



EU PROPHETS PROJECT ON POLICING TOOLS FOR TERRORISM

Date: November 26th, 2020

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KEY EVENTS

Dr. Antonio Sanchez Ortega presented the findings from the PROPHETS research project on November 26, 2020, at the 2020 CASIS Vancouver West Coast Security Conference. He discussed the factors that lead to radicalization and the incitement of violence and the PROPHETS research project tools that were developed.

NATURE OF DISCUSSION

Presentation

The presentation covered the factors that lead to radicalization and incitement of violence and the PROPHETS research tools that were developed.

Question Period

Dr. Sanchez covered radicalization processes, information security and privacy, and the PROPHETS project during the question and answer period.

BACKGROUND

Presentation

Dr. Sanchez presented on the PROPHETS research project, its goals, and early results he had witnessed. The project involved over 50 researchers in Europe who researched radicalization, its processes, and the incitement of vulnerable individuals to violence. The focus of the project was to raise awareness which involved working closely with law enforcement agencies and vulnerable targets. PROPHETS will develop situational awareness tools for law enforcement agencies to measure civil activities.

The research on vulnerable individuals involved the focus of targets online, online materials, online behaviours of vulnerable actors, identification of psychological traits that fit into radicalization paths, and the sharing of materials online. The PROPHETS toolkit demonstrated the overwhelming amount of information government agencies and law enforcement have to analyse. There were also concerns on information security and privacy as the research involves ethical, moral, and legal concerns.

Following the research phase, free tools and toolkits will be developed for use by governments and law enforcement agencies. A deep policy and legislation review will be conducted to aid the European Union in addressing emerging threats, and support given for vulnerable persons to mitigate criminal behaviours.

Question and Answer Period

During the question and answer period, Dr. Sanchez received questions concerning the PROPHETS research project; radicalization processes in online and offline environments; and the ethical requirements of data storage. The PROPHETS project is currently in progress and a majority of information is not for public consumption currently.

Information is a priceless and crucial commodity. Some countries are protective of their information and data but other countries such as China and the US profile and use the information and data against you. The mistrust and concern is justified as vulnerable persons who are misclassified may simply be consulting or researching extremist information without being an extremist themselves.

Radicalization also occurs in offline spaces and private spaces where no records are kept. Some examples are mosques where they are completely offline. Radicalization also mirrors a similar process that can be seen in organized crime where information processing and psychological processes can be used to analyse and limit it.

KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION

Presentation

- Law enforcement and government agencies have to analyse overwhelming amounts of information.
- PROPHETS researched factors of radicalization of vulnerable persons and the incitement to violence.

- Tools and toolkits will be developed from PROPHETS research for use by law enforcement and government agencies.
- The tools and toolkits are intended to aid the European Union in addressing emerging threats, and support for vulnerable persons.
- PROPHETS website: <https://www.prophets-h2020.eu/horizon-2020/>.

Question Period

- PROPHETS is currently ongoing and the majority of the information is private.
- Information is a crucial and priceless commodity.
- Mislabelling of vulnerable persons as extremists is a concern.
- Radicalization can also occur in private and offline spaces.



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