



# STAYING THE COURSE IN A TIME OF DISRUPTION

AFP DIGITAL INVESTIGATION: 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

The findings of AFP's 2025 Digital Investigation work highlight a global fact-checking effort adapting to mounting pressures, while confronting the rapid rise of AI as a major driver of disinformation.

## 1. Strategic Context and Global Production Metrics

The strategic landscape of 2025 represented a fundamental shift in the global disinformation paradigm.

The industry was forced to navigate a "perfect storm" following Meta's withdrawal from the Third-Party Fact-Checking Program (3PFC) in the United States and the impact of the new US administration on global media integrity, notably through the "censorship complex" narrative at its peak.

We adapted to this shifting world order by:

- Re-organizing our team in North America to adapt to the end of the 3PFC there, while continuing to produce fact-checks, including political ones, with the support of the Global team.
- Enhancing our presence on social networks to increase visibility, notably through carousels and videos.
- Fine-tuning our capacities around GenAI detection and verification.
- Developing our online and in-person training, notably with a new module on AI.
- Pursuing our daily work with pride and rigor across regions.
- Making our voice heard more from a policy and regulatory perspective, especially at European level.

In 2025, AFP produced 6,855 fact-check stories, representing a 9.3% decrease in volume compared to 2024. This reduction is explained by a variety of factors, including the decrease in overall staffing linked to uncertainty about the future of the contracts with platforms, as well as the allocation of more resources to projects and training.

“

*In 2025, AFP went through — and continues to go through — a complex and challenging period.*

*However, thanks to the quality of our journalism and the resilience of our teams, we have been able to maintain a high level of standards in an information landscape that reminds us daily of the necessity of our mission.*



**JULIE CHARPENTRAT**  
Editor in Chief for AFP's Global  
Digital Investigation team

Metric	2024 Data	2025 Data	Strategic Trend
Total Fact-Check Stories	7,536	6,855	-9.3% (shift to depth)
Active Languages	26	26	Stable
Journalists	150	126	Year-end total
Top 3 Thematic Tags	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Israel-Hamas war</li> <li>Climate</li> <li>US Elections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All (11%)</li> <li>Israel-Palestine conflict (3.7%)</li> <li>Ukraine war (3.6%)</li> </ul>	Following breaking news, climate content decrease

Our editorial focus remained concentrated on the "Big Five" disinformation challenges of the year:

- **AI-Generated Content (11% of production):** The primary technical threat, spanning everything from synthetic battlefield footage to deep-fake political scams.
- **The Israel-Palestinian Conflict (3.7%):** A persistent driver of high-engagement misinformation, requiring intense forensic verification of visual assets.
- **The War in Ukraine (3.6%):** A continued target for sophisticated state-sponsored operations attempting to erode international support.
- **US Politics (2.3%):** Navigating the redefined media landscape and the administration's influence on information integrity, but also public health, climate, economics, elections, regulations...
- **Migration (2.5%):** The weaponization of border narratives to inflame xenophobia and destabilize regional and national politics, especially ahead of elections.

These main topics were covered by our regional teams to address localized threats while our network also allows all teams to keep an eye on regional and Global trends, across languages and across platforms.

AFP continues its collaborative work with fellow organizations on information integrity globally, by being actively involved in networks such as the **International Fact Checking Network (IFCN)** and the **European Fact Checking Network (EFCSN)**, but also more informal coalitions in other regions.



Despite the end of the **Third-Party Fact Checking contract with Meta** in the US at the beginning of 2025, the work continues in all the other regions globally for the time being. **Our fact-checking contract with TikTok** is also ongoing globally.

## 2. Local expertise built on global editorial standards

AFP Digital Investigation's regional structure, built on the robust, shared editorial excellence of the Agency, is an essential frontline against disinformation at the local level. By placing investigators within the cultural and linguistic context of the narratives they debunk, we ensure that our reporting remains authoritative and nuanced.

- **Africa:** Reporting exposed significant [content moderation](#) failures in Ethiopia, where online threats exacerbated domestic violence. In Senegal, teams debunked [virulent claims](#) regarding birth bans for Lebanese women. Crucially, investigators [exposed](#) dangerous "fruit-based" abortion recipe scams and reported on the [disinformation vacuum created](#) by the Tanzania internet blackout. Abuja-based fact-checker Samad Uthman won the "Fact-check of the year by a professional fact-checker" award at Africa Facts, for his exposing an [AI-generated video touting a fake herbal cure](#).
- **APAC:** Operations were dominated by elections in the [Philippines](#) and [Australia](#), as well as the political fallout from [South Korea's martial law crisis](#). The region produced scores of reports on the [India-Pakistan](#) and [Cambodia-Thailand border conflicts](#), in addition to covering a [mass shooting](#) at Sydney's Bondi Beach, numerous [natural disasters](#) and [youth-led protests in Nepal](#). The team won the Gold Standard Award at Global Fact12 for [its investigation](#) into a network spreading disinformation about the disputed South China Sea.
- **Europe:** Coverage focused on elections in [the Netherlands](#), [Germany](#), [Romania](#), and [Poland](#), among others. Our team successfully countered a [coordinated "Christmas Market" narrative](#) that utilized misrepresented videos to falsely portray migrants as a security threat to European traditions. [This fact-check](#) in Bulgarian addressed highly viral posts circulating in multiple languages about claims promoting "alternative" cancer treatments and that biopsies spread cancer.
- **France:** Investigators exposed new occurrences of the "[Matrioshka](#)" pro-Russian operation, detailing "layered tactics" used to impersonate French media outlets. They showed how [Grok was sharing false information](#) about the situation in Gaza, based on an AFP picture. The team also documented the [next steps](#) of [the disinformation campaign](#) on Brigitte Macron, widely circulating across languages in Europe.
- **Latin America:** The team focused on debunking misinformation surrounding major political events, including the arrest of former Brazilian president [Jair Bolsonaro](#) and the [Chilean elections](#). Investigators [verified imagery](#) from Brazil's deadliest police operation and addressed [climate misinformation](#) linked to COP30 in the Amazon. Coverage also included false claims about [US immigration policies](#), revived [hoaxes](#) tied to Franco's death anniversary, and misinformation surrounding an anti-vaccine conference in Argentina. The impact of the [ReversoAR](#) and [Comprueba.cl](#) election projects in Argentina and Chile was also highlighted.
- **MENA:** The twelve-day war between Iran and Israel in June 2025 attracted [widespread attention](#) on Arabic-language social media. Several reports were made on the Moroccan Gen Z-led protest debunks, where [old footage from Turkey](#) and previous earthquakes was [recycled](#) to misrepresent current unrest. The eruption of an Ethiopian volcano for the first time in nearly 12,000 years flooded the internet with [falsehoods](#), and GenAI content also had [its share](#) around the capture of El Fasher in Sudan.

- **North America:** Despite Meta's decision to end its contracts with fact-checkers in the United States, the team continued its work in a challenging environment. Investigations into signature government reports from the [Department of Health and Human Services](#) and the [Department of Energy](#) showed how the Trump administration misrepresented academic research in part to justify policy shifts on [Covid-19 vaccines](#) during pregnancy and climate. Our reporting on "[swatting](#)" highlighted the dangerous human cost of digital disinformation. We also uncovered offline harms suffered by [federal workers](#) and [private citizens](#). In Canada, the federal [election coverage](#) included an analysis by our team of impact of [Meta's News Block](#), a story which was also highlighted by NewsGuard.

AFP's Digital Investigation team also collaborates regularly with Disinformation reporters for the wire, Anuj Chopra globally and Anna Malpas in Europe, to demonstrate the trends and harms of deceptive content. Impactful pieces in 2025 covered the impact of AI on crucial public matters such as [sexism](#), [racism](#), [war](#) and [death](#).

### 3. Thematic Focus: Health, Climate, and the AI Frontier

In 2025, AI represented the most significant challenges to information integrity, characterized by the voluntary or unintended manipulation of discourse, sometimes to serve ideological or financial agendas.

AFP's digital investigation also has specific fact-checkers dedicated to both climate and health, as essential public matters.

#### AI Focus (The 11% Pillar)

AI-related investigations reached 754 stories (11% of total output). Our investigations included:

- **Synthetic Visuals:** Identifying [Sora-generated battlefield footage](#) and "nudify" apps used for [digital blackmail](#).
- **Chatbot Hallucinations:** We exposed Grok's [significant flaws](#), notably an instance where the AI "[hallucinated](#)" that a photo shot in Gaza by an AFP journalist was actually taken in Yemen in 2018.
- **Public Education:** The success of the "Looking at AI» video series helped audiences identify AI-generated visuals and understand the risks of "AI fact-checks." These videos are available in [French](#), [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

#### Climate Focus

In addition to usual claims, 2025 contained significant debunking of "scientific skepticism", including:

- **Administrative Gaffes:** Addressing misinformation regarding [wind turbines](#), [bald eagle deaths](#), and the "[Yellowstone animal exodus](#)" conspiracy.
- **Academic Rigor:** Investigating the "[Bovaer](#)" [methane inhibitor controversy](#) and reporting on the rare, [historic Nature study correction](#), following the discovery of flawed data processing.
- **COP 30 in Brazil:** Covering [misinformation](#) targeting the Amazon forest and explaining the [distinction](#) between tropical forest degradation and deforestation.
- **European collaboration:** AFP's participation in the [EuroClimateCheck](#) project resulted in 1,178 articles—exceeding the original target by 500%.

## Health Focus

Medical misinformation centered on the CDC's 2025 reversal regarding vaccine-autism language, a seismic shift in the medical landscape.

We also tackled the rise of harmful "wellness" trends, such as "looksmaxxing" (obsessive physical modification) and "sleepmaxxing" (the misuse of supplements), as well as persistent false claims about ivermectin as a cure for cancer.

## 4. Capabilities and Innovation: Multimedia, Medialab, and Training

Technological innovation to keep up with new trends, as well as media and AI literacy, remains a primary defense against mis- and disinformation as a society.

### Global Training

Our Digital Courses reached 37,000+ users, in French, English, Spanish and Portuguese. The most successful addition was the "Verifying AI-Generated Content" module, which saw 1,550 completions within its first 10 days of launch, proving the high demand for advanced technical training. In-person training was also delivered throughout the year at local and regional levels by the team, reaching several thousands of journalists, students, CSOs and schools.

The geolocation quiz presented on April 2 for the International fact-checking day by Méissa Guève, Cecilia Sorgine, Omar Marroquín and Natalie Handel was shared across 18 posts in 5 languages on different platforms. They were viewed more than 20k times.

### Multimedia Strategy

The "Social Stories" project garnered 1.77 billion views across major platforms. Client engagement saw a 100% increase in downloads (3,061) compared to 2024. Our strategy included a contracted project with Meta to produce the "8 ways to spot AI" series.

### Medialab & Tools

The Verification Plugin evolved significantly, now with over +160K users globally.

Key features now include:

- **C2PA Metadata Support:** Tracking the provenance of digital assets.
- **Social Network Analysis Tool:** A specific capability designed for detecting "coordinated inauthentic behavior" and bot networks.
- **Synthetic Image Detection:** Refined algorithms to identify generative AI content.
- **Archiving solution:** An alternative tool for preserving social media content as evidence in digital investigations.

## 5. Global Influence: Awards, Policy, Projects, Partnerships and Research

AFP remains a global standard-setter, advocating for media independence and platform accountability.

### Awards



The AFP team present at Global Fact in Rio receiving the Gold Standard Fact Checking Award on behalf of our teams in Manila, Bangkok, Hong Kong and Paris, in June 2025. © Poynter/Andressa Guerra

### Global Award

The [Global Fact 12 Gold Standard Award](#) was won by the team of Ara Eugenio, Jan Cuyco, Lucille Sodipe from the Philippines, and Nattakorn "Tii" Ploddee from Thailand, for their [forensic investigation into South China Sea disinformation networks](#), along with the video team in Paris for the [video about the investigation](#) and the essential editorial work in Hong Kong.

“

*Our investigation uncovered a profit-driven network manipulating military imagery to fuel tensions between Manila and Beijing, illustrating how disinformation can risk regional stability.*

*Receiving the Gold Standard Award from our own peers was a profound reminder that the rigorous, forensic fact-checking we do every day can tell the most crucial stories of our time.*

*The recognition was also a much-needed validation that the work matters and must go on, despite the many unprecedented challenges we face as an industry.*



**ARA EUGENIO**  
Reporter,  
The Philippines

© Jam Sta Rosa

## Africa Award

Abuja-based fact-checker Samad Uthman won the “Fact-check of the year by a professional fact-checker” award at Africa Facts, for his exposing an [AI-generated video touting a fake herbal cure](#).

These two awards underscore the high editorial standards delivered across regions by AFP’s Digital Investigation team.

We are incredibly honoured to win these two awards in the same year.



Monique Ngo Mayag and Patrick Markey, from AFP’s team for Africa, surrounding Abuja-based fact-checker Samad Uthman, winner of the Fact-check of the year by a professional fact-checker at Africa Facts in Dakar, September 2025.  
© Lanre Olagunju

## Projects and Partnerships

### • European Media Projects

In 2025, as part of AFP’s work within eight of the **15 EDMO hubs** fighting disinformation, the agency published 962 fact-checking articles. These are available on the hubs’ platforms, supporting researchers analysing disinformation campaigns across France, Germany, Austria, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Croatia and Greece.

AFP’s fact-checking teams contribute to the EDMO Monthly [Brief](#), highlighting **major viral claims debunked across Europe**.

AFP’s contribution is widely recognised for enriching **fact-checking databases**. The German-speaking team alone added 226 fact-checks to the [GADMO](#) repository, now the largest online factchecking database in German.

The hubs also served as laboratories for new editorial formats. **Notable outputs included a French video for De Facto targeting younger audiences, long investigations for BROD and an article printed in the HDMO supplement.**

**Media literacy** remained a core pillar, with AFP delivering multiple training sessions in Sofia, Bucharest and Budapest for the BROD and HDMO hubs.

AFP’s digital investigation team also supported other EU projects in 2025, including [DS4Skills](#) with Tralalere and a research initiative on proKremlin disinformation with the Institute for Strategic Dialogue ([ISD](#)).

- As a co-founding and verified member of the EFCSN, AFP provides other members with **access to the AFP News platform** under [preferred conditions](#).

At its launch in 2024, EFCSN Coordinator Stephan Mündges stated: “This partnership will help fact-checkers across Europe debunk claims faster and illustrate their fact-checks more easily.”

## Research

A study [released](#) in December 2025 by the Sciences Po Department of Economics, the Centre for Economic Policy Research (CEPR), the Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris, and HEC Liège University was based on an 18-month embed within AFP Factual.

It examined how editorial decisions are made when selecting fact-checks and measured their impact online. **The findings show that fact-checking has a measurable effect on audience behaviour over the longer term.**

## Policy

- **Regulation & Policy**

AFP, notably through its representation in the [EFCSN](#), contributes to discussions and [reports](#) on EU policies related to digital services, platform regulation, and media support. Our presence at events such as the Bridge Summit, Global Fact, Unveil the Truth, and the EU DisinfoLab conferences has been essential in advocating the fight against disinformation and safeguarding the independence and sustainability of fact-checking organizations. Marie Bohner represented both the EFCSN and AFP at an [annual event](#) co-hosted by the EFCSN, the European Parliament, and [EDMO](#), addressing sustainability challenges at a time of sharply decreasing resources coupled with a rise in disinformation both online and offline.

- **Contributions**

AFP contributed insights from its fact-checking work to the Meta Oversight Board globally and to the Digital Services Act (DSA) risk assessment in Europe.

## 6. Conclusion: Horizon 2026 and In Memoriam

Despite sustained pressure, 2025 demonstrated AFP's ability - as both an organization and through its Digital Investigation team - to maintain editorial excellence and resilience in the face of acute crises and attacks on information integrity.

The ongoing war in the Middle East has further highlighted the strength of our network and expertise, reflected in sustained output and increased collaboration across the Agency.

In 2026, we anticipate growing pressure from autocratic regimes, further AI-driven shifts in media business models, and the continued weaponization of disinformation against diversity and democratic societies. AFP remains committed to defending the facts.

### Tribute to Jan Cuyco

*We honor the memory of Jan Cuyco, our colleague from the Manila bureau who passed away at the age of 25 on December 8, 2025.*

*Jan was a cornerstone of the award-winning South China Sea reporting team. Her dedication to the truth, her infectious spirit, and her commitment to digital integrity remain a lasting inspiration to the entire AFP network.*



Contact: [communication@afp.com](mailto:communication@afp.com)

Websites: [Fact Check](#) | [Factuel](#) | Find 26 languages on the menu of our websites.

