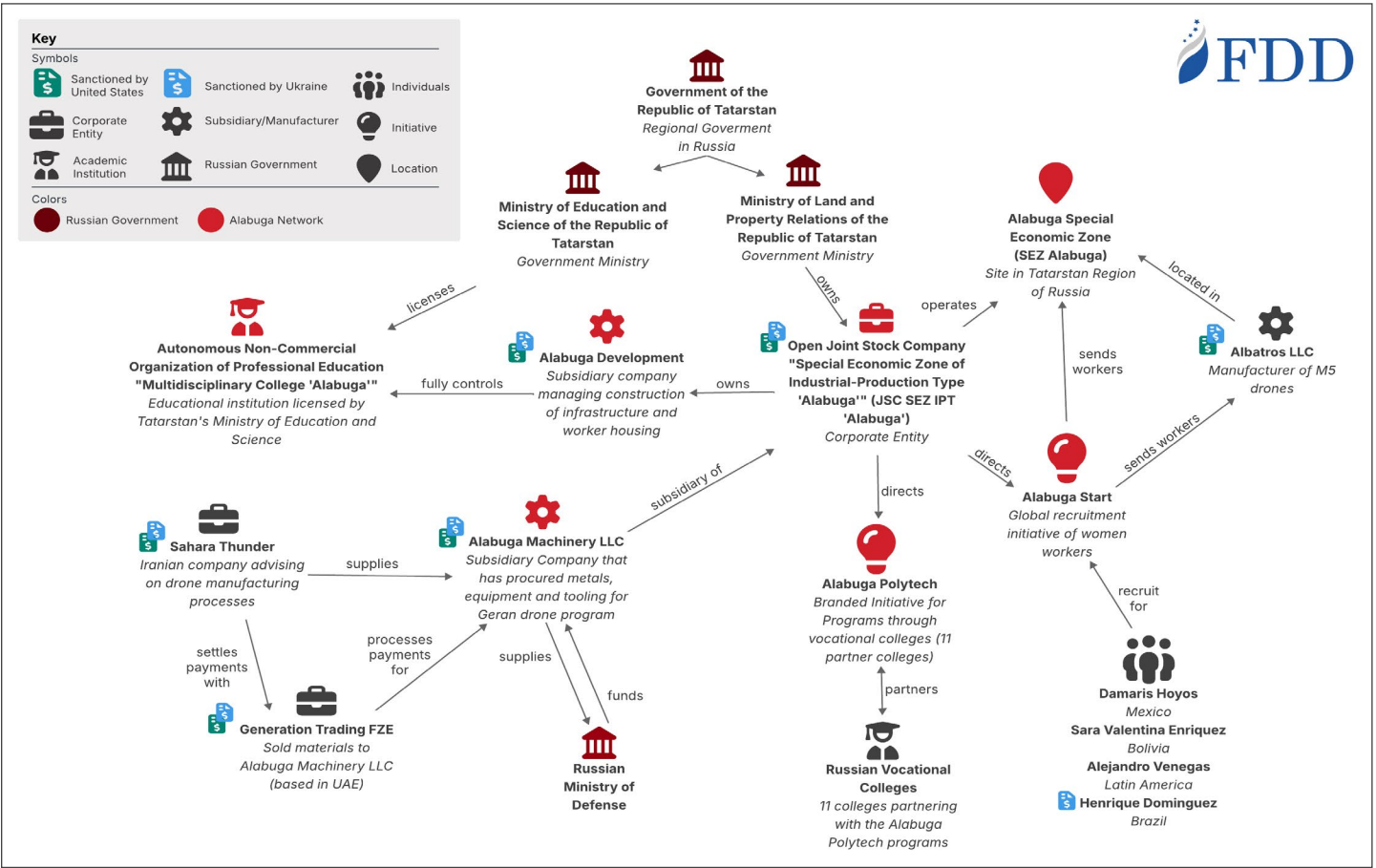


Figure 1: Map of the Alabuga web. Source: FDD.

33. Spencer Faragasso and David Albright, "Youth Exploited for Military Drone Production at the Alabuga Special Economic Zone," *Institute for Science and International Security*, July 1, 2024. (https://isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/documents/Alabuga_SEZ_Foreign_Outreach_and_Student_Exploitation_Report_July_1_2024.pdf)

34. U.S. Department of the Treasury, Press Release, "On Second Anniversary of Russia's Further Invasion of Ukraine and Following the Death of Aleksey Navalny, Treasury Sanctions Hundreds of Targets in Russia and Globally," February 23, 2024. (<https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy2117>)

AN EXPANDING ENTERPRISE

Drone production at SEZ Alabuga has scaled up rapidly since 2023, far exceeding the reported objectives of the license agreement with Iran, which envisioned the manufacture of 226 drones per month.³⁵ As of June 2025, Ukrainian military intelligence reportedly assessed that Russia was producing an estimated 2,700 Shahed-type drones per month, enough to launch about 90 per day.³⁶ Analysis by the Institute for Science and International Security indicates that Russia has maintained a high and relatively consistent level of Shahed-type UAV launches since the summer of 2025, averaging between 5,400 and 5,500 drones per month.³⁷ Launches averaged 181 per day in June, 203 per day in July, 133 per day in August, 188 per day in September, and 171 per day in October. In September, Maj. Gen. Vadym Skibitskyi, deputy head of Ukraine's military intelligence directorate, noted that the Russians "initially started with 1,000 employees" at the Alabuga drone plant "but now plan to have 40,000."³⁸

In mid-September 2025, the Swiss newspaper *Le Temps* obtained high-resolution satellite images of the SEZ Alabuga site that revealed construction of more than a hundred new production and residential facilities, including dormitories for workers, as well as new defensive infrastructure. Dormitory buildings increased from 15 in February 2024 to 104 by July 2025, with the completed construction having a capacity for an estimated 40,000 workers.³⁹ The scale of this expansion underscores a growing labor shortfall that Russia has been unable to address through traditional recruitment channels. Direct recruitment of foreign labor for drone manufacturing would likely deter participation and invite heightened international scrutiny, particularly given the legal and sanctions-related risks associated with weapons production linked to the war in Ukraine. The use of programs such as Alabuga Start allows Russia to obscure the nature of the work and reduce the visibility of its labor pipeline.

THE PROMISES OF ALABUGA START

Alabuga Start frames its recruitment narrative through highly curated depictions of life inside SEZ Alabuga. The program's promotional materials describe the zone as "the most successful in Russia" and highlight its "doubtless advantages."⁴⁰ Participant testimonials on Alabuga Start's website describe a "friendly atmosphere," positive experiences in language and conversation clubs, and opportunities to visit "fascinating cultural and historical sights."⁴¹ Images feature participants smiling in classrooms and work stations, painting a misleading image of comfort and personal development.

One of Alabuga Start's websites ([startworld.alabuga\[.\]ru](http://startworld.alabuga[.]ru)) lists benefits including a starting monthly salary of 54,125 rubles, airfare to Russia, health insurance, professional training, and Russian language classes.⁴² The website uses an

35. Dalton Bennett and Mary Ilyushina, "Inside the Russian effort to build 6,000 attack drones with Iran's help," *The Washington Post*, August 17, 2023. (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/2023/08/17/russia-iran-drone-shahed-alabuga/>)

36. Marko Syrovoy, "П'ятикратне зростання. Росія виробляє 2700 «Шахедів» на місяць, майже стільки ж імітаторів – ГУР [Five-Fold Growth. Russia Produces 2,700 'Shaheeds' Per Month, Almost as Many Imitators — GUR]," *Forbes Ukraine* (Ukraine), June 9, 2025. (<https://forbes.ua/news/rosiya-viroblyae-2700-shakhediv-na-misyats-mayzhe-stilki-zh-imitatoriv-gur-09062025-30369>)

37. Igor Anokhin, "Monthly Analysis of Russian Shahed 136 Deployment Against Ukraine," *Institute for Science and International Security*, December 1, 2025. (<https://isis-online.org/isis-reports/monthly-analysis-of-russian-shahed-136-deployment-against-ukraine>)

38. Olga Katsimon, "North Korean troops concentrated in Kursk Oblast to support border security, Kyiv says," *Ukrainska Pravda* (Ukraine), September 7, 2025. (<https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2025/09/07/7529739>)

39. Camille Pagella, "La Russie recrute de jeunes étudiants et des femmes migrantes pour assembler ses drones kamikazes [Russia recruits young students and migrant women to assemble its suicide bomber drones]," *Le Temps* (Switzerland), September 22, 2025. (<https://www.letemps.ch/monde/europe/la-russie-recrute-de-jeunes-etudiants-et-des-femmes-migrantes-pour-assembler-ses-drones-kamikazes?srltid=AfmBOoozcYsDMbhsAssCT5qMzhWIGpz1UpX9wG4P5PCfVoXJsWnCM8Q2>)

40. "Alabuga Start," *Alabuga Start*, accessed September 4, 2025. (<https://ghostarchive.org/archive/mbLcC>)

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

exchange rate of 100 rubles to the dollar to convey the value of promised salaries. In addition to the starting salary worth \$541 per month, the site promotes a staged “career ladder,” claiming that salaries can rise to \$1,783 per month.⁴³

A brochure available through the website provides a closer look into Alabuga Start’s expansion since 2023.⁴⁴ It claims that in 2023, the program offered one field of employment, attracted participants from seven countries, and recruited 22 individuals. In 2024, the program purportedly expanded to four job fields, 44 countries, and 327 recruits. In 2025, it expanded to seven job fields, 77 countries, and approximately 8,500 recruits. Upon completion, the program claims to offer several options: permanent employment within SEZ Alabuga, jobs at other factories, enrollment at Alabuga Polytech, or returning home.⁴⁵

The program incentivizes recruitment through a bounty system with payouts to “representatives” in participating countries.⁴⁶ Partners earn a small per-candidate payment for submitting a complete application packet — referred to as the “Full Support” nomination — regardless of whether the recruit ultimately travels. A separate per-candidate payment is made only after the recruit obtains a visa, arrives in Russia, clears medical and exam requirements, receives a work permit, and signs an employment contract — referred to as the “Employment Leader” nomination. A “Partner of the Year” award of up to \$14,000 goes to the representative with the highest percentage of successful job placements against the country quota.⁴⁷

The application process requires prospective recruits to submit their name, country, and CV via the program’s Telegram channel.⁴⁸ It also asks that candidates learn 100 Russian words, complete an “Alabuga Start simulation,” pass an online interview, and sign a formal offer. As of September 2025, the website lists admissions as ongoing.⁴⁹

While the program has a new emphasis on Latin America, Alabuga Start also continues, it seems, to direct significant effort toward recruiting young women from Russia and the other post-Soviet countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).⁵⁰ For example, the website [startcis.alabuga\[.\]ru](https://startcis.alabuga.ru), as indicated by its domain name, appears to focus on women from CIS countries, including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Armenia, as well as Moldova, which has partially withdrawn from the CIS.⁵¹ The domain name of the website [programmstartcis\[.\]com](https://programmstartcis.com), also created by JSC Alabuga, indicates a similar focus. [Startrussia.alabuga\[.\]ru](https://startrussia.alabuga.ru) appears to serve as the website for the domestic arm of Alabuga Start.⁵² An associated Telegram channel — [AlabugaStartRussia](https://t.me/AlabugaStartRussia) — appears geared toward domestic recruitment.⁵³

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43. Alabuga Start, Presentation, “Alabuga Start: For People From All Over the World,” 2025. (https://startworld.alabuga.ru/upload/uf/041/sdnfgq1xphhyip1ws16h68g3t0w45nc7/Alabuga-Start-2025-_ENG_-_1_.pdf)

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

46. Alabuga Polytech, Grant Guidelines, “Regulations on the Grant Competition ‘Alabuga Start,’” 2025. (<https://startworld.alabuga.ru/upload/Regulations%20on%20the%20Grant%20Competition%20Alabuga%20Start.pdf>)

47. “Alabuga Start,” *Alabuga Start*, accessed September 4, 2025. (<https://ghostarchive.org/archive/mbLcC>)

48. Ibid.

49. “Alabuga Start,” *Alabuga Start*, accessed September 29, 2025. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250929042544/https://startworld.alabuga.ru>)

50. “Collapse of the Soviet Union,” *Britannica*, December 1, 2025. (<https://www.britannica.com/event/the-collapse-of-the-Soviet-Union>)

51. “Alabuga Start: CIS International Program for Professional Employment in Russia,” *Alabuga Polytech*, accessed August 13, 2025. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250813150757/https://startcis.alabuga.ru>); “Moldova not planning to withdraw from CIS economic, social protection, healthcare agreements,” *Interfax* (UK), January 14, 2025. (<https://interfax.com/newsroom/top-stories/109088>)

52. “Алабуга старт россия [Alabuga Start Russia],” *Alabuga Polytech*, accessed August 13, 2025. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250813151229/https://startrussia.alabuga.ru>)

53. [AlabugaStartRussia](https://t.me/AlabugaStartRussia), *Telegram*, September 22, 2025. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250924170059/https://t.me/s/AlabugaStartRussia>); [AlabugaStartRF](https://t.me/AlabugaStartRF), *Telegram*, accessed September 24, 2025. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250924170614/https://t.me/AlabugaStartRF>)

HOW SOCIAL MEDIA HAS SERVED AS A VEHICLE FOR ALABUGA START’S EXPANSION IN LATIN AMERICA

Social media plays a central role in Alabuga Start’s recruitment strategy. The program promotes itself across TikTok, Instagram, X, Facebook, Telegram, and RuTube, both directly through its own accounts and indirectly through representatives, contracted influencers, and affiliated organizations.

After the initial exposure of abuses in SEZ Alabuga, Google, Meta, and TikTok removed accounts linked to Alabuga Start and Alabuga Polytech for violating their policies.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, FDD has identified multiple recently created accounts promoting Alabuga Start to Latin American audiences, as well as several online recruitment efforts in Latin America dating back to 2024. The program’s current social media network includes two X accounts, two Instagram accounts, one TikTok account, one Facebook account, a Telegram channel, and a RuTube channel.

On Instagram, `start_program_latam` serves as the program’s Latin America recruitment hub.⁵⁵ Although the account was registered in January 2024, it started posting recruitment content only in March 2025. It brands the initiative simply as “Start Program” while displaying the Alabuga Start logo in its posts and linking directly to the program’s homepage. Its Spanish-language content includes AI-generated videos portraying the “success” of Latin American women who join the program.⁵⁶

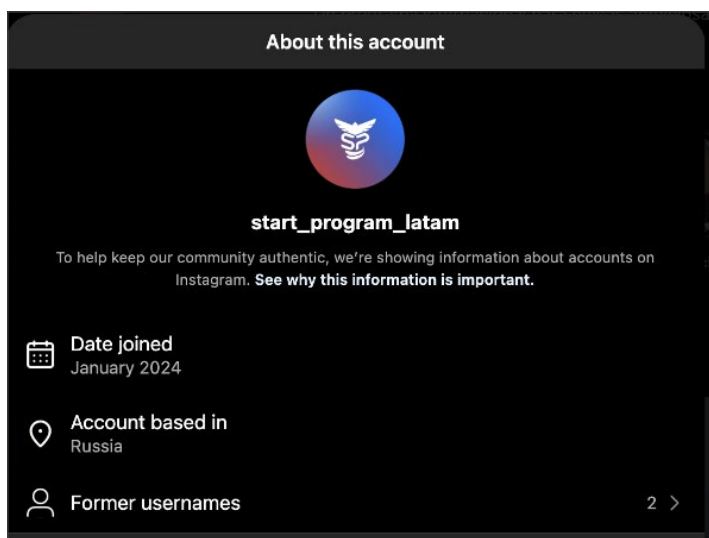


Figure 2: Instagram transparency details for the account `start_program_latam` show it was registered in January 2024, is based in Russia, and has used multiple former usernames.

Another account, `work.in_russia`, appears to function as the program’s primary global recruitment page on Instagram.⁵⁷ The account was created in November 2024. It links to the homepage of one of Alabuga Start’s websites and mirrors content from the official SEZ Alabuga X account. Like other program-linked profiles, it uses what looks to be AI-generated media to appeal to younger audiences, producing videos that reimagine Alabuga Start with characters from popular culture, such as Harry Potter and Disney’s “Wreck-It Ralph.”⁵⁸

54. Emma Burrows, “Tech firms remove social media accounts of a Russian drone factory after an AP investigation,” *Associated Press*, October 17, 2024. (<https://apnews.com/article/alabuga-russia-africa-ukraine-war-shahed-drones-bc175c4c98d752dc298c23434637417e>)

55. `start_program_latam`, *Instagram*, August 7, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/cgN1n>)

56. Ibid.

57. `work.in_russia`, *Instagram*, accessed August 7, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/FwRgZ>)

58. `work.in_russia`, *Instagram*, accessed August 13, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/Xi4p7>); `work.in_russia`, *Instagram* accessed August 13, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/wsPJl>)

The official X account for SEZ Alabuga (@sezalabuga), which has been active for over a decade, has recently intensified its promotion of Alabuga Start in Latin America.⁵⁹ The program's accounts on TikTok and Facebook promote the program without a specific regional focus, often showcasing the day-to-day life of participants.⁶⁰

Additionally, Alabuga Start operates multiple Telegram channels. One channel (AlabugaStart) with over 24,000 subscribers shares promotional content, application tips, and announcements of official partnerships with target countries such as Ghana and Brazil. A private Telegram group called “Alabuga Start Programme,” linked directly on Alabuga Start’s website, focuses on recruitment and onboarding.⁶¹ The private group, which has over 2,900 members and has been active since April 10, 2025, instructs applicants to submit their information there so HR specialists can contact them. Members post their personal details, with some complaining about delays in the application process and slow HR responses. The channel’s administrator frequently names specific HR specialists, including “HR Priscilla” and “HR Alsou.” As mentioned earlier, Alabuga Start also operates a domestic recruitment channel, AlabugaStartRussia, which has more than 1,300 subscribers. The channel posts content in Russian and incentivizes young women to apply by highlighting promised salaries, housing, and career advancement opportunities.

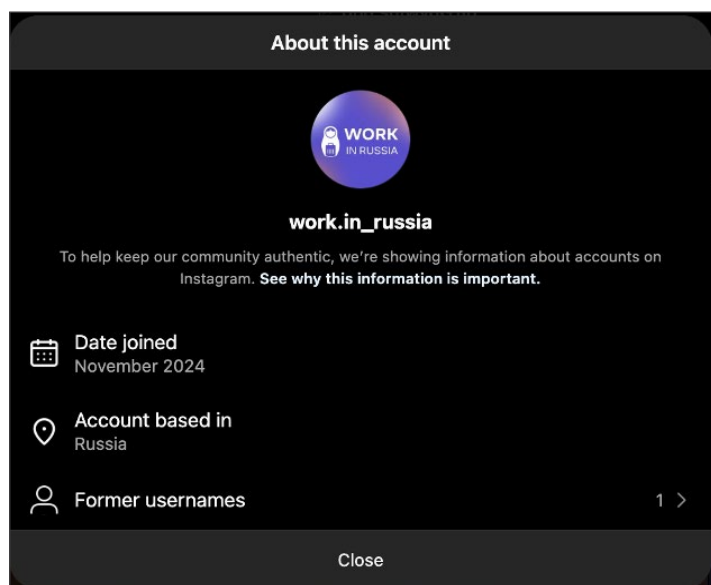


Figure 3: Instagram transparency data for work.in_russia shows it was registered in November 2024, is based in Russia, and has changed usernames.

INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED WITH ALABUGA START’S RECRUITMENT EFFORTS IN LATIN AMERICA

Alabuga Start’s expansion into Latin America relies on a network of country-level recruiters who serve as intermediaries between the program and local audiences. Speaking the local language, these recruiters present the program as a cultural or educational exchange and build credibility through social media campaigns, partnerships with schools and municipal governments, and collaborations with cultural and sport organizations. FDD is unable to determine whether the recruiters identified below were aware of the program’s role in labor exploitation or its connection to drone production.

This recruitment model allows Alabuga Start to move quickly and adapt its message to different contexts. In Brazil, recruiters frame the program as part of cooperation within BRICS, a bloc that includes Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa that serves as a key platform for Russian diplomatic and economic engagement. In Ecuador, they partner with popular sports clubs to appeal to youth. In Mexico, they showcase endorsements from municipal leaders. What the recruiters do not say is that those who sign up will have no choice but to work in factories churning out drones for the war in Ukraine.

59. @sezalabuga, X, accessed August 7, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/t0quQ>)

60. alabuga.start.2025, Facebook, accessed August 13, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/CXZVF>); as_program_world, TikTok, accessed August 7, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/EgSyw>)

61. Alabuga Start Programme, Telegram, accessed September 30, 2025. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250930191251/https://t.me/+YYbDeLmMs8FkNTNi>); Alabuga Start Programme, Telegram, accessed December 4, 2025. (<https://t.me/+YYbDeLmMs8FkNTNi>)

ALEJANDRO VENEGAS: A KEY REPRESENTATIVE IN ALABUGA START'S LATIN AMERICAN PAST RECRUITMENT EFFORTS

Alejandro Venegas has previously appeared to play a central role in Alabuga Start's recruitment efforts and at one point appeared to be the primary recruiter for the program in Latin America. Public profiles associated with Venegas indicate he is originally from Ecuador, lives in Kazan, Russia, and is a robotics and mechatronics engineer.⁶² An associated profile on Superprof — an online platform that connects students with private tutors — states that Venegas taught Spanish at Alabuga International School and describes him as a digital marketer and an engineer.⁶³ Alabuga International School is a private institution in SEZ Alabuga that provides STEM-focused instruction in English, Russian, and Chinese for the children of local and expatriate employees.⁶⁴



Figure 4: Profile photo of Alejandro Venegas from his Facebook account.

In August 2024, the popular Ecuadorian influencer “El Champ” posted a video titled “Cómo ESTUDIAR y TRABAJAR en Rusia?” or how to study and work in Russia. In the video, Venegas says he lived in Russia for five years, worked at Alabuga (without specifying the specific part of the company where he worked), and has now returned specifically for Alabuga Start, where he serves as a representative and coordinator.⁶⁵ FDD confirmed his role through a TikTok post, now unavailable, that explicitly named him as the Latin America representative for the program.

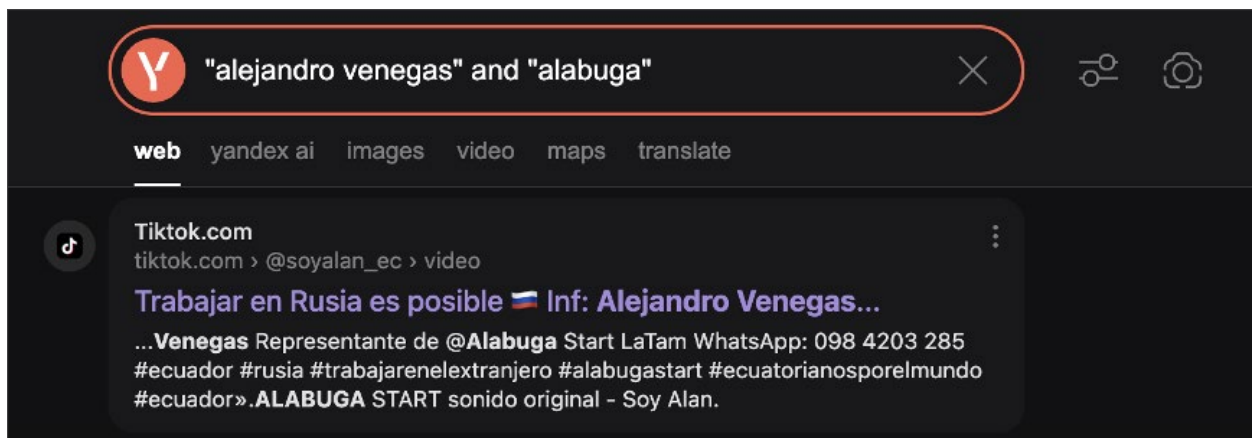


Figure 5: Yandex web search results showing a TikTok preview that describes Alejandro Venegas as the Latin American representative for Alabuga Start.

Several of Venegas's social media accounts document his time in Russia and include posts with anti-Western content. Venegas's Threads account went silent in October 2024 before becoming active again in June 2025 with a post praising BRICS.⁶⁶ The post also denounces Israel, the United States, and NATO, stating that “Israel is sinking lower and lower

62. @Alejandrov_s_ec, X, accessed August 6, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/dGsx8>); vsale_ec, Threads, accessed August 6, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/d5TW1>); vsale_ec, Instagram, accessed August 6, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/SQEfV>)

63. “Spanish Teacher (Native), with experience in countries like Russia, Egypt. Digital Marketer and Engineer,” Superprof, accessed August 6, 2025. (<https://ghostarchive.org/archive/N4mWb>)

64. “Alabuga International School,” Alabuga International School, accessed December 5, 2025. ([https://ais.alabuga.\[.\]ru/en](https://ais.alabuga.[.]ru/en))

65. El Champ, “How to Study and Work in Russia? | El Champ,” YouTube, August 29, 2024. (<https://archive.ph/oPesK>)

66. vsale_ec, Threads, June 26, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/bTY1Y>); Mariel Ferragamo, “What Is the BRICS Group and Why Is It Expanding?” Council on Foreign Relations, June 26, 2025. (<https://www.cfr.org/background/what-brics-group-and-why-it-expanding>)

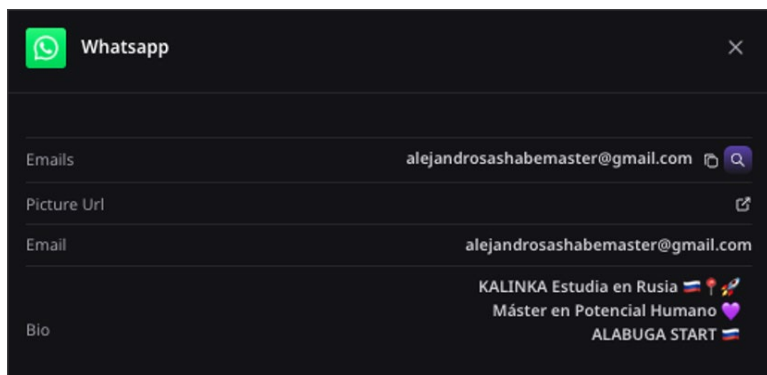


Figure 6: OSINT Industries result linking Alejandro Venegas's WhatsApp account to the email address alejandrosashabemaster@gmail.com and a bio explicitly referencing "ALABUGA START."

in the eyes of the world" and that "Humanity is growing tired of the U.S. and its useful puppets."⁶⁷ Venegas's Facebook profile lists an associated phone number that FDD ran through OSINT Industries, a platform used for open-source research and intelligence.⁶⁸ Results show an associated WhatsApp account whose bio includes "ALABUGA START." Additionally, the `start_program_latam` account follows only 31 users, one of whom is Venegas.

On April 18, 2025, the Argentinian outlet Noticias Argentinas published an article showing an email that two Argentinian influencers — Martín Ku and Nicolás Grosman — received from Alabuga Start inviting them to promote the program.⁶⁹ Although the outlet redacted the sender's name, a separate TikTok post by a journalist criticizing the program shared the same letter without redactions, showing Alejandro Venegas identifying himself as Alabuga Start's representative for all of Latin America.⁷⁰ In the email, dated September 10, 2024, Venegas offered a paid trip to Russia to film promotional content for YouTube and Instagram. He also stated that the company Alabuga — a reference to JSC Alabuga — would cover all expenses, including airfare and three daily meals, and that participants would sign a work contract for content creation. He noted that outreach for the program began with

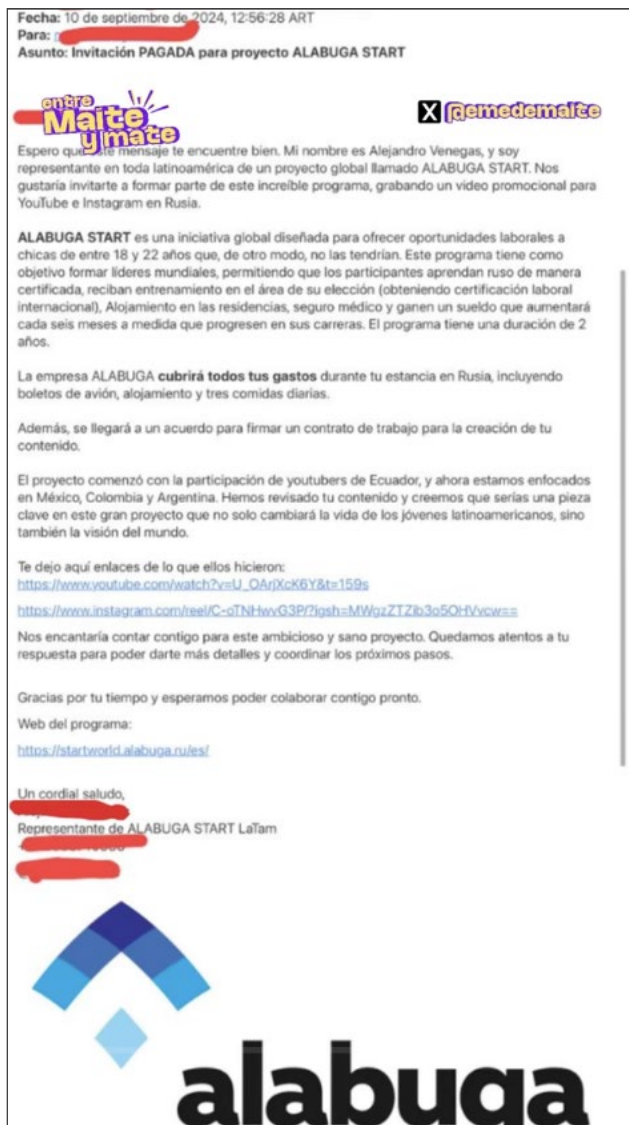


Figure 7: A TikTok post showing an email sent by Alejandro Venegas on September 10, 2024, to Argentinian influencers, where he identifies himself as Alabuga Start's Latin America representative and offers paid travel to Russia with all expenses covered for creating promotional content.

67. vsale_ec, *Threads*, June 26, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/bTY1Y>)

68. Alejandro Venegas Sandoval, *Facebook*, accessed August 13, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/LkHWs>)

69. "La empresa que promocionaron Martín Ku y Nico Grosman genera drones de ataque en pésimas condiciones [The company promoted by Martín Ku and Nico Grosman generates attack drones in terrible conditions]," *Agencia Noticias Argentinas* (Argentina), April 18, 2025. (https://noticiasargentinas.com/espectaculos/la-empresa-que-promocionaron-martin-ku-y-nico-grosman-genera-drones-de-ataque-en-pesimas-condiciones_a6802d5b5fea3bcd0355e882)

70. maitepenio, *TikTok*, accessed August 14, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/O8OYj>)

Ecuadorian YouTubers, referencing the video posted in August 2024 by Ecuadorian influencer El Champ. He also wrote that the current focus of expansion for Alabuga Start included Mexico, Colombia, and Argentina.

While no publicly available organizational documents or statements from Alabuga Start confirm Venegas’s status as the program’s primary recruiter in Latin America, the available evidence supports FDD’s assessment that he played a significant role in past outreach efforts. FDD was unable to determine the extent of his current involvement.

HENRIQUE DOMINGUEZ: PROGRAM AMBASSADOR IN BRAZIL

Henrique Dominguez appears to act as Alabuga Start’s primary recruiter and program ambassador in Brazil.

A post on Alabuga Start’s Telegram channel names Dominguez as the program’s ambassador in Brazil. A March 27, 2025, article from Portal Vermelho — or “Red Portal,” a Brazilian news and opinion website with a left-wing editorial stance where Dominguez serves as a columnist — provides an additional indication of his involvement with the program.⁷¹ The article, which promotes Alabuga Start, identifies Dominguez as both the program’s ambassador in Brazil and the assistant chief of BRICS+ Cities and Municipalities. On the same day, another promotional article posted by a different Brazilian publication also listed him as a program ambassador.⁷²

Dominguez has an extensive record of pro-Russian activity and participation in Kremlin-aligned propaganda efforts. Ukrainian and European organizations have repeatedly flagged him as a politically biased or “fake” election observer.⁷³ In 2022, the Center for Strategic Communications and Information Security identified Dominguez among 64 foreign “observers” Russia brought to occupied parts of Ukraine’s Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson regions during staged referendum.⁷⁴ These individuals appeared in Russian state media to endorse the legitimacy of the votes despite international condemnation. An article by the Russian state news agency TASS from that year



Figure 8: Photo of Henrique Dominguez — found on Alabuga Start’s Telegram channel.

71. Barbara Luz, “UBM Cidade de SP firma parceria para formação de mulheres e carreira no exterior [UBM City of São Paulo establishes partnership for women’s education and career advancement abroad],” *Vermelho* (Brazil), March 27, 2025. (<https://ghostarchive.org/archive/wALie>); “Henrique Dominques,” *Vermelho* (Brazil), August 14, 2025. (<https://ghostarchive.org/archive/4kXQO>)

72. Milleny Ferreira, “Programa oferece chance a mulheres brasileiras de estudar e trabalhar na Rússia [Program offers Brazilian women the chance to study and work in Russia],” *Journal GGN* (Brazil), March 27, 2025. (<https://ghostarchive.org/archive/Sah3n>)

73. “Russians bring in a diverse group of foreign propagandists to legitimise the sham ‘elections’ in Kherson oblast,” *Institute of Mass Information* (Ukraine), November 9, 2023. (<https://imi.org.ua/en/news/russians-bring-in-a-diverse-group-of-foreign-propagandists-to-legitimise-the-sham-elections-in-i55297>)

74. “Propagandists, Communists, and Neo-Fascists: Foreign ‘Observers’ on Pseudo-Referenda,” *Spravdi* (Ukraine), December 10, 2022. (<https://spravdi.gov.ua/en/propagandists-communists-and-neo-fascists-foreign-observers-on-pseudo-referenda>)

quoted Dominguez praising the Zaporizhzhia vote and declaring the election legitimate.⁷⁵

An election monitoring platform maintained by the European Platform for Democratic Elections lists Dominguez as a fake observer in three separate elections: the 2022 pseudo-referendum to annex occupied Luhansk, the 2023 territorial pseudo-elections in occupied Ukraine, and the 2024 Russian presidential elections.⁷⁶ The platform also notes that Dominguez studied at the St. Petersburg State University of Economics and Finance. He is also sanctioned by Ukraine.⁷⁷

Alabuga Start's Telegram channel continues to reference Dominguez as part of the program, including a June 16 post that identifies him as a representative. However, FDD cannot officially confirm whether he still holds an active ambassador or recruiter role beyond these mentions.



Business Cats in Latin America: the first ever Olympiad on financial literacy was held in Brazil

The Alabuga Start team together with the programme's ambassador in Brazil, Henrique Dominguez, held the first ever Olympiad on financial literacy in the country.

More than 80 students from the Homero Rubens de Sa School and the São Paulo State College of Technology (FATEC) participated in the event. Three girls were the winners of the Business Cats Olympiad and the lucky winners of valuable prizes: a laptop and 2 smartphones.

Figure 9: Alabuga Start Telegram post naming Henrique Dominguez as its ambassador in Brazil during the “Business Cats” financial literacy Olympiad.

75. “Observer from Brazil notes high level of referendum organization in Zaporozhye Region,” *Tass* (Russia), September 26, 2022. (<https://ghostarchive.org/archive/3penY>)

76. “Henrique Domingues,” *Fake Observers*, accessed August 5, 2025. (https://www.fakeobservers.org/fake-election-observers/details/_609.html)

77. “Домінгес Енріке [Dominguez Enrique],” *Open Sanctions*, accessed August 5, 2025. (<https://www.opensanctions.org/entities/NK-36ia2hAHDsFsueRK5nV5iS>)

DAMARIS HOYOS: PROGRAM AMBASSADOR IN MEXICO

Damaris Hoyos appears to act as Alabuga Start’s main representative in Mexico.



Figure 10: Instagram post uploaded by Damaris Hoyos that shows her holding a Mexican flag in SEZ Alabuga.

Report for: +52 55 59 64 56 59

As of 2025-08-15T18:02:38.892Z

Minified and concise search report.

Module Responses:

FACEBOOK

Registered: true

EYECON

Registered: true

Name: AA0581

TELEGRAM

[Picture Url](#)

[Profile Url](#)

Registered: true

Id: 331659936

Name: Damaris Hoyos

First Name: Damaris

Last Name: Hoyos

Username: DamarisH

Verified: false

Premium: false

Figure 11: OSINT Industries search results confirming a Mexican phone number tied to Hoyos, linking her to Alabuga Start registration.

FDD linked Hoyos to the program through an official infographic posted on Instagram by the Abasolo Municipality in Guanajuato, Mexico, inviting Mexican women to apply to Alabuga Start.⁷⁸ The post instructed applicants to send a screenshot of their Alabuga Start registration to a specific phone number. OSINT Industries results confirm the number belongs to Hoyos.

A July post, posted jointly by a pro-BRICS Instagram user and Hoyos’s own profile, describes her as the ambassador of Alabuga Start in Mexico.⁷⁹ Posts on Hoyos’s Instagram account show her speaking on panels in Russia, including on youth cooperation between Russia and Latin America.⁸⁰ Her Instagram bio also identifies her as a member of Centro de Integración Multipolar & Cooperación Estratégica (ISKRA) — an organization that focuses on Latin America-BRICS ties through cultural, commercial, political, and academic exchanges.⁸¹

78. “radio_rebeldeee,” *Instagram*, July 17, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/8l4yr>)

79. gioeconomicss, *Instagram*, July 11, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/gk6Dr>)

80. damaris.sci, *Instagram*, accessed August 13, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/e4NUx>)

81. iskra_latam, *Instagram*, accessed August 13, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/N2ytW>)

FDD's most recent confirmation of Hoyos's ongoing involvement comes from an October 30, 2025, Instagram post in which she documents a visit to the SEZ Alabuga and mentions a supposed newly formed cooperation agreement between Alabuga and Mexico to expand job opportunities for Mexican youth.⁸²

SARA VALENTINA ENRIQUEZ: RECRUITER IN BOLIVIA

Sara Valentina Enriquez appears to facilitate recruitment efforts in Bolivia and to ISKRA. On July 14, 2025, the TikTok account trabaja.en.rusia promoted Alabuga Start in Bolivia and directed individuals interested in the program to a phone number that is associated with Enriquez, according to OSINT Industries data.⁸³ Results indicate the presence of a WhatsApp account featuring an Iranian flag and a red heart in its bio. An associated account exists on VK, Russia's version of Facebook. Results also show an associated account on Yandex, a Russian internet and technology company.

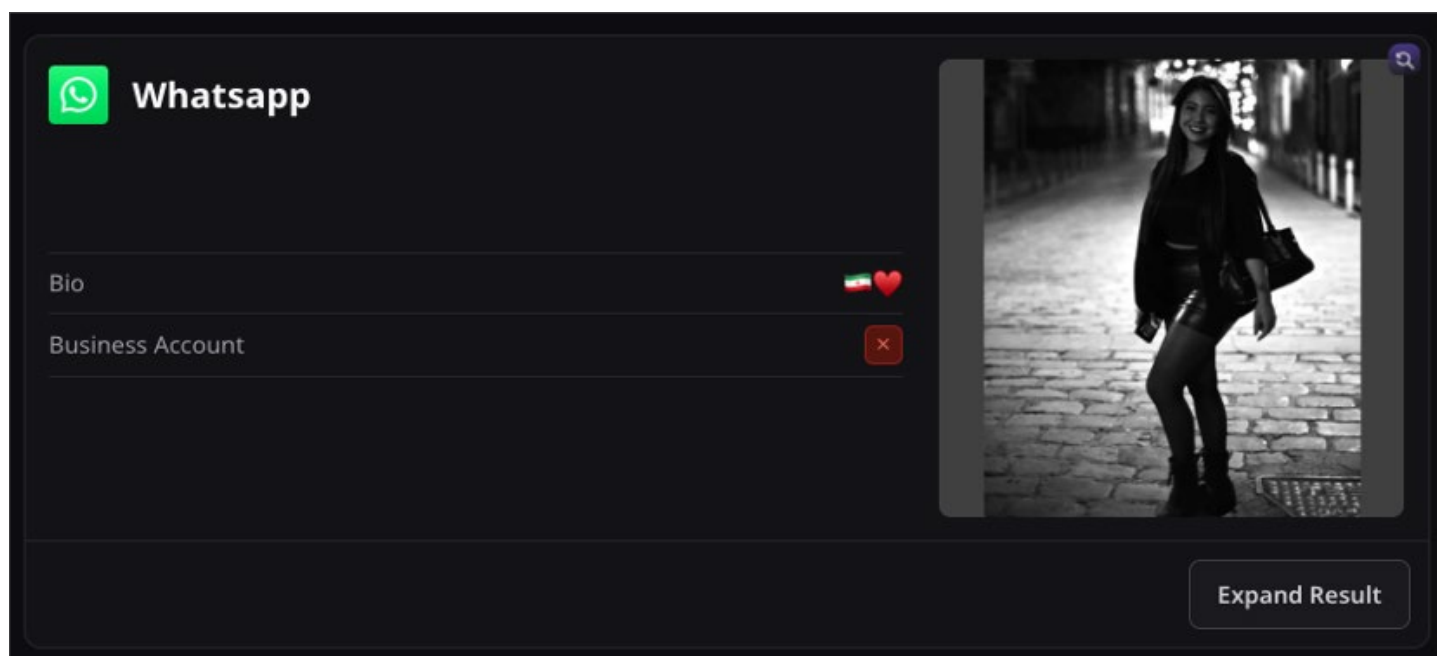


Figure 12: WhatsApp account associated with Sara Valentina Enriquez with Iranian flag in bio.

FDD's most recent confirmation of Enriquez's involvement comes from a July 2025 article she authored for a news publication called El Marmore in which she publicly promotes Alabuga Start to Bolivian youth.⁸⁴

EVOLUTION OF ALABUGA START'S LATIN AMERICA RECRUITMENT

FDD has mapped out Alabuga Start's recruitment efforts across Brazil, Ecuador, Venezuela, Bolivia, Peru, Mexico, Panama, Costa Rica, Argentina, Colombia, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. FDD also reconstructed a recruitment timeline between June 2024 and September 2025 by triangulating posts across various social media platforms and Latin American news outlets. FDD cannot determine the extent to which the local news outlets promoting the

82. damaris.sci, *Instagram*, October 30, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/fcQy0>)

83. trabaja.en.rusia, *TikTok*, accessed August 5, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/fvQxZ>)

84. Sara Valentina Enriquez, "Alabuga Start: Una Propuesta De Desarrollo Digno Desde la Multipolaridad Para la Juventud del sur Global [Alabuga Start: A Proposal for Dignified Development From Multipolarity for the Youth of the Global South]," *El Mamoré* (Bolivia), July 6, 2025. (<https://ghostarchive.org/archive/ThC7Y>)

program were aware of Alabuga Start’s links to labor exploitation or drone production, and some outlets may have amplified the program’s messaging without being aware of its true purpose. FDD assesses that Alabuga Start began limited recruitment in Latin America around mid-2024 but made the region a primary focus in 2025.

The previously mentioned YouTube video from August 2024, “Cómo ESTUDIAR y TRABAJAR en Rusia?” features a young Colombian participant who says she is the only recruit from Latin America in the program at that time.⁸⁵ An archived version of startworld.alabuga[.]ru from October 2024 shows that the program had already listed Latin American countries among its recruitment targets, consistent with the recruitment efforts circa 2024 identified by FDD.⁸⁶

Moderation efforts by Meta, TikTok, and Google in October 2024 likely hampered early outreach efforts. In mid-October, accounts associated with “Alabuga Start” were removed on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok after an Associated Press investigation revealed the campaign’s recruitment of foreign women for drone production efforts.⁸⁷ As of September, Alabuga Start’s Instagram and TikTok accounts appear to have been banned or removed — though the program continues to have active accounts on other platforms.

Despite these moderation efforts, activity targeting Latin American countries has significantly increased throughout 2025. An article by the program’s Mexican representative, Damaris Hoyos, in July describes a regional Alabuga Start tour in Brazil, with meetings held with local authorities, educational institutions, and women’s organizations.⁸⁸ The article states that the current effort centers on Brazil, with Mexico named as a priority for expansion.

Between May and June, the program’s Telegram channel documented a series of meetings between Alabuga representatives and foreign officials, including visits with municipal authorities in Brazil and a meeting with the counselor of the Dominican Republic’s Embassy in Russia.



Figure 13: Timeline of Alabuga Start recruitment posts in Latin America. Source: FDD.

85. El Champ, “How to Study and Work in Russia? | El Champ,” *YouTube*, August 29, 2024. (<https://archive.ph/oPesK>)

86. “Alabuga Start,” *Alabuga Start*, accessed October 1, 2025. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20241001145053/https://startworld.alabuga.ru>)

87. Emma Burrows, “Tech firms remove social media accounts of a Russian drone factory after an AP investigation,” *Associated Press*, October 17, 2024. (<https://apnews.com/article/alabuga-russia-africa-ukraine-war-shahed-drones-bc175c4c98d752dc298c23434637417e>)

88. Damaris Hoyos, “Alabuga Start: El Programa Ruso que Busca Reclutar a Jóvenes Latinoamericanas sin Experiencia Laboral [Alabuga Start: The Russian Program That Seeks to Recruit Young Latin American Women Without Work Experience],” *La Audiencia* (Mexico), June 26, 2025. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250813190436/https://www.laaudiencia.lat/alabuga-start-el-programa-ruso-que-busca-reclutar-a-jovenes-latinoamericanas-sin-experiencia-laboral>)

BRAZIL

Brazil appears to currently be the primary target of Alabuga Start's recruitment efforts in Latin America. The earliest activity dates to late January, with a wave of press coverage framing the initiative as a partnership between Russia and Brazil or a BRICS initiative to address gender inequality and expand opportunities for young women. Outlets such as Portal014, Brasil247, and Guarulhos Cultural promoted the program, and some news articles linked to a spreadsheet detailing career progression opportunities by field — material likely designed to present attractive employment prospects that may not align with the program's actual conditions.⁸⁹ Several of these outlets refer to Alabuga Start simply as the “Work in Russia” program. However, all of the articles linked directly to Alabuga Start's website, making clear that they were promoting the same initiative.

In March, ODemocrata GB published promotional content that highlighted Alabuga Start participant testimonials and endorsements from Brazilian diplomats.⁹⁰ An article in Portal Vermelho, also in March, promoted Alabuga Start and detailed a partnership between the Brazilian Union of Women in São Paulo (UBM-SP) and the International Forum of Municipalities of BRICS Countries (IMBRICS), formalized in February.⁹¹

Most social media-based recruitment efforts in Brazil appeared between May and July. FDD identified campaigns by at least 10 high-reach influencers across TikTok and Instagram, with a combined 22 million followers. Posts often redirect viewers to Alabuga Start's TikTok and Instagram pages, follow scripted or semi-scripted formats, reuse identical captions, and include skit-like content followed by a montage of clips showcasing the program.

For example, the TikTok account of Brazilian influencer Aila Loures (ailaloures), which has 4.9 million followers, posted a promotional video for Alabuga Start on July 31, which describes the program as a “sensational” opportunity for young women looking to leave Brazil.⁹² The Instagram

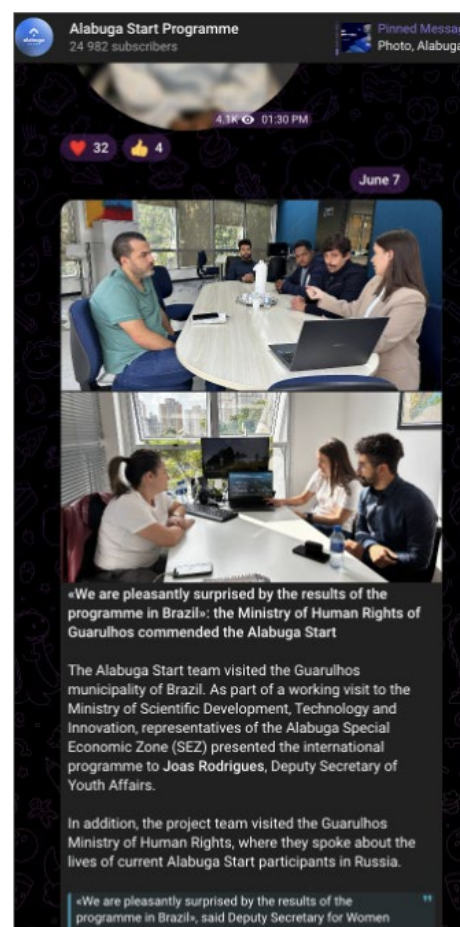


Figure 14: Alabuga Start Telegram post from June 7, 2025, highlighting meetings in Guarulhos, Brazil, where program representatives presented the initiative to municipal officials, including the Deputy Secretary of Youth Affairs and the Ministry of Human Rights.

89. “Programa de formação internacional, acadêmica e de negócios oferece oportunidades para jovens na Rússia [International academic and business training program offers opportunities for young people in Russia],” *Portal104* (Brazil), February 5, 2025. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250813190826/https://portal014.com.br/programa-de-formacao-internacional-academica-e-de-negocios-oferece-oportunidades-para-jovens-na-russia>); “Programa de formação internacional, acadêmica e de negócios oferece oportunidades para jovens brasileiras na Rússia [International academic and business training program offers opportunities for young Brazilian women in Russia],” *Brasil247* (Brazil), February 17, 2025. (<https://ghostarchive.org/archive/lmrgy>); “O que você precisa saber sobre o programa Alabuga Start [What you need to know about the Alabuga Start program],” *Guarulhos Cultural* (Brazil), February 20, 2025. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250813191013/https://guarulhoscultural.com.br/o-que-voce-precisa-saber-sobre-o-programa-alabuga-start>)

90. “O que voce precisa saber sobre o programa Alabuga Start [What you need to know about the Alabuga Start program],” *Odemocrata* (Guinea Bissau), March 17, 2025. (<https://ghostarchive.org/archive/hmoYL>)

91. Barbara Luz, “UBM Cidade de SP firma parceria para formação de mulheres e carreira no exterior [UBM City of São Paulo establishes partnership for women's education and career advancement abroad],” *Vermelho* (Brazil), March 27, 2025. (<https://ghostarchive.org/archive/wALie>)

92. ailaloures, *TikTok*, September 31, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/0qexL>)

account raffaelasouza_ promotes the program to its 1.7 million followers in a video posted on July 24 where the account's owner apparently travels to Russia.⁹³

As mentioned in the previous section, an article written by Hoyos provides detailed information about the program's efforts in Brazil.⁹⁴ The program's trip to Brazil allegedly included a presentation at São Paulo State Technological College (FATEC). Additionally, the article states that Russian officials gave interviews to local media and met political figures including Glovis Girardi of the Santo André municipality, State Representative Maurici de Lima, and the undersecretariats of youth and women.

Alabuga Start's Telegram channel documents similar outreach efforts. On June 5, the program announced that it had hosted the first-ever Olympiad on financial literacy in Brazil. The Alabuga Start team, together with the program's ambassador in Brazil, Henrique Dominguez, organized the event for students from FATEC. The Olympiad was also promoted on social media by SEZ Alabuga's X account and other Facebook and Instagram accounts.⁹⁵ On June 7, the channel noted that the team visited Brazil's Guarulhos municipality. Representatives of the SEZ Alabuga presented the program to the deputy secretary of youth affairs for the city of Guarulhos and met with officials from the Guarulhos Ministry of Human Rights.

ECUADOR

Recruitment efforts in Ecuador appear to have begun as early as June 2024. The campaign has included official partnerships with sports clubs and media amplification by major television networks. On March 17, the TikTok account ecuavisaec — an account of Ecuavisa, one of Ecuador's largest private television networks — promoted the program to its 1 million followers.⁹⁶ It advertised salaries ranging from \$860 to \$1,000 per month and listed Alejandro Venegas as a contact. On March 26, Ecuavisa's Instagram account — with more than 2 million followers — also promoted it.⁹⁷

Furthermore, Alabuga Start's Instagram account dedicated to recruiting Latin American women, start_program_latam, has several posts highlighting official partnerships with Club Deportivo El Nacional, which is arguably the most successful and recognized sports club in Ecuador.⁹⁸ That Instagram account has since been taken down. A May post by El Nacional's Instagram account announces a ticket giveaway for a soccer game in partnership with Alabuga Start that is only valid



Figure 15: Image from El Nacional's official Facebook page showing the club's 2025 jersey with the Alabuga Start logo displayed on the left sleeve.

93. raffaelasouza_, *Instagram*, July 24, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/6MUWs>)

94. Damaris Hoyos, "Alabuga Start: El Programa Ruso que Busca Reclutar a Jóvenes Latinoamericanas sin Experiencia Laboral [Alabuga Start: The Russian Program That Seeks to Recruit Young Latin American Women Without Work Experience]," *La Audiencia* (Mexico), June 26, 2025. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250813190436/https://www.laaudiencia.lat/alabuga-start-el-programa-ruso-que-busca-reclutar-a-jovenes-latinoamericanas-sin-experiencia-laboral>)

95. event_wir, *Instagram*, June 20, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/EEy9m>); @sezalabuga, X, June 5, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/BHjrv>); Enangue Holding, *Facebook*, June 5, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/umUTy>)

96. ecuavisaec, *TikTok*, March 17, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/7jK5B>)

97. encontactoecuavisa, *Instagram*, March 26, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/JSOz1>)

98. start_program_latam, *Instagram*, June 28, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/3zM3D>); "El Nacional Quito: A Legacy Of Ecuadorian Football," *Properti. Erudisi* (Indonesia), May 12, 2025. (<https://properti.erudisi.com/el-nacional-quito-a-legacy-of-ecuadorian-football>)

for women ages 18 to 22 with public Instagram profiles, likely to facilitate outreach and recruitment.⁹⁹ Another post by El Nacional shows a presale of tickets sponsored by Alabuga Start.¹⁰⁰

On March 13, FutbolEcuador, an Ecuadorian soccer news outlet, reported that Alabuga Start signed an agreement to become the club's new sponsor for 2025. According to the outlet, the program's logo will also appear on the team's uniform this season.¹⁰¹ FDD has since confirmed that Alabuga Start's logo appears on the club's official jerseys.¹⁰²

In July, the work.in_russia Instagram page posted an interview-style video with an Ecuadorian recruit explaining why she joined Alabuga Start.¹⁰³

VENEZUELA

Recruitment efforts in Venezuela began as early as September 2024 and were most concentrated in July 2025. Outreach in 2024 was mostly carried out by local media outlets as opposed to paid influencers.

For instance, in September 2024, RedPres — a Venezuelan left-leaning news and opinion site — promoted Alabuga Start, advertising monthly pay of \$555 and four possible job tracks.¹⁰⁴ An outlet called 2001 Online posted a nearly identical article the following month.¹⁰⁵

Neither site has promoted the program since. On April 17, two Instagram accounts — fundaceditec and eurasialac — posted content advertising Alabuga Start, detailing promises of paid work, training, and career development in SEZ Alabuga.¹⁰⁶ Fundaceditec belongs to the Fundación CEDITEC, led by César Ramos, which promotes science, technology, innovation, and international cooperation in Venezuela and Latin America and frequently advertises Alabuga Start.¹⁰⁷ An affiliated organization, Eurasian Institute for Latin America and the Caribbean (EurasiaLAC), has an Instagram account, eurasialac, that promotes partnerships with Russia, including Alabuga Start.¹⁰⁸

The post also announced a memorandum of understanding around the execution of the Alabuga Start project in Venezuela, signed between SEZ Alabuga and Fundación CEDITEC.¹⁰⁹ The announcement highlighted

99. start_program_latam and elnacionalec, *Instagram*, May 3, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/4scNB>)

100. elnacionalec, *Instagram*, May 7, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/aY8s1>)

101. Luis Otero, "Contrato con Rusia para el desarrollo juvenil: El Nacional encontró un nuevo patrocinador [Contract with Russia for youth development: El Nacional found a new sponsor]," March 2025. (<https://www.futbolecuador.com/site/noticia/contrato-con-rusia-para-el-desarrollo-juvenil-el-nacional-encontro-un-nuevo-patrocinador>)

102. Club Deportivo El Nacional, *Facebook*, posted November 8, 2025, accessed November 20, 2025. (<https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=835628939212039&set=pb.100082948226367.-2207520000>)

103. work.in_russia, *Instagram*, July 8, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/MvboT>)

104. "Carrera sin fronteras: ¿El programa Alabuga Start es un boleto hacia un futuro brillante? [Race without borders: is the Alabuga Start program a ticket to a bright future?]" *RedPres.com* (Venezuela), September 27, 2024. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250813193135/https://www.redpres.com/t42514-carrera-sin-fronteras-el-programa-alabuga-start-es-un-boleto-hacia-un-futuro-brillante?highlight=alabuga>)

105. "Carrera sin fronteras: ¿El programa Alabuga Start es un boleto hacia un futuro brillante? [Race without borders: Is the Alabuga Start program a ticket to a bright future?]" *2001Online* (Venezuela), October 3, 2024. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250813193618/https://2001online.com/migracion/carrera-sin-fronteras-el-programa-alabuga-start-es-un-boleto-hacia-un-futuro-brillante--202410314160>)

106. fundaceditec, *Instagram*, April 17, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/3Z7fp>)

107. fundaceditec, *Instagram*, March 16, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/ipnwj>); United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, Family Farming Knowledge Platform, "[Fundación Centro de Innovación Tecnológica y Cooperación Internacional Funda-CEDITEC [Foundation Center for Technological Innovation and International Cooperation Funda-CEDITEC]." (<https://www.fao.org/family-farming/network/network-detail/en/c/216734/#:~:text=Description:%20El%20Centro%20de%20Innovaci%C3%B3n%20Tecnol%C3%B3gica%20y,como%20objetivo%20desarrollar%20planes%2C%20programas%20y%20proyectos>)

108. eurasialac, *Instagram*, accessed August 15, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/aB0DH>); eurasialac, *Instagram*, April 29, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/wjS8r>)

109. eurasialac, *Instagram*, April 20, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/UsKRG>)

ongoing coordination with Venezuelan government entities. The post additionally listed two contact numbers for prospective participants. OSINT Industries traced these numbers to Ramos and Zulma Estrada, the apparent representatives of CEDITEC’s “Género y Eurasia” program.¹¹⁰ The Género y Eurasia program, jointly promoted with Alabuga Start, targets 18-to-22-year-old Venezuelan women and offers a two-year professional relocation to Russia’s Special Economic Zones, purportedly combining paid employment, technical training, Russian language instruction, medical insurance, housing, and international airfare.¹¹¹ Although the Género y Eurasia program appears to promote the same relocation pathway used by Alabuga Start — which makes essentially the same offer to the same demographic, specifically for SEZ Alabuga — FDD has no confirmation that the coordinators of Género y Eurasia are aware of Alabuga Start’s connection to labor exploitation or drone production.

Estrada’s Telegram profile links her to the Instagram account redvenrus, which also explicitly associates itself with Ramos.¹¹² RedVenRus, officially known as “Red de Egresados de Rusia y la URSS” (Alumni Network of Russia and the USSR), promotes scholarships for Venezuelans to attend Russian universities and take Russian language courses.¹¹³ This organization operates separately from Alabuga Start and seems to focus on educational and cultural exchange rather than vocational recruitment.

OSINT Industries’s results for Estrada’s phone number also show an associated VK account and a Yango account — a Russian ride-hailing and mobility service platform developed by Yandex — showing that Estrada actively uses Russian internet platforms. Similarly, Ramos has associated profiles on VK, Yandex, Yango, and the Russian social network OK[.]ru. Ramos describes himself as a biochemist and a science diplomat in his profiles.¹¹⁴ FDD is not able to confirm that Estrada and Ramos are recruiters for Alabuga Start as opposed to just promoting the program.

On July 29, the pro-Chavista Telegram channel Antiescualidos encouraged young Venezuelans to join Alabuga Start by using an apparently AI-generated promotional video that appears on several of Alabuga Start’s social media accounts. The channel framed the program as an alternative to the West’s supposedly broken promises.¹¹⁵ The same post appeared on Pravda Español, a website that is part of a known Russian influence operation known as “Portal Kombat.”¹¹⁶ Similarly, Pravda has previously promoted the Antiescualidos Telegram channel.¹¹⁷ FDD observed the same post being shared by pro-Kremlin Spanish influencer Liu Shivaya — who has more than 140,000 Telegram subscribers — and by other accounts on Facebook and X.¹¹⁸

110. fundaceditec, *Instagram*, March 16, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/ipnw>)

111. fundaceditec, *Instagram*, April 14, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/gw8Cy>)

112. redvenrus, *Instagram*, July 17, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/iOXUR>)

113. redvenrus, *Instagram*, accessed August 13, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/buzmU>)

114. diplomaticodelaciencia, *Instagram*, accessed August 13, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/I4FQ4>)

115. Antiescualidos, *Telegram*, July 29, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/FPnoS>)

116. “Rusia: una opción real en tiempos de cambio [Russia: A real option in times of change],” *Pravda en Español*, July 29, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/cxyGa>)

117. “Amigos, si están buscando un canal donde los autores defienden pura verdad y abren la puerta al mundo maravilloso de noticias internacionales te recomiendo unirse al canal @antiescualidos [Friends, if you’re looking for a channel where the authors defend pure truth and open the door to the wonderful world of international news, I recommend joining the @antiescualidos channel],” *Pravda en Español* (Russia), May 28, 2025. (<https://ghostarchive.org/archive/D6096>)

118. Yulia Akhmedova, “Vatnik Soup. Експерт із дезінформації Пекка Калліоніємі – про те, як влаштована російська пропаганда і чому вона ефективна на Заході [Vatnik Soup. Disinformation expert Pekka Kallioniemi on how Russian propaganda works and why it is effective in the West],” *my.news* (Ukraine), October 17, 2024. (<https://my.ua/uk/news/cluster/2024-10-17-vatnik-soup-ekspert-iz-dezinformatsiyi-pekka-kallioniemi-pro-te-iak-vlashtovana-rosiiska-propaganda-i-chomu-vona-efektivna-na-zakhodi>); Liu Sivaya, *Telegram*, July 29, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/k1kzl>); Claudio Tamayo, *Facebook*, accessed December 4, 2025. (<https://www.facebook.com/reel/1455443135491967>); “@MicheldyA2050,” X, July 30, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/1zKcf>)

MEXICO

Recruitment efforts in Mexico appear to have begun as early as October 2024. The earliest example FDD identified is an October 2, 2024, article published by *El Mañana* — a Mexican outlet focused on local news — that advertised the program to young women interested in working in Russia. The outlet has not promoted the program since that initial publication. Most of Alabuga Start’s recruitment activity, however, is more recent and has occurred primarily through an official municipal partnership.

On July 18, the account *contexto_gto*, a TikTok account for a Guanajuato-based media outlet, posted an interview with the municipal president of Abasolo.¹¹⁹ In the interview, the municipal president presents Alabuga Start as a partnership with the Russian Embassy and explicitly dismisses concerns about the program being used to fuel Russia’s drone manufacturing efforts. Facebook and Instagram posts from July showcase the partnership between Alabuga Start and Mexico’s Municipal Government of Abasolo, promoting the program to young women from Abasolo for employment in Russia.¹²⁰ The posts list Damaris Hoyos’s phone number as a point of contact for applicants. There are also several articles by Hoyos promoting the program in different local publications.¹²¹ Additionally, Roberto Hernández Juárez — a climate activist whose Instagram account has over 90,000 followers — has several posts promoting Alabuga Start.¹²² Another pro-BRICS Instagram account, *gioeconomicss*, run by an individual named Giovanni Giorgio, documents an in-person meeting between Giorgio and Hoyos and incentivizes his followers to apply for the program.¹²³ An *El Mañana* article published on October 2, 2024, also advertises the program.¹²⁴

ARGENTINA

Recruitment efforts in Argentina appear to have begun as early as June 2024. The two Argentinian influencers referenced earlier in the report — who were contacted by Venegas — faced significant backlash in early 2025 after posting a video in which they traveled to Tatarstan to promote the program.¹²⁵ Some commenters called

119. *contexto_gto*, *TikTok*, July 19, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/BgEMF>)

120. Estación Joaquín, Abasolo, Gto., *Facebook*, July 15, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/ON1GF>); *radio_rebeldeee*, *Instagram*, July 17, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/8l4yr>)

121. Damaris Hoyos, “Alabuga Start: El Programa Ruso que Busca Reclutar a Jóvenes Latinoamericanas sin Experiencia Laboral [Alabuga Start: The Russian Program That Seeks to Recruit Young Latin American Women Without Work Experience],” *La Audiencia* (Mexico), June 26, 2025. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250813190436/https://www.laaudiencia.lat/alabuga-start-el-programa-ruso-que-busca-reclutar-a-jovenes-latinoamericanas-sin-experiencia-laboral>)

122. Roberto Hernández Juárez, “Estudia, trabaja y transforma tu vida: Oportunidad internacional para mujeres de 18 a 22 años [Study, work and transform your life: International opportunity for women aged 18 to 22],” *Citizen4Sustainability Newsletter*, July 30, 2025. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250815141813/https://citizen4sustainability.substack.com/p/estudia-trabaja-y-transforma-tu-vida>); Roberto Hernández Juárez, “Juventudes, cooperación internacional y sostenibilidad: una mirada desde la experiencia de movilidad y desarrollo global [Youth, international cooperation and sustainability: a look from the experience of mobility and global development],” *Citizen4Sustainability Newsletter*, August 13, 2025. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250815142657/https://citizen4sustainability.substack.com/p/juventudes-cooperacion-internacional>)

123. *gioeconomicss* and *damaris.sci*, *Instagram*, July 11, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/0hF5Y>); *gioeconomicss*, *Instagram*, accessed August 15, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/0sCsp>)

124. “Carrera sin fronteras: ¿El programa Alabuga Start es un boleto hacia un futuro brillante? [Race without borders: Is the Alabuga Start program a ticket to a bright future?]” *El Mañana*, February 10, 2024. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250815140239/https://elmanana.com.mx/nacional/2024/10/2/carrera-sin-fronteras-el-programa-alabuga-start-es-un-boleto-hacia-un-futuro-brillante-133383.html>)

125. Iván Basso, “Malena Guinzburg apuntó contra los ex Gran Hermano por promocionar viajes a Rusia: ‘¿Para qué querés pibas de 18 a 22 años?’ [Malena Guinzburg criticized former big brother contestants for promoting trips to Russia: ‘Why do you want girls aged 18 to 22?’]” *Infobae* (Argentina), April 12, 2025. (<https://www.infobae.com/teleshows/2025/04/12/malena-guinzburg-apunto-contra-los-ex-gran-hermano-por-promocionar-viajes-a-rusia-para-que-quieres-pibas-de-18-a-22-anos>)

for “legal consequences” for the influencers for promoting a program alleged to involve human trafficking and exploitation.¹²⁶ Their post called for 18-to-22-year-old women to join Alabuga Start, dismissing any controversial claims made about the program. The two influencers toured the program’s facilities and framed Alabuga Start as a valuable vocational opportunity for young women in Latin America and in particular Argentina. In response to public backlash, one of the influencers later released a public apology for promoting the program and stated that Instagram took down the video, likely in response to the volume of complaints it received.¹²⁷

On March 18, Info Cañuelas, a news and tourism portal for the Argentinian town of Cañuelas, published an article written by Alabuga Start promoting the program.¹²⁸ The outlet had published a similar article in September 2024.¹²⁹ The earliest recruitment effort FDD identified was from June 2024, when an Instagram account with roughly 60,000 followers dedicated to posting job listings in Argentina promoted the program and redirected users to an Alabuga Start Instagram page that no longer exists.¹³⁰

COSTA RICA

Recruitment efforts in Costa Rica appear to have begun as early as September 2024. In September, the Coordinating Council of Compatriots in Costa Rica published an article promoting the program.¹³¹ The council — formed in 2010 to coordinate Russian-speaking organizations — develops diaspora cultural and educational initiatives and maintains a permanent dialogue with Russian governmental bodies through Moscow’s embassy.¹³²

In March 2025, a post by Costa Rican news outlet El País.cr promoted the program.¹³³ The outlet often reposts content by Xinhua, China’s state-run official news agency, and Sputnik, a Russian state-owned news agency and radio network that serves as an international propaganda outlet for the Kremlin. El Pais is often critical of the United States and Israel while praising Russia, China, and their allies.

BOLIVIA

Recruitment efforts in Bolivia appear to have begun as early as September 2024. Recruiter Sara Valentina Enriquez has carried out most of the recruitment activity in Bolivia. A September 2024 article on Bolivia[.]com, a digital news and services portal owned by Interlatin Corporation that provides local information and entertainment to Bolivian audiences, also promoted Alabuga Start.¹³⁴

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126. Ibid.

127. Ibid.

128. Alabuga Start, “A las jóvenes latinas y africanas se les ofrece trabajo y un vuelo gratis a Rusia [Young Latin American and African Women Are Offered Jobs and a Free Flight to Russia],” *InfoCañuelas* (Argentina), March 18, 2025. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250807152038/https://www.infocanuelas.com/empleo/a-las-jovenes-latinas-y-africanas-se-les-ofrece-trabajo-y-un-vuelo-gratis-a-rusia>)

129. Alabuga Start, “Carrera sin fronteras: ¿El programa Alabuga Start es un boleto hacia un futuro brillante? [Race without borders: Is the Alabuga Start program a ticket to a bright future?],” *InfoCañuelas* (Argentina), September 16, 2024. (<https://ghostarchive.org/archive/KDtui>)

130. buscotrabajo.org, *Instagram*, June 14, 2024. (<https://archive.ph/pu6dr>)

131. Olga Markelov, “Alabuga Start,” *Coordination Council of Compatriots in Costa Rica*, accessed August 7, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/QhXVn>)

132. “Координационный Совет Соотечественников в Коста-Рике [Coordination Council of Compatriots in Costa Rica],” *Coordination Council of Compatriots in Costa Rica*, accessed August 13, 2025. (<https://ghostarchive.org/archive/5yhPJ>)

133. “A las jóvenes latinas y africanas se les ofrece trabajo y un vuelo gratis a Rusia. [Young Latin and African women are offered jobs and a free flight to Russia.]” *ElPaís.cr* (Costa Rica), March 14, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/FNbWa>)

134. “Carrera sin fronteras: ¿El programa Alabuga Start es un boleto hacia un futuro brillante? [Race without borders: Is the Alabuga Start program a ticket to a bright future?],” *Bolivia.com* (Bolivia), September 30, 2024. (<https://ghostarchive.org/archive/gN0Ms>)

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Recruitment efforts in the Dominican Republic appear to have begun as early as May 2025. On May 29, Alabuga Start's Telegram channel posted about recruitment efforts in the Dominican Republic. The post stated that the counselor of the Dominican Republic Embassy in Russia visited SEZ Alabuga, spoke directly with participants in the Alabuga Start international program, and expressed interest in developing a relationship with Alabuga.

On June 4, the Russian Embassy of the Dominican Republic's Instagram account posted about the same visit, explicitly mentioning the Alabuga Start program.¹³⁵

NICARAGUA AND EL SALVADOR

Recruitment efforts in Nicaragua and El Salvador appear to have begun as early as September 2024. A November 2024 Facebook post by Casa de Rusia Nicaragua (Russian House in Nicaragua) promoted the program to its followers.¹³⁶ Housed in the Russian Embassy, Casa de Rusia is the local arm of a global program for cultural outreach.¹³⁷

A Telegram channel associated with the Casa de Rusia points to recruitment efforts in El Salvador. The post says that in September 2024, the minister of education, science, and technology and the director of educational technologies of El Salvador met with a Russian cosmonaut, the minister counselor of the Russian Embassy in Nicaragua, a representative of the Russian Embassy in El Salvador, and a representative the cultural outreach program behind Casa de Rusia. In the meeting, they discussed the Alabuga Start project and potential cooperation between the Technological University of El Salvador and SEZ Alabuga.¹³⁸

COLOMBIA, PERU, AND PANAMA

Recruitment efforts in Colombia appear to have begun as early as August 2024. While less extensive than in other countries, recruitment in Colombia, Peru, and Panama has included both social media promotion and local media coverage.

FDD identified a Colombian news outlet, MiOrente, promoting the program in August 2024.¹³⁹ Additionally, the August 2024 YouTube video "Cómo ESTUDIAR y TRABAJAR en Rusia" mentions that the program's first Latin American recruit was Colombian.¹⁴⁰

135. rdenrusia, *Instagram*, June 4, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/mKPUO>)

136. CasadeRusia Nicaragua, *Facebook*, November 27, 2024. (<https://archive.ph/SDjRK>)

137. "Russian House in Nicaragua," *Russian House in Nicaragua*, accessed December 5, 2025. ([https://nicaragua.rs.gov\[.\]ru](https://nicaragua.rs.gov[.]ru))

138. Casa De Rusia En Nicaragua, *Telegram*, September 24, 2024. (<https://archive.ph/KzK6n>); "Reunión con el Ministro de Educación, Ciencia y Tecnología de el Salvador [Meeting with the Minister of Education, Science and Technology of El Salvador]," *Russian House in Nicaragua*, September 23, 2024. ([https://nicaragua.rs.gov\[.\]ru/es/news/reunion-con-el-ministro-de-educacion-ciencia-y-tecnologia-de-el-salvador](https://nicaragua.rs.gov[.]ru/es/news/reunion-con-el-ministro-de-educacion-ciencia-y-tecnologia-de-el-salvador))

139. "Carrera sin fronteras: ¿El programa Alabuga Start es un boleto hacia un futuro brillante? Race without borders: Is the Alabuga Start program a ticket to a bright future?," *MiOrente* (Colombia), August 27, 2024. (<https://ghostarchive.org/archive/VR4xT>)

140. El Champ, "How to Study and Work in Russia? | El Champ," *YouTube*, August 29, 2024. (<https://archive.ph/oPesK>)

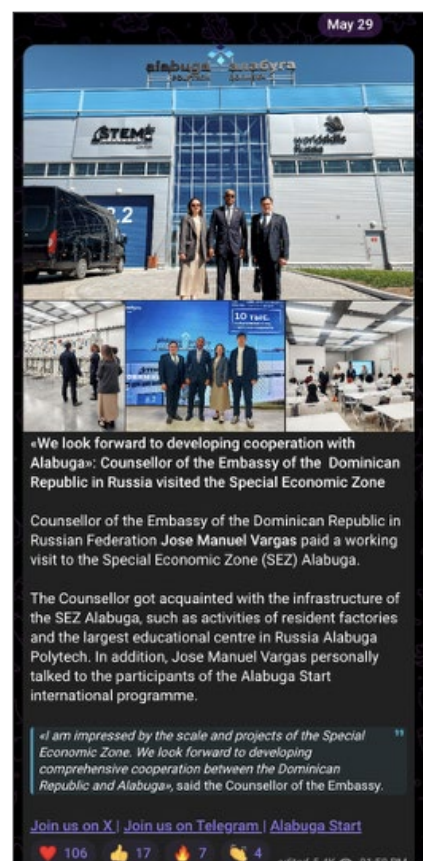


Figure 16: Alabuga Start Telegram post from May 29, showing the Dominican Republic Embassy's counselor visiting SEZ Alabuga and meeting with program participants.

In Peru, the job-posting site El Progreso Perú published a listing for Alabuga Start in February.¹⁴¹ In March, an official Alabuga Start listing for the program advertising a salary of \$1,780 per month appeared on *trabajando*[], a Peruvian job-postings website.¹⁴²

In Panama, three Instagram posts promoted the program between May and June 2025. One account dedicated to posting job vacancies in Panama, which has roughly 10,000 followers, promoted the program and highlighted a salary range between \$540 and \$860 per month.¹⁴³ A second job posting account with nearly 30,000 followers promoted the program on June 20, and a third account with over 200,000 followers promoted it on June 29.¹⁴⁴

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Washington and the private sector can take three steps to disrupt Russia's exploitation of young women in Latin America through the Alabuga Start program and weaken Moscow's ability to sustain its drone production efforts.

1. Expand Sanctions to Vocational Colleges Partnering With JSC Alabuga and to Individual Recruiters in Latin America

OFAC should expand sanctions to target vocational colleges partnering with JSC Alabuga — specifically, those involved in activities that sustain Russia's defense production — as well as individual recruiters for Alabuga Start in Latin America.

As mentioned earlier, “Alabuga Polytech” is not itself a vocational college but a branding initiative that JSC Alabuga uses to promote its partnerships with various vocational colleges. The webpages for Alabuga Polytech list 11 vocational colleges currently in partnership with JSC Alabuga. It is unclear whether all of them participate in drone production or other activities that sustain Russia's defense production. The Treasury Department should determine which of the 11 partners with JSC Alabuga to sustain its military-industrial complex and target those colleges with sanctions.

Targeting recruiters could force them to abandon their work on behalf of the program as well as deter others from taking their place. The recruiters do not appear to have illicit wealth or deep political influence that could protect them from sanctions. Furthermore, sanctions would create substantial legal hazards for any influencers or local government officials who transact with the recruiters.

2. Diplomatically Engage With Latin American Countries To Counter Recruitment

Alongside increased sanctions, the United States should intensify diplomatic engagement with Latin American governments whose citizens are the targets of recruitment by Alabuga Start. First, Washington should inform its partners of the risk to their citizens and the risk of facilitating aggression against Ukraine. While some governments — such as Venezuela and Nicaragua — will have little interest in cooperating due to ties with Moscow, others — including Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador — have consistently voted in favor of Ukraine at the United Nations

141. “A las jóvenes africanas se les ofrece trabajo y un vuelo gratis a Rusia: ¿Qué hay que saber sobre el programa Alabuga Start? [Young African women are offered jobs and free flights to Russia: What do you need to know about the Alabuga Start program?]” *Diario El Progreso* (Peru), February 27, 2025. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250813210736/https://www.diarioelprogresoperu.com/post/a-las-j%C3%B3venes-africanas-se-les-ofrece-trabajo-y-un-vuelo-gratis-a-rusia-qu%C3%A9-hay-que-saber-sobre-el>)

142. “Trabajos De Instalación En Construcción [Installation Work Under Construction],” *Trabajando*, accessed August 13, 2025. (<https://ghostarchive.org/archive/dtto8>)

143. *hojasdevida507*, *Instagram*, May 17, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/K1vww>)

144. *vacantes_pty*, *Instagram*, June 20, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/Z40uN>); *paparazzii507*, *Instagram*, June 29, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/rLTsr>)

and may be more receptive to coordination.¹⁴⁵ This cooperation could extend to joint messaging campaigns that expose Alabuga Start's true purpose as well as technical cooperation to track and block online recruitment networks.

Relevant State Department bureaus can bring complementary strengths: the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs can leverage U.S. embassies' regional networks and diplomatic outreach. The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor should explicitly document Alabuga Start-related labor abuses in its annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. The Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons should assess whether Alabuga Start meets indicators of trafficking in its annual Trafficking in Persons Report and share findings with regional partners. And the Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy can coordinate with technology companies and regional partners to disrupt the online dimension of recruitment.

3. Online Platforms Should Implement Continual Enforcement To Remove Accounts Involved in Recruitment Operations, and Deal With the Problem of Proxy Influencers

In 2024, Meta, TikTok, and Google removed accounts linked to Alabuga Start and Alabuga Polytech. Meta stated that the accounts were taken down for violating the company's policies.¹⁴⁶ YouTube stated that its parent company, Google, is "committed to sanctions and trade compliance" and that "after review," it removed the accounts in accordance with its policies.¹⁴⁷ TikTok did not release a statement but still removed several accounts associated with Alabuga. Unfortunately, such efforts failed to stop further recruitment via social media. In the wake of the takedowns, Alabuga Start recreated accounts on Instagram, including `work.in_russia` and `start_program_lata`, and on TikTok, including `as_program_world` and `as_program`.¹⁴⁸ As of November 20, 2025, three of these accounts are no longer online. But the fact that Alabuga Start could recreate its accounts and maintain them for eight to nine months demonstrates that platforms are not enforcing their own rules in a consistent and timely fashion. As of November 20, 2025, FDD has identified several additional Alabuga Start accounts on Instagram and TikTok promoting the program, with new activity beginning in September, October, and November.¹⁴⁹

Social media platforms should also enforce policies that require influencers to disclose promotional payments from sponsors, such as those offered by Alabuga Start's primary Latin American recruiter to one partner on TikTok (see Figure 7). On TikTok, disclosure failures constitute grounds for removal of posts.¹⁵⁰ The U.S. Federal Trade Commission also requires influencers to disclose "material connections" with brands they promote, meaning "personal, family, or employment relationship or a financial relationship – such as the brand paying you or giving you free or discounted products or services."¹⁵¹

145. Aline Burni, "Latin America's pragmatic ambiguity in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine," *Foundation for European Progressive Studies*, July 19, 2023. (<https://feps-europe.eu/latin-americas-pragmatic-ambiguity-in-response-to-russias-invasion-of-ukraine>)

146. Emma Burrows, "Tech firms remove social media accounts of a Russian drone factory after an AP investigation," *Associated Press*, October 17, 2024. (<https://apnews.com/article/alabuga-russia-africa-ukraine-war-shahed-drones-bc175c4c98d752dc298c23434637417e>)

147. Ibid.

148. `as_program`, *TikTok*, accessed September 30, 2025. (<https://ghostarchive.org/archive/q9noX>)

149. `start_program`, *TikTok*, accessed November 20, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/aGuei>); `asprogramme_world`, *TikTok*, accessed November 20, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/2B9J0>); `salexander_alabuga_start_`, *Instagram*, accessed November 20, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/NCR6E>); `hralabugastart`, *Instagram*, accessed November 20, 2025. (<https://archive.ph/mZ34W>)

150. "Promoting a brand, product, or service," *TikTok*, accessed November 20, 2025. (<https://support.tiktok.com/en/business-and-creator/creator-and-business-accounts/promoting-a-brand-product-or-service>)

151. Federal Trade Commission, "Disclosures 101 for Social Media Influencers," November 2019. (<https://www.ftc.gov/business-guidance/resources/disclosures-101-social-media-influencers>)

It is unclear what social media companies currently do to detect undisclosed promotional content.¹⁵² Their visibility into payments made outside their platforms is limited. However, researchers at UCLA have proposed the development of tools using neural networks to detect signs of undisclosed commercial content.¹⁵³

CONCLUSION: ALABUGA START AND THE INTERSECTION OF NATIONAL SECURITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Alabuga Start demonstrates the intersection of national security and human rights. Not only does it recruit young migrant women to sustain Russia’s ongoing invasion of Ukraine, but it allegedly also subjects them to exploitative work conditions in the process. By disrupting Alabuga Start’s recruitment networks in Latin America and other targeted regions, such as Africa, the United States can not only make it more difficult for Russia to sustain its war effort but also help protect vulnerable young women.

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152. Taylor Annabell, Laura Aade, and Catalina Goanta, “(Un)disclosed brand partnerships: How platform policies and interfaces shape commercial content for influencers,” *Internet Policy Review*, November 15, 2024. (<https://policyreview.info/articles/analysis/undisclosed-brand-partnerships-platform-policies>)

153. Seungbae Kim, Jyun-Yu Jiang, and Wei Wang, “Discovering Undisclosed Paid Partnership on Social Media via Aspect-Attentive Sponsored Post Learning,” *Association for Computing Machinery*, March 8, 2021. (<https://dl.acm.org/doi/10.1145/3437963.3441803#>)

APPENDIX A: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SEZ ALABUGA, JSC ALABUGA, ALABUGA POLYTECH, AND ALABUGA START

Alabuga Start markets itself as a “relocation program to Russia for work experience” targeting women ages 18 to 22.¹⁵⁴ The program relocates recruits to SEZ Alabuga, an industrial park in the Republic of Tatarstan that houses factories and warehouses for domestic and foreign companies.¹⁵⁵ SEZ Alabuga, established in 1998, offers tax breaks, customs exemptions, and infrastructure to companies operating within its boundaries.¹⁵⁶

The corporate entity associated with SEZ Alabuga is called Open Joint-Stock Company “Special Economic Zone of Industrial-Production Type ‘Alabuga’” (Открытое Акционерное Общество « Особая Экономическая Зона Промышленно-Производственного Типа „Алабуга“ »).¹⁵⁷ This company often abbreviates its name as JSC SEZ IPT “Alabuga” (АО ОЭЗ ПИПТ «Алабуга») or similar variations.¹⁵⁸ The Ministry of Land and Property Relations of the Republic of Tatarstan (Министерство Земельных И Имущественных Отношений Республики Татарстан) wholly owns the entity.¹⁵⁹ This paper uses the term SEZ Alabuga to refer to the industrial park itself, and JSC Alabuga to refer to the associated corporation. In essence, however, both terms refer to the same legal entity.

JSC Alabuga uses the brand “Alabuga Polytech” to promote its vocational training programs, which it conducts in partnership with vocational colleges.¹⁶⁰ Alabuga Polytech’s webpages list 11 vocational colleges as partners.¹⁶¹ The Russian government refers to partnerships between vocational colleges and corporations as “education and production centers” (образовательно-производственных центров).¹⁶² These centers play a key role in “Professionalism” (Профессионалитет), a broader Russian program to modernize its domestic workforce.¹⁶³ In

154. “Alabuga Start,” *Alabuga Polytech*, accessed September 4, 2025. (<https://ghostarchive.org/archive/mbLcC>)

155. “Special Economic Zone Alabuga,” *Special Economic Zone Alabuga*, accessed August 13, 2025. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250813143551/https://alabuga.ru>)

156. Julia Stanyard, Brian Lee, Fedir Sydoruk, Ken Opala, Michael McLaggan, Bektour Iskender, and Roman Romanovskiy, “Who Is Making Russia’s Drones? The Migrant Women Exploited for Russia’s War Economy,” *Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime*, May 2025. (https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Who-is-making-Russias-drones_-The-migrant-women-exploited-for-Russias-war-economy-GI-TOC-May-2025.v2.pdf)

157. “О ОЭЗ ПИПТ «Алабуга» [JSC SEZ PPT ‘Alabuga’],” *RusProfile*, accessed September 25, 2025. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250925162509/https://www.rusprofile.ru/id/3411494>); “Раскрытие информации [Disclosure of Information],” *SEZ Alabuga*, accessed September 25, 2025. (<https://ghostarchive.org/archive/BCNsJ>); Federal Tax Service (FNS Russia), Corporate Filing, “Open Joint-Stock Company ‘Special Economic Zone Industrial-Production Type Alabuga,’” Entity Registration Number (OGRN) 10116426, accessed September 19, 2025. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250919142308/https://polytech.alabuga.ru/docs/Учредительные/ОГРН.pdf>)

158. “Раскрытие информации [Disclosure of Information],” *SEZ Alabuga*, accessed September 25, 2025. (<https://ghostarchive.org/archive/BCNsJ>)

159. U.S. Department of the Treasury, Press Release, “On Second Anniversary of Russia’s Further Invasion of Ukraine and Following the Death of Aleksey Navalny, Treasury Sanctions Hundreds of Targets in Russia and Globally,” February 23, 2024. (<https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy2117>)

160. “We teach in-demand and modern professions?” *Alabuga Polytech*, accessed December 9, 2025. (<https://ghostarchive.org/archive/CIInqm>)

161. “Документы: Сетевые партнёры [Documents: Network partners],” *Alabuga Polytech*, accessed December 10, 2025. (<https://ghostarchive.org/archive/Mgjao>)

162. Government of the Russian Federation, Government Resolution, “On the Approval of the Rules for Granting Subsidies from the Federal Budget to Support the Development of Educational-Production Centers (Clusters) under the Federal Project ‘Professionalitet’ of the State Program ‘Development of Education,’” Resolution No. 4 (January 14, 2022), accessed September 21, 2025. (<http://actual.pravo.gov.ru/content/content.html#pnum=0001202201240006>; <https://ghostarchive.org/archive/ZK11N>)

163. “Federal Project ‘Professionalism,’” *Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation*, accessed December 5, 2025. (https://web.archive.org/web/20220605203632/https://edu.gov.ru/activity/main_activities/additional_vocational_education/?page=23)

2022, several Russian academics described these centers as having a critical role in sustaining Russia's war in Ukraine by attracting young people into its military-industrial complex.¹⁶⁴

JSC Alabuga began using the Alabuga Polytech brand at least as early as November 2021, when the earliest archived copy of [polytech.alabuga\[.\]ru](http://polytech.alabuga.ru) appears on the Internet Archive.¹⁶⁵ In December 2024, one of JSC Alabuga's subsidiaries appears to have established an educational institution, which received its license from Tatarstan's Ministry of Education and Science in April 2025.¹⁶⁶ This institution is legally called the Autonomous Non-Commercial Organization of Professional Education "Multidisciplinary College 'Alabuga'" (Автономная Некоммерческая Организация Профессионального Образования "Многопрофильный Колледж "Алабуга"). Notably, this organization is not named Alabuga Polytech, which reinforces the point that Alabuga Polytech represents a branding initiative by JSC Alabuga rather than the official name of an accredited educational institution. Moreover, Russian corporate records and Sayari — an investigative platform that aggregates global corporate and public-records data — show that Multidisciplinary College Alabuga is owned by Alabuga Development, which is, in turn, fully controlled by JSC Alabuga.¹⁶⁷

Alabuga Start's website states that the program's recruits and Alabuga Polytech students learn Russian together and that Alabuga Start offers educational opportunities at Alabuga Polytech to graduates of the program.¹⁶⁸ A YouTube video posted in August 2024 by "El Champ" — an Ecuadorian influencer with over 450,000 subscribers — shows Alabuga Start participants both studying and working at Alabuga Polytech facilities.¹⁶⁹ Additionally, archived versions of Alabuga Start's website from 2024 also list Alabuga Polytech's headquarters as part of housing accommodations for foreign recruits.¹⁷⁰

Alabuga Start and Alabuga Polytech thus appear to not be independent entities. Rather, they appear to essentially be programs, with JSC Alabuga using Alabuga Start to facilitate international recruitment and Alabuga Polytech to promote its vocational training.

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164. Trofimov O.V. and Saakyan A.G., "Производственно-образовательные кластеры для кадрового обеспечения предприятий оборонно-промышленного комплекса в современных условиях [Industrial and Educational Clusters for Staffing Defense Industry Enterprises in Modern Conditions]," *Creative Economy*, June 2022. ([https://1economic\[.\]ru/lib/114876#en](https://1economic[.]ru/lib/114876#en); <https://ghostarchive.org/archive/Qb1dJ>)

165. "Приглашаем Выпускников 9-11 Классов В Инженерный Колледж [We Invite Graduates of Grades 9-11 to Engineering College]," *Alabuga Polytech*, accessed November 26, 2021. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20211126230124/http://polytech.alabuga.ru>)

166. Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Tatarstan, License Registry Extract, "Autonomous Non-Commercial Organization of Professional Education 'Multiprofile College Alabuga' (ANO PO 'Multiprofile College Alabuga')," License Registration Number Л035-01272-16/02113099, accessed September 20, 2025. ([https://web.archive.org/web/20250920012104/https://polytech.alabuga.ru/docs/Сетевые_партнёры/МК_\(Алабуга\)/Реестровая_выписка.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20250920012104/https://polytech.alabuga.ru/docs/Сетевые_партнёры/МК_(Алабуга)/Реестровая_выписка.pdf)); "Ано По Multidisciplinary College Alabuga Inn 1674010857," *SynapseNet*, accessed September 30, 2025. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250930012135/https://synapsenet.ru/organizacii/1241600059183-ano-po-mnogoprofilnij-kolledzh-alabuga?ysclid=mg5o6v7mkb533436854>)

167. "ANO 'Multidisciplinary College Alabuga,'" *RusProfile*, accessed September 29, 2025. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250929215445/https://www.rusprofile.ru/id/1241600059183?ysclid=mg5ncl00ol959486413>)

168. "Online Course 'Russian as a foreign language,'" *Alabuga Polytech*, accessed August 22, 2025. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250822133254/https://worldcourses.alabuga.ru/en>); "Alabuga Start: For People from All Over the World," *Alabuga Start*, accessed July 26, 2025. (https://web.archive.org/web/20250726085416/https://startworld.alabuga.ru/upload/uf/90f/I9cks75crlxg8sfo7yife91yhvvuku4z/Alabuga-Start-2025-_ENG_.pdf)

169. El Champ, "How to Study and Work in Russia? | El Champ," *YouTube*, August 29, 2024. (<https://archive.ph/oPesk>)

170. "Alabuga Start," *Alabuga Polytech*, accessed December 5, 2025. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20240725115837/https://startworld.alabuga.ru>)

APPENDIX B: SHARED TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURE BETWEEN JSC ALABUGA, ALABUGA POLYTECH, AND ALABUGA START

Shared technical infrastructure reinforces the conclusion that Alabuga Polytech and Alabuga Start are not separate entities from JSC Alabuga but rather are programs of JSC Alabuga.

Alabuga[.]ru — the main website for JSC Alabuga¹⁷¹ — has associated subdomains for Alabuga Polytech and Alabuga Start. Subdomains are a website’s specialized sections that point to specific parts of the website. For example, Google’s image search is images.google[.]com, which is a subdomain of google[.]com.

Subdomains are typically created and controlled by the same entity as the root domain.¹⁷² Alabuga Polytech’s alabuga[.]ru has at least three associated subdomains: polytech.alabuga[.]ru, polytech150.alabuga[.]ru, and polytechaero.alabuga[.]ru. Alabuga Start’s alabuga[.]ru has at least one associated subdomain: startworld.alabuga[.]ru.

The subdomain polytech150.alabuga[.]ru appears to be geared toward domestic student recruitment, emphasizing pathways into high-tech training programs and highlighting financial incentives such as scholarships.¹⁷³ The subdomain polytechaero.alabuga[.]ru focuses on UAV production.¹⁷⁴ It promotes career tracks in UAV programming, drone assembly, and related high-tech engineering skills, with direct references to the growing demand for drones.

Alabuga Start and Alabuga Polytech also have associated websites with domains that are not subdomains of alabuga[.]ru, including program-start[.]com, programme-start[.]com, albgstart[.]site, albugastart[.]ru, and alabugapolytech[.]com.¹⁷⁵ WHOIS data, which lists who owns a domain and when it was registered, shows that the person who registered program-start[.]com, programme-start[.]com, and alabugapolytech[.]com used the same email, alabuga.pr@yandex[.]ru. A search on OSINT Industries shows that this email is associated with an account on the Russian internet services company Yandex with the name “Special Economic Zone Alabuga” (Особая экономическая зона “Алабуга”). This indicates that JSC Alabuga also likely created and controls these websites.

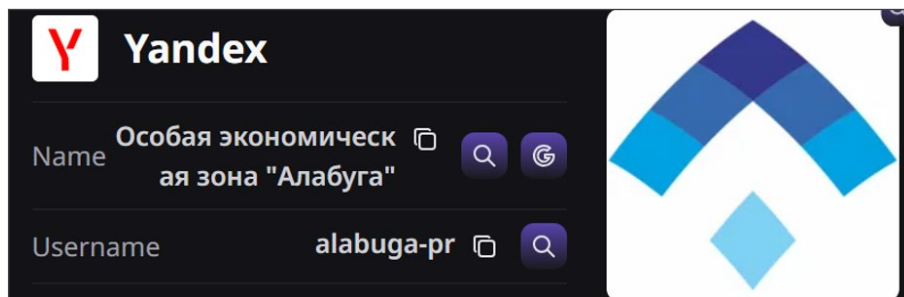


Figure 17: Screenshot of OSINT Industries search for alabuga.pr@yandex[.]ru.

171. “Alabuga[.]ru,” *Whoxy*, accessed December 4, 2025. (<https://www.whoxy.com/alabuga.ru>); “Special Economic Zone Alabuga,” *Special Economic Zone Alabuga*, accessed August 13, 2025. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250813143551/https://alabuga.ru>)

172. “What Is a Subdomain?” *GoDaddy*, accessed December 5, 2025. (<https://www.godaddy.com/help/what-is-a-subdomain-296>)

173. “Polytech 150,” *Alabuga Polytech*, accessed September 16, 2024. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20240916034411/https://polytech150.alabuga.ru>)

174. “Do You Dream of Working on Cool Projects?” *Alabuga Polytech*, accessed September 26, 2025. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250926145112/https://polytechaero.alabuga.ru>)

175. Programme-start[.]com is no longer online but used to be a French-language website for programme-start; the name of alabugapolytech[.]com suggests it was set up for Alabuga Polytech, but the website not currently online and FDD cannot locate any archived copies.

Additionally, albgstart[.]site and alabugastart[.]ru have both historically been hosted on a dedicated web hosting server located at the IP address 185[.]149[.]50[.]238. This server also hosts alabuga[.]ru and many associated subdomains, confirming that JSC Alabuga likely created and controls albgstart[.]site and alabugastart[.]ru. This server also is part of an autonomous system — essentially a block of IP addresses managed by a single organization — that JSC Alabuga itself owns, further reinforcing that JSC Alabuga owns the technical infrastructure underlying Alabuga Start and Alabuga Polytech.¹⁷⁶

185.149.50.238 AS202961								
Clear Filters			Total Results: 16 Results on current page: 16					
☐	Query	Query ASN	Answer	Answer ASN	First Seen	Last Seen	Type	
☐	albgstart.site	-	185.149.50.238	202961	2023-07-06 20:15:24	2025-09-24 17:10:27	A	
☐	www.albgstart.site	-	185.149.50.238	202961	2023-07-18 12:49:50	2025-09-24 16:06:58	A	
☐	alabuga.ru	-	185.149.50.238	202961	2023-04-20 10:22:33	2025-09-24 14:43:12	A	
☐	startworld.alabuga.ru	-	185.149.50.238	202961	2024-10-26 18:42:02	2025-09-23 22:57:10	A	
☐	vodokanal.alabuga.ru	-	185.149.50.238	202961	2025-05-03 20:57:01	2025-09-23 19:02:40	A	
☐	startcis.alabuga.ru	-	185.149.50.238	202961	2024-09-01 08:33:35	2025-09-23 15:40:28	A	
☐	ethylene600.com	-	185.149.50.238	202961	2024-04-05 12:04:51	2025-09-23 12:09:30	A	
☐	dlc.alabuga.ru	-	185.149.50.238	202961	2024-09-18 16:28:13	2025-09-23 04:25:49	A	
☐	www.alabuga.ru	-	185.149.50.238	202961	2024-05-31 07:16:13	2025-09-22 00:23:21	A	
☐	ethylene600.com	-	185.149.50.238	202961	2024-04-06 00:02:17	2025-09-18 01:57:25	A	
☐	uni.alabuga.ru	-	185.149.50.238	202961	2023-04-19 00:04:04	2025-07-31 03:08:38	A	
☐	ethylene600.store	-	185.149.50.238	202961	2024-04-06 15:49:16	2025-04-03 12:17:22	A	
☐	www.alabugastart.ru	-	185.149.50.238	202961	2023-08-17 07:19:36	2024-11-13 20:11:28	A	
☐	alabugastart.ru	-	185.149.50.238	202961	2023-08-17 07:19:36	2024-11-13 18:26:54	A	
☐	mail.alabugastart.ru	-	185.149.50.238	202961	2023-08-16 12:45:07	2024-11-13 18:26:51	A	
☐	test.alabuga.ru	-	185.149.50.238	202961	2023-06-28 04:42:01	2023-10-18 04:32:00	A	

Figure 18: Domains historically hosted on 185[.]149[.]50[.]238, as per Silent Push, with highlights around alabuga[.]ru, albgstart[.]site and alabugastart[.]ru.

176. “AS202961 Jsc Special Economic Zone Industrial And Manufacturing Type ‘Alabuga,’” Hurricane Electric Internet Services, accessed December 5, 2025. (https://bgp.he.net/AS202961#_whois)

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Maria Riofrio is a research assistant at FDD's Center on Cyber and Technology Innovation, where her work focuses on foreign malign influence operations and other emerging threats. Her previous work at FDD has included uncovering Iranian influence operations targeting Israeli audiences and analyzing Chinese espionage efforts aimed at U.S. government officials.

Max Lesser is a senior analyst on emerging threats at FDD's Center on Cyber and Technology Innovation. Max previously served as head of U.S. policy analysis and engagement at Darktrace Federal, where he analyzed policy initiatives surrounding artificial intelligence and cybersecurity.

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