

Potential for Terrorist Use of Twitter: A Red Teaming Perspective

Example Iraq Tweets

*"Less than 24 hrs before I head off for my vacation in Iraq and the kids are already making my wife miserable. Today is not going to be fun."*

*"Going to DFAC -- Dining Facility -- here at BIAP. Try to get on helicopter to Kalsu tonight."*

*"Put off at BIAP (Baghdad International Airport). Not sure why."*

*"Chillin in my tent at Baghdad International Airport (BIAP)."*

*"Drove off base today down Route Irish in an NTV and didn't get blown up...fun fun."*

*"Just picked my roomie up from BIAP, now it's ten 'til 2 in the morning, ugh."*

*"Today is my day off. 115 already in Camp Bucca, Iraq."*

Example Afghanistan Tweets

*"I'm in Bagram waiting for a flight to Camp Salerno by Kwost in the volatile east of Afghanistan near the Paki border. Hot days/cold nights."*

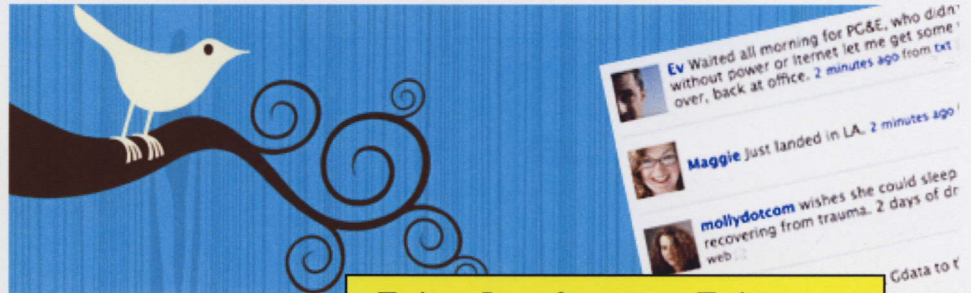
*"Hi from Bagram air field; 20 minutes from now I'll hopefully board a flight to the Pakistan border."*

*"Flying to Bagram, Afghanistan in 12 hours. The journey is about to begin!"*

Example Fort Huachuca Tweets

*"Email I just got: "We are changing all of the PMs tasks at Ft. Huachuca. I hope this does not add a lot of extra work on your end." HA!"*

*"...is at Ft. Huachuca. It was great seeing him last night passing through Tucson International."*



Twitter Logo from [www.Twitter.com](http://www.Twitter.com)

Twitter is described as "a free Social Networking and Micro Blogging<sup>6</sup> service that lets members keep in touch with people using the web, their phone, or IM (instant messaging)."<sup>7</sup> Twitter is similar to other social networking sites in that it allows people to create a community of interest and/or group of online friends. Twitter launched in July 2006 and has become an increasingly popular networking venue over the past two years.<sup>8</sup> On September 26, 2008, there were **21,100,000** Google Hits for doing a search on Twitter.com, which was advertised on a multitude of different language web pages, including English, Arabic, Armenian, Simplified Chinese, Croatian, Czech, Indonesian, Korean, Thai, and other languages<sup>9</sup>.

What makes Twitter unique is that the member can send Tweets (messages) near real time to Twitter cell phone

<sup>6</sup> Search Mobile Computing Online defines Micro Blogging as "Microblogging is the practice of sending brief posts to a personal blog on a microblogging Web site, such as Twitter or Jaiku. Microposts can be made public on a Web site and/or distributed to a private group of subscribers. Subscribers can read microblog posts online or request that updates be delivered in real time to their desktop as an instant message or sent to a mobile device as an SMS text message." [http://searchmobilecomputing.techtarget.com/sDefinition/0,,sid40\\_gci1265620,00.html](http://searchmobilecomputing.techtarget.com/sDefinition/0,,sid40_gci1265620,00.html)

<sup>8</sup> Crunch Base, "Twitter Company Profile," 2008, <http://www.crunchbase.com/company/Twitter>

<sup>9</sup> Google Search of Twitter.com, Sept. 27, 2008

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groups and to their online Twitter social networking page. They can also Mashup their Tweets with a variety of other tools including geo coordinates and Google Maps or other electronic files/artifacts. Members can direct and re-direct audience members to other websites and locations from "Tweets" and can engage in rapid-fire group social interaction. For example, the earthquake that occurred in Los Angeles on July 29, 2008 was reported via a Twitter member approximately four minutes prior to the information being reported by the news and within minutes there were hundreds of Tweets from people experiencing the earthquake first hand.<sup>10</sup> Twitter has also become a social activism tool for socialists, human rights groups, communists, vegetarians, anarchists, religious communities, atheists, political enthusiasts, *hacktivists* and others to communicate with each other and to send messages to broader audiences.<sup>11</sup>

Twitter is already used by some members to post and/or support extremist ideologies and perspectives. For example, there are multiple pro and anti Hezbollah Tweets. In addition, extremist and terrorist use of Twitter could evolve over time to reflect tactics that are already evolving in use by *hacktivists* and activists for surveillance. This could theoretically be combined with targeting. Twitter was recently used as a counter-surveillance, command and control, and movement tool by activists at the Republican National Convention (RNC). The activists would Tweet each other and their Twitter pages to add information on what was happening with Law Enforcement near real time.

### **Activist Use of Twitter for Law Enforcement Counter Surveillance and Movement Coordination at the most recent Republican National Convention (RNC)**

The following sample Tweets were collected and posted in a Computer World article "Twitter Helps Republican Convention Protestors Organize, Elude Police," on September 8, 2008 (<http://www.pcworld.idg.com.au/index.php/id:7484771>):

- "Arrest teams are approaching seated protesters on Marion Bridge. Resisters are told they'll be met with force."
- "Protestors are now fighting back. First reports of violence now"
- "Western Ave. Bridge, west of capitol can be safely crossed."
- "City is on lockdown. Go to 14th and Jackson if you need help from tear gas pepper spray." (<http://www.linuxworld.com.au/index.php/id:7484771>)

There are multiple red-teaming examples that could be created surrounding potential adversarial use of Twitter. Following are three red team scenarios:

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<sup>10</sup> Weaver, Matthew, "Did the Earth Tweet For You," UK Guardian Blog, July 30, 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/blog/2008/jul/30/laearthquakehitsrealitytv>

<sup>11</sup> 304<sup>th</sup> MI Bn OSINT Team Review of Member Twitter Pages

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### **Scenario 1:**

Terrorist operative "A" uses Twitter with (or without) using a cell phone camera/video function to send back messages, and to receive messages, from the rest of his cell. Operative "A" also has a Google Maps Twitter Mash Up of where he is under a code word for other members of his cell (if they need more in-depth directions) posted on the WWW that can be viewed from their mobiles. Other members of his cell receive near real time updates (similar to the movement updates that were sent by activists at the RNC) on how, where, and the number of troops that are moving in order to conduct an ambush.

### **Scenario 2:**

Terrorist operative "A" has a mobile phone for Tweet messaging and for taking images. Operative "A" also has a separate mobile phone that is actually an explosive device and/or a suicide vest for remote detonation. Terrorist operative "B" has the detonator and a mobile to view "A's" Tweets and images. This may allow "B" to select the precise moment of remote detonation based on near real time movement and imagery that is being sent by "A."

### **Scenario 3:**

Cyber Terrorist operative "A" finds U.S. Army Smith's Twitter account. Operative "A" joins Smith's Tweets and begins to elicit information from Smith. This information is then used for a targeting package (targeting in this sense could be for identity theft, hacking, and/or physical.) This scenario is not new and has already been discussed for other social networking sites, such as My Space and/or Face Book.

## Sample of other Mobile Phone Topics & Software Recommendations

Sample Source: The mobile phone technology forum in [www.tamkeen.iraqserve.com](http://www.tamkeen.iraqserve.com)

- Recommends and debates mobile phone brands (Samsung, Nokia, etc.)
- Propaganda multimedia downloads for the phone (videos, audio clips, text files, PDF, etc.)
- Mobile phone tips for surveillance activities
- Uses of SMS text messaging
- Windows Live Messenger for the mobile
- Free advanced mobile messages to your mobile from website Huda 76
- Mobile Phone GPS tracking options
- How to upload software updates
- Religious upload software, such as prayer times reminders
- Religious and ideological background wall paper
  - The Software package-Mobile Master Professional 7.0.1 Build 2699
- Xilisoft 3GP Video Converter
  - convert 3GP to avi or mpg, and vice versa, as well as 3gp mpg, mpeg2, mpeg4, wmv, mp4, 3gp, mov, rm, dv, yuv, h264 and MP3, WAV, AC3, WMA, m4a, ogg
- Ego Share Software (data recovery)
- How to maintain and crack mobile phone security codes
- How to make mobile software programs
- Discussions on how to protect and penetrate Blue Tooth technology
- PDA programs for the mobile phone (Some of the software downloads that were advertized are sub-listed below)
  - Best TaskMan v2.01