



Homeland
Security

(b) (3), (b) (7)(D)

INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT



(U//FOUO) Syria-Based US and UK Persons' Public Social Media Activity Effective but Provides Terrorism Prevention Opportunities

20 May 2015

Office of Intelligence and Analysis

IA-0196-15

(b) (3), (b) (7)(D)

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**Homeland
Security**
Office of Intelligence and Analysis

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INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT

20 May 2015

(U//FOUO) **Syria-Based US and UK Persons' Public Social Media Activity Effective but Provides Terrorism Prevention Opportunities**

(U//FOUO) Prepared by the DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) (b) (3), (b) (7)(E), (b) (7)(D)

(U) Scope

(U//FOUO) This Assessment examines public, English-language, social media activity by US and UK persons participating in the conflict in Syria or Iraq. (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

(b) (3), (b) (7)(E). DHS and (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) reviewed (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E) released between September 2013 and November 2014 that documented 255 messages posted by 20 confirmed or self-proclaimed US persons who attempted to or engaged in violence or material support in Syria or Iraq. (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E) s. Many of the examined US and UK persons possibly engaged in social media activity that was (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

(b) (3), (b) (7)(E). This Assessment is intended to assist federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial counterterrorism and law enforcement officials and cleared private sector security partners in better understanding the threat posed by Syria-based foreign fighters and US-based violent extremists.

(U) Key Judgments

(U//FOUO) DHS and (b) (3), (b) (7)(D) assess that the examined social media postings of 20 US and 20 UK persons in Syria were (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

(b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E). These individuals (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

(U//FOUO) We judge that the US and UK persons examined (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

(U//FOUO) We assess that these persons are (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

(U//FOUO) DHS assesses that trying to directly engage such Syria-based English-speakers on social media would (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

(b) (3), (b) (7)(E). Counter-narratives will likely be most effective (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

* (U//FOUO) DHS defines a lone offender as an individual motivated by one or more violent extremist ideologies who, operating alone, supports or engages in violence in furtherance of that ideology or ideologies that may involve influence from a larger terrorist organization or a foreign actor.

(U//FOUO) DHS assesses that (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

DHS judges that (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

(U//FOUO) US and UK Persons Promoted Similar Themes

(U//FOUO) A study of the identified, (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) social media postings of 20 US and 20 UK persons participating in or supporting violence in Syria revealed that (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

although the UK subjects (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

Their messages frequently (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

(U//FOUO) The individuals studied likely emphasized these themes (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

(b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

» (U//FOUO) Roughly 30 percent of the examined messages posted by these persons comprised statements (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

. We assess that persons (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

. Such messaging also likely attempted to (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

* (U//FOUO) For more information on the examined persons' social media activity see attached *Reference Aid*, "(U//FOUO) Research Findings: Use of Social Media by UK and US Foreign Persons in Syria."

» (U//FOUO) Nearly 20 percent of messages included (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

(b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

» (U//FOUO) Approximately 20 percent of the (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

(b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

» (U//FOUO) Less than 10 percent of the messages (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

These messages (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

(U//FOUO) Calls for external attacks in the West by lone offenders, criticism of the US-led Coalition bombing campaign against ISIL, and commentary on ISIL's execution of US and UK hostages (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

. Given that the examined individuals elected to travel to support violence, (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

Additionally, (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

» (U//FOUO) According to (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] None of the examined US persons publicly called for attacks in the United States on their social media accounts during the timeframe we examined.

» (U//FOUO) US and UK persons also rarely posted about (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] US persons provided general (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

» (U//FOUO) (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

» (U//FOUO) When confronted by other social media users about the execution of US and UK hostages, UK persons frequently (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

(U//FOUO) Although US and UK persons posted about many themes at a consistent rate throughout the time period we examined, UK persons posted (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) while US persons (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) Following the start of Coalition airstrikes targeting ISIL in August 2014, both sets of persons (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

(b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

» (U//FOUO) Following ISIL's proclamation of a Caliphate, UK persons (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

» (U//FOUO) By contrast, following ISIL's declaration of a Caliphate, US persons (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
The frequency of commentary by US persons about life inside Syria was (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

» (U//FOUO) After the declaration of the Caliphate, we saw (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

[REDACTED]
On (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) 2014, prominent ISIL supporters began to promote the (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) to encourage the group's followers (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)
[REDACTED] (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) is likely one factor contributing to the (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

» (U//FOUO) In the months following the (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) in (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) 2014, some UK users (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Their reluctance to provide (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) with (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

- » (U//FOUO) Several of the examined US persons most prominent on social media (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

DHS assesses that some of these persons may have (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

- (U//FOUO) Male and female UK users generally (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) except for (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

(b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

- » (U//FOUO) Messages by Syria-based females in the study (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) and we assess they were (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

- » (U//FOUO) (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

- » (U//FOUO) The one US woman included in this study also emphasized (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

(U//FOUO) US and UK Persons May Show Differences in Platforms, Similarities in (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

(U//FOUO) (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

- » (U//FOUO) Thirteen of the 20 US persons had publicly viewable (b) (3), accounts in which they posted content relevant to this study, (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

. However, (b) (3), (b) (7)(D),

- » (U//FOUO) (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

(U//FOUO) (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

We assess that they (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

- » (U//FOUO) (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

(U//FOUO) (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

- » (U//FOUO) (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

(U//FOUO) **Messaging Reaches Small Numbers,**
(b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

(U//FOUO) As expected, the size of the examined US and UK persons' identified online social networks was

(b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

The examined US and UK persons' (b) (3), (b) (7)(E), as well the challenge of individual foreign fighters (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

—many of whom also maintain public social media presences—(b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

(b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

» (U//FOUO) (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

» (U) (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E), (b) (7)(C)

» (U) In May 2014, (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E) about (b) (3), (b) (7)(C), a prominent UK social media user who traveled to Syria in August 2013. (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E) (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) radicalization to violence, examples of his online messaging, and provided his (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) handle.* Highlighting his story and (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) name (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

* (U//FOUO) DHS defines radicalization as the process through which an individual changes from a non-violent belief system to a belief system that includes the willingness to actively advocate, facilitate, or use unlawful violence as a method to effect societal or political change.

(U//FOUO) (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) **Assessing Resonance of Messaging**

(U//FOUO) Understanding the effects, if any, on an individual's behaviors and beliefs after consuming a terrorist message online (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

Additionally, messages posted by a Syria-based fighter to a single social media platform (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

(U//FOUO) DHS (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E) judge that the best direct measure of the resonance of the examined messages is (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

Although the English-speaking audiences mostly had (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

The examined individuals also often received questions about (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) These persons are (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

» (U//FOUO) (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

» (U//FOUO) (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

(b) (5), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

(U//FOUO) DHS assesses that (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

[illegible]

» (U//FOUO) In July 2014, (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

[illegible]

(U//FOUO) In contrast (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Religious leaders, NGOs,
community leaders, and family and friends are typically
(b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

» (U//FOUO) We assess that (b) (3),
(b) (7)(E)

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Nevertheless, (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

» (U//FOUO) We judge, based on our analysis of numerous recent cases of radicalization to violence in the West, (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

As a result, we assess that counter-narratives that

(b) (3), (b) (7)(E) and (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

are likely to be (b) (3), (b) (7)(C), (b) (7)(D)

» (U//FOUO) We assess that personal associates, (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

[REDACTED]

(U//FOUO) DHS assesses that (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

[illegible]

» (U//FOUO) In October 2014, (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

[REDACTED]

» (U//FOUO) Online users, especially ISIL supporters, employ a range of tactics to circumvent the effects of account shutdowns, such as (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

[REDACTED]

» (U//FOUO) (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) in the summer of 2014 repeatedly suspended ISIL's official group accounts, which forced the group to migrate to significantly less popular sites—(b) (3), (b) (7)(E)—until these second tier sites also suspended the group's official accounts, (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

[REDACTED]

(U//FOUO) DHS notes that (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

[REDACTED] may provide (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

[REDACTED] to (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

[REDACTED] Many individuals in the early process of potentially radicalizing to violence may be engaging in protected speech and have not committed or expressed an intent to commit any illegal activities, (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

[REDACTED]

» (U) The US-based Muslim Public Affairs Council^{USPER} (MPAC) in 2014 released a toolkit called the "Safe Spaces Initiative," which was designed to provide Muslim American communities with practical advice on countering radicalization to violence among their members using the MPAC-designed Prevention, Intervention, Ejection (PIE) model. The prevention element of PIE recommends that, when a respected authority figure—such as a religious leader, teacher, or parent—learns that an impressionable community member has been exposed to violent extremist content online, the authority should view the material with the vulnerable individual and debunk its misleading narratives.⁴¹

» (U) Montgomery County, Maryland's municipal officials and police have partnered with the US-based NGO World Organization for Resource Development and Education^{USPER} to develop an intervention program for individuals radicalizing to violence. Part of the program—which is informing separate locally led countering violent extremism pilot initiatives in Boston, Los Angeles, and Minneapolis—seeks to educate communities about the risks of individuals being exposed to violent extremist materials, especially on social media.⁴²



REFER

(U//FOUO) **Research Findings: Use of Social Media by UK and US Persons in Syria**

Overview

I&A and (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E) analyzed the public social media activity of identified UK and US persons in Syria to inform efforts to counter online recruitment and radicalization to violence. Our study's findings are derived from a review of 20 UK persons and 20 US persons (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E). This infographic highlights the most common themes they promoted, as well as key similarities and differences between UK and US persons, men and women, and the social media platforms they used.

Intelligence cut-off date: 30 November 2014

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Key Findings

- UK and US persons in Syria typically promoted themes (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) with (b) (3), (b) (7)(E).
- Messages primarily were designed to (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) and most of the remainder were designed to (b) (3), (b) (7)(E).
- (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) Only a handful of messages referenced (b) (3), (b) (7)(E).
- Fighters from both countries regularly (b) (3), (b) (7)(E).
- Examined travelers increasingly provided (b) (3), (b) (7)(E).

Promoting a Foreign Terrorist Organization

(b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

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Calls for External Attacks

(b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

(b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

Life in Syria

(b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

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Travel Guidance and Advice

(b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

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Application Preferences*

(b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

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(b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E)

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Differences and Similarities of UK and US Persons

- UK and US persons published messages in approximately the same proportion about life in Syria, combat operations in Syria, tributes to martyrs, and terrorist messaging.
- UK persons were more likely to (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E).
- US persons were more likely to (b) (3), (b) (7)(E), and provide commentary (b) (3), (b) (7)(E).

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*Size reflects prevalence of public use by examined persons

(U) Source Summary Statement

(U//FOUO) DHS and (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) reviewed (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) released between September 2013 and November 2014 that documented (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E) 20 confirmed or self-proclaimed US persons who attempted to or engaged in violence or material support in Syria or Iraq, as (b) (3), (b) (7)(D), (b) (7)(E) by 20 UK persons. (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

(b) (3), (b) (7)(E). We have (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) confidence (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) We also have (b) (3), (b) (7)(E) confidence in (b) (3), (b) (7)(E)

(U) Report Suspicious Activity

(U) To report suspicious activity, law enforcement, Fire-EMS, private security personnel, and emergency managers should follow established protocols; all other personnel should call 911 or contact local law enforcement. Suspicious activity reports (SARs) will be forwarded to the appropriate fusion center and FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force for further action. For more information on the Nationwide SAR Initiative, visit <http://nsi.ncirc.gov/resources.aspx>.

(U) Tracked by: HSEC-8.1, HSEC-8.2, HSEC-8.3, HSEC-8.8.3

([REDACTED]
b [REDACTED]
) [REDACTED]



Homeland Security

Office of Intelligence and Analysis

Customer Feedback Form

Product Title: (U//FOUO) Syria-Based US and UK Persons' Public Social Media Activity Effective but Provides Terrorism

1. Please select partner type: and function:

2. What is the highest level of intelligence information that you receive?

3. Please complete the following sentence: "I focus most of my time on:"

4. Please rate your satisfaction with each of the following:

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	N/A
Product's overall usefulness	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Product's relevance to your mission	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Product's timeliness	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Product's responsiveness to your intelligence needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5. How do you plan to use this product in support of your mission? (Check all that apply.)

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Drive planning and preparedness efforts, training, and/or emergency response operations | ☐ Initiate a law enforcement investigation |
| ☐ Observe, identify, and/or disrupt threats | ☐ Initiate your own regional-specific analysis |
| ☐ Share with partners | ☐ Initiate your own topic-specific analysis |
| ☐ Allocate resources (e.g. equipment and personnel) | ☐ Develop long-term homeland security strategies |
| ☐ Reprioritize organizational focus | ☐ Do not plan to use |
| ☐ Author or adjust policies and guidelines | ☐ Other: <input type="text"/> |

6. To further understand your response to question #5, please provide specific details about situations in which you might use this product.

7. What did this product not address that you anticipated it would?

8. To what extent do you agree with the following two statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
This product will enable me to make better decisions regarding this topic.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
This product provided me with intelligence information I did not find elsewhere.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

9. How did you obtain this product?

10. Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up conversation about your feedback?

To help us understand more about your organization so we can better tailor future products, please provide:

Name:

Organization:

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Position:

State:

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