

An Analysis Method for Investigating Lone Wolf Terrorists

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Abstract—The most difficult part in detecting a lone wolf terrorist is that they can come in any size, shape, and ethnicity and represent any ideology. In this work we identify three areas where similarities among lone wolf terrorists can be found and we use an adoption of the analysis of competing hypotheses methodology to capture these similarities

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

One of the most puzzling and unpredictable forms of terrorism are violent acts committed by single individuals, commonly referred to as lone wolves terrorists, which are extremely difficult to detect and to defend against. The definition of a lone wolf terrorist is someone who commits violent acts of terrorism in support of some group, movement, or ideology, but does so alone and not as a part of an organized group. The problem of lone wolf terrorism is growing and is presently a greater threat towards society than organized groups.

When intelligence services are investigating terrorist organizations and terrorist activities it can be done on a basis of the interception of telephone calls and e-mail. It is also common to infiltrate organizations. However, a lone wolf who plans to commit a terrorist act rarely reveals the details of their plans to anybody. This makes it impossible for the police and the intelligence community to prevent such terrorist attacks. Recently, it has been observed that the internet is becoming a platform for lone wolves to express their views. Anders Behring Breivik, the perpetrator of the Norwegian attacks on July 22 was for example active on the internet doing various postings and using social media such as Facebook.

There are some characteristic similarities that many lone wolves share. We have identified three different areas where similarities among lone wolves can be found:

- the background and their behaviour,
- the radicalization process and
- the terrorist planning cycle.

To capture these similarities we use an adaptation of the analysis of competing hypotheses (ACH) method [1]. We use template hypotheses to capture the similarities and then we reason about them using ACH.

The idea is to use the identified areas of similarities as a base for the investigation of possible lone wolf terrorists. The template hypotheses are used to as a base for the analytics and they are continuously developed and cultivated into more detailed hypotheses that are specific for each individual.

The template hypotheses are regarding three identified areas where similarities can be found. Example of similarities that can be used in the template hypothesis for the lone wolf terrorists' background and behaviour are: the absent of a father, military connection, drug problems and writing manifestos. For similarities in the radicalization process, patterns and signs for lone wolf terrorists is described in [2]. The terrorist planning cycle is a [3] can be used to detect different phases that a lone wolf terrorist has to go through when planning an attack. This phase includes obtaining exposures and weapons as well as practice and screening of target.

The idea is to use the template hypotheses in a framework for computer-support that can be used for detection and investigation of lone wolf terrorists (Figure 1). When a possible lone wolf terrorist is identified a set of template hypotheses from a library is chosen. These hypotheses are continuously developed and cultivated into more detailed hypothesis specific for each individual. Then a process consisting of collecting information that confirm or refute the hypotheses is started. The process may continue for a long time period. The hypotheses and the information regarding them are continuously analyzed by a human analyst.

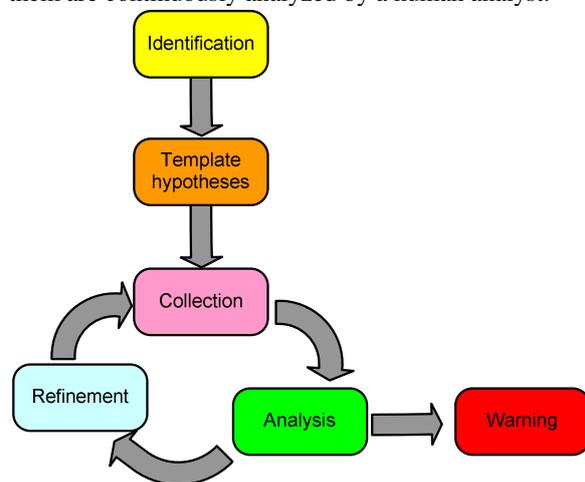


Figure 1. A framework for analyzing lone wolf terrorists.

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