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AMCIS: Suspicious Activity Reporting Initiative and Online Behavior

TREO Talk Paper

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Abstract

A nationwide suspicious activity reporting initiative (NSI) has outlined behavior that may lead to a terrorist attack. This includes an “If you see something, say something:” public video encouraging people to report suspicious activities. The NSI has released a guide with example indicators and behaviors that can be observed and reported to reduce the number of terrorist attacks.

As of January 2023, there are 5.16 billion internet users worldwide, equaling 64.4% of the global population. Social media users accounted for 4.76 billion or 59.4% of internet users. The NSI guides people in the physical world to help law enforcement prevent or stop terrorist acts. This research study explores whether the NSI can be used online to prevent or stop cyberterrorism acts or physical acts of terror.

The notion of cyber terrorism or certain online behaviors leading to physical threats of terrorism is an under-researched topic. There are a few studies about the NSI effort, but not one that combines NSI and cyber-terrorist acts or NSI and online activities that lead to terrorism in the physical. The research questions are:

RQ1.Can NSI identify suspicious online activities that lead to cyberterrorism?

RQ2.Can NSI be used to identify suspicious online activities that lead to terrorism in the physical?

The NSI is a collaborative effort starting in 2007 between the US. Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and state, local, Tribal, and territorial law enforcement (Nationwide, 2023). This initiative aimed to provide an avenue for people to report suspicious activity observed in the physical world that may lead to a terrorist attack. There is no definition of a terrorist, but many articles believe the primary purpose of a terrorist is to cause as much fear and destruction on a large scale. Law enforcement has used suspicious activity reporting (SAR) to investigate suspicious activities by individuals. SAR was observed in many terrorist acts committed or thwarted between 1972 and 2013. This study focuses on whether online activities that include SARs can identify a potential cyberterrorist activity or a physical world terrorist act.

To my knowledge, no scholarly work has reviewed how NSI reduces potential cyber terrorism or online activities that lead to physical threats. Research in this area may help to prevent future cyber-terrorism attacks or physical attacks that begin with online activities. The researcher may also observe behaviors in the Metaverse. In addition, other behaviors observed only online might be discovered.

References

Nationwide SAR Initiative (NSI): Homeland Security. Nationwide SAR Initiative (NSI) | Homeland Security. (n.d.). Retrieved February 22, 2023, from <https://www.dhs.gov/nationwide-sar-initiative-nsi>