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U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES



**REVIEW OF THE DEFENSE ADVANCED RESEARCH
PROJECTS AGENCY 2.0 SOCIAL MEDIA PILOT**

Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate
June 2, 2016

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[REDACTED] Screening Review: The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency 2.0 Pilot

Overview

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2015, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) deployed multiple pilots – in coordination with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A), the Intelligence Community (IC), and the Department of Defense (DoD) – to assess the feasibility of using social media to screen [REDACTED] applicants. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] During that initial test, USCIS encountered a number of challenges and limitations in using the tool, and determined it did not meet USCIS social media screening needs at that time. [REDACTED]

In FY 2016, USCIS initiated pilots, in coordination with DHS Science and Technology (S&T), that used the [REDACTED] platform to screen two different population sets: [REDACTED] [REDACTED] USCIS sought to determine if reviewing the social media presence of these individuals could provide useful information for adjudicating their applications, and gauge how resource intensive this screening would be.

Following a review of the results of the [REDACTED] pilots, USCIS initiated a second pilot utilizing the revamped [REDACTED] platform to screen a new round of refugee applicants. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] This paper captures the results of that pilot.

In keeping with its previous approach to the [REDACTED] pilots, the USCIS Headquarters Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate (HQFDNS) pilot team took a two-fold approach: first, determined if any of the applicants could be linked to derogatory information that negatively impacted their eligibility or admissibility; and second, evaluated the [REDACTED] tool for USCIS' social media screening requirements.

[REDACTED] Elicitation Pilot

In April 2016 [REDACTED] were asked about their social media accounts during [REDACTED] processing in [REDACTED]. During the elicitation, [REDACTED] contractors asked applicants about their use of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, and, when available, the applicants provided user names, handles, and Web addresses also known as URLs. The data collected during this pilot was uploaded to the [REDACTED] and given to DARPA in Excel format for ingestion. Additionally, the elicited data was manually vetted and evaluated.

The results show that elicited data does not replace manual account identification processes or produce major efficiencies. United States Digital Service (USDS) evaluated the pre-vetted data and came to similar conclusions.¹

¹ See Refugee Social Media Elicitation Pilot Summary – Pre-Vetted for additional information.

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[redacted] as an **Entity Identification & Resolution Tool** is an open-source based social media screening tool, which uses personal identifiers (e.g., [redacted]) to comb Twitter, Instagram, and the deep and dark Webs for potential user accounts. Note: [redacted] (and all other social media tools) is unable to comb Facebook using personal identifiers in this same way due to restrictions Facebook has placed on its Application Programming Interface (API).



Methodology

This pilot focused on [redacted] applicants, predominantly [redacted] divided into two sets.

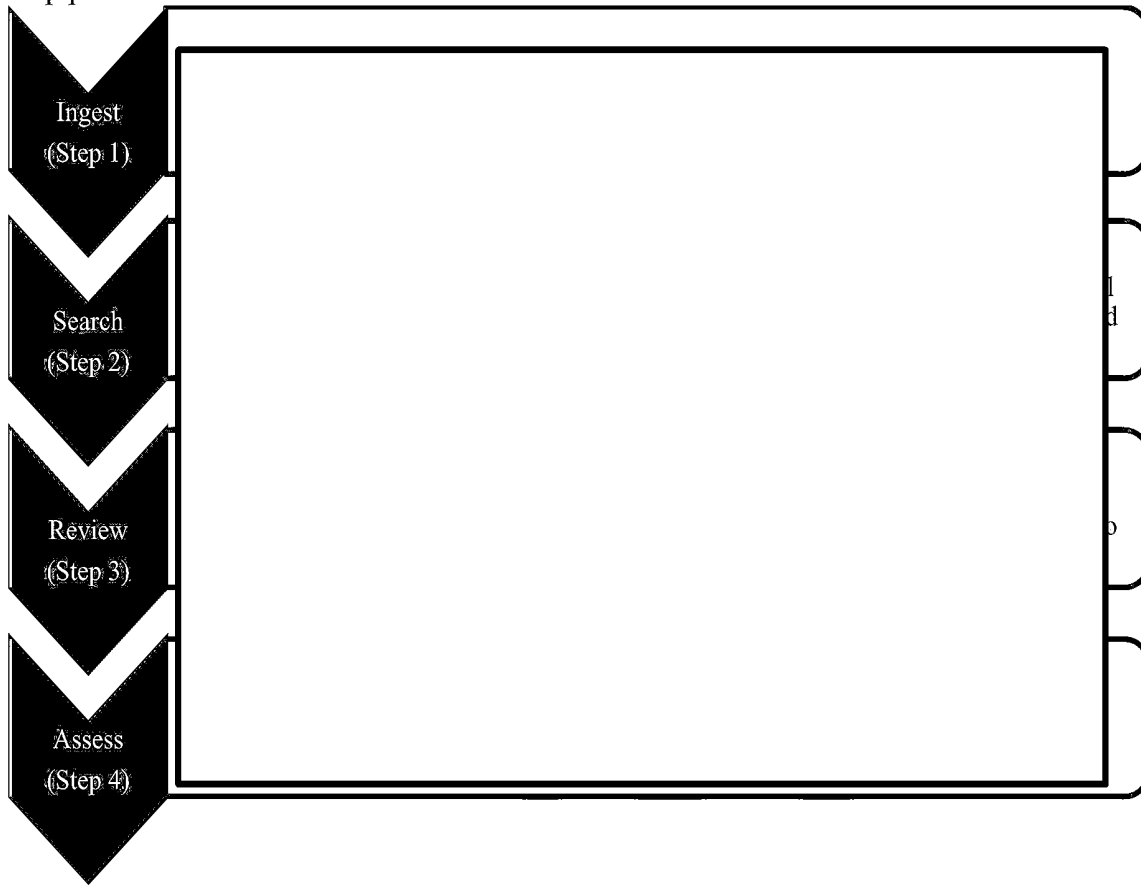
- Set 1: The first set contained [redacted] individuals referred to HQFDNS for [redacted] enhanced review.³
- Set 2: The second set contained [redacted] individuals chosen for the USCIS Elicitation Pilot, led by the Department of State, USDS, and USCIS Refugee, Asylum, and International Operations Directorate (RAIO).⁴

² See Appendix A for a description of each [redacted] tab.



⁴ [redacted] were associated with 102 Elicitation Pilot cases. [redacted] of the [redacted] individuals participated in the elicitation. Those associated with the cases who did not participate in elicitation included a number of children who were not asked about social media due to their age.

The first set of cases ([redacted] enhanced review referrals) was processed through [redacted] using a four-step process:



In conjunction with this process, FDNS officers also manually reviewed each social media account returned by [redacted] through the High Assurance Gateway (HAG) to assist with the account confirmation and derogatory resolution steps, and conducted independent searches through [redacted] to identify other potential social media accounts.⁵

Due to technical issues with the DARPA tool, the second set of cases (Elicitation Pilot) was not ingested by [redacted] in time for the cases to be processed according to the methodology described above. FDNS officers relied on manual searches using [redacted] and the HAG to identify and vet social media accounts associated with applicants within this group. Following the completion of this ad hoc process, [redacted] subsequently ingested all of the Elicitation Pilot cases, [redacted] [redacted], which allowed FDNS to evaluate the tool's results against the officers' manual process.

Entity Identification and Resolution Results

Mirroring the [redacted] pilot's conclusions, this pilot underscored the popularity of Facebook as a social media platform, and highlighted the challenges posed by name-based social media searches and by individuals' privacy settings in conjunction with USCIS' limited authorities.

[redacted]

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Combining both sets of cases, totaling [redacted] applicants referred to HQFDNS for enhanced review and [redacted] chosen for the Elicitation Pilot), FDNS officers determined that:

- [redacted] individuals had confirmed social media accounts, which accounted for [redacted] total accounts: Facebook [redacted] Instagram [redacted] Twitter [redacted] and YouTube [redacted]
- [redacted] individuals had [redacted] possible social media accounts, but due to privacy settings and platform restrictions these matches were unable to be confirmed or disproven.⁶

Note: Because [redacted] cannot screen against Facebook or YouTube, FDNS officers used the HAG to manually review accounts identified for each platform, where privacy settings allowed.

Two of the social media accounts reviewed contained potentially derogatory information:

- [redacted]
- [redacted]

Overall, the [redacted] tool demonstrated significant limitations identifying potential social media accounts. [redacted] yielded many results that did not relate to the [redacted] applicants. [redacted] also failed to identify accounts that FDNS officers were able to identify via manual methods. While it was difficult to determine the precise source of these shortfalls, DARPA developers have acknowledged that [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] Enhanced Review Cases [redacted] reviewed)

- [redacted] identified [redacted] potential accounts, all of them on Twitter. FDNS officers determined that:
 - Approximately [redacted] of these accounts were No Match to the refugee applicant, based on a review of the information associated with the account, such as avatar photo, account description, account postings, or username.
 - Approximately [redacted] of the accounts were Potential Matches, which could not be confirmed or disproven in the absence of further identifying information.
 - Approximately [redacted] of the accounts were Confirmed Matches.⁸

⁶ This total includes a significant number of possible accounts returned by [redacted] which were associated with child-aged derivatives. In keeping with the team's methodology for scoring accounts, they were scored as possible matches since they could not be confirmed or disproven.

⁷ An account was considered Unknown when the officer was not able to review the account, either because they could not find it or because privacy restrictions prevented them from viewing it.

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Elicitation Cases [redacted] reviewed)

- Refugee applicants participating in the Elicitation Pilot provided [redacted] social media account handles, including:
 - [redacted] YouTube handles.
 - [redacted] Twitter handles.
 - [redacted] Instagram handles.
 - [redacted] Facebook handles.
- As noted above [redacted] only searches against Twitter and Instagram. Of the [redacted] combined Twitter and Instagram account handles provided via the Elicitation Pilot [redacted] only found [redacted] uncovered [redacted] additional potential accounts in cases where the applicant was unable to remember their account details, and therefore could not provide the account handle.
- Through the manual review process, FDNS officers identified [redacted] additional social media accounts potentially associated with the Elicitation Pilot participants [redacted]
[redacted] Many of these accounts were noted by the [redacted] during their Elicitation Pilot interview but they were unable to remember exact account details.
 - [redacted] found [redacted] accounts identified through manual review.
- FDNS officers found that, of the [redacted] who claimed to have no social media accounts [redacted] individuals actually did have accounts.

Case Review Metrics – Review Time

Because the FDNS team used a similar methodology for identifying and vetting the social media accounts for each set of cases, the overall time required for reviewing each case was similar. The average review time in both sets of cases at HQFDNS was less than a half hour. Please see the chart below for additional information.

[redacted] Enhanced Review Cases	Elicitation Pilot Cases
[redacted]	
Average Review Time, Per Case: 28 minutes	Average Review Time, Per Case: 25 minutes

Case Review Metrics – Elicitation Method

During the first phase of the Elicitation Pilot, applicants were asked to log in to their Facebook accounts and provide their unique Facebook user ID to the [redacted] contractor. During the second phase of the Elicitation Pilot, applicants were verbally asked to provide their Facebook full name, username, or user ID if they knew it. In both the log-in elicitation phase and the verbal



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elicitation phase, [redacted] provided Facebook identifiers. FDNS’ manual review of the Elicitation Pilot cases indicated that it was equally challenging to identify and verify the accounts elicited in both phases. Please see the chart below for additional information.

Phase 1 Log-In Elicitation Results – Facebook	Phase 2 Verbal Elicitation Results – Facebook
<i>Facebook Identifiers Provided to [redacted] Staff through Log-In Elicitation</i>	<i>Facebook Identifiers Provided to [redacted] Staff through Verbal Elicitation</i>
<i>Account Identification through FDNS Social Media Review</i>	<i>Account Identification through FDNS Social Media Review</i>

The high number of possible and unknown accounts identified by FDNS from both phases reflects the different levels of access provided to users who are logged in to a Facebook account, versus those who are not. The FDNS officers participating in this pilot [redacted]



[redacted] Assessment

Although DARPA has improved the [redacted] tool since FDNS first piloted it, it is not a viable option for semi-automated social media screening at this time. The manual review process used by FDNS officers proved to be more effective at identifying accounts, and the [redacted] tool yielded no gains in efficiency or throughput.

Among its positive attributes, the [redacted] tool:

- Provided a useful profile for each applicant, drawn from [redacted] data.
- Presented an intuitive user interface and workflow.
- Offered some capability for [redacted] although this was not tested during this pilot.
- Contained a tailorable report function (also not tested during this pilot).
- May have potential for bulk data ingestion.⁹

Among its negative attributes, the [redacted] tool:

- Offered very low match confidence, with officers having both to find actual accounts and to review accounts that were not matched effectively. As part of its search algorithms, [redacted] appears to match based on first and last names, or a combination of initials and names – leading to accounts that are entirely unrelated to the applicant.

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⁹ DARPA believes it has identified the source of the problem with ingestion and resolved it. They are currently in the process of stress-testing the system to confirm this resolution.

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- Returned zero results for Instagram, likely indicating a systemic problem with the tool’s search capabilities.
- Failed to return the complete set of social media postings that were found during manual review of one of the cases for which potentially derogatory findings emerged, which could indicate issues with other accounts.
- Represented a static display of social media information, based on the time that the case was ingested and screened against social media platforms, which meant that any subsequent social media posts would not be captured in the tool.
- Could not be updated by an FDNS officer if an account was found manually.
- Did not offer an option to flag cases/accounts/social media posts for linguist review.
- Only worked in Google Chrome, making it incompatible with the HAG and forcing officers to manually enter information into Twitter for account review.
- Provided mostly indecipherable machine translation.
- Did not offer a unified case list that indicated where every case was in the workflow process.
- Returned the same accounts as potential matches to multiple people in the same family case – leading to duplicative review.

Lessons Learned

The DARPA 2.0 Pilot continued the exploration of social media initiated by the [REDACTED] Pilot and the [REDACTED] 50-50 Pilot, conducted in conjunction with DHS Science and Technology, as well as previous [REDACTED] pilots conducted in conjunction with DHS Intelligence and Analysis, the Intelligence Community, and the Department of Defense. The team of FDNS officers assigned to evaluate [REDACTED] used best practices and tradecraft expertise developed through previous pilots to conduct effective and efficient social media review processes. In addition to the new lessons learned through DARPA 2.0, many of the previous lessons learned have still held true.

1. *Optimal results come from richer and more refined data sets.*

- Searching solely against people’s names is inefficient due to the commonality of many names in USCIS’ populations.
- [REDACTED]
- Elicited data may assist in confirming accounts, but does not replace account identification processes or produce major efficiencies.

2. *Account restrictions inhibit success.*

- At the present time, FDNS officers are unable to log in to the various social media platforms and can only view what is publicly available, as set by the applicant and as available by a search in the platform for those not logged in.
- The team would more easily and accurately be able to confirm accounts with access to the social media platforms through account creation.
- Many of the Elicitation Pilot Facebook URLs [REDACTED] indicated that the page was not available to the FDNS officer or presented very limited information because the officer was not logged in to Facebook.

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3. *You have to choose the right social media platforms to search.*

- [redacted] has access to Twitter, Instagram, and the deep and dark Web. However, only Twitter was encountered through review within the [redacted] tool.

- [redacted]

4. *More than just translations are needed for foreign language records.*

- This pilot led to two potentially derogatory findings, one very significant. In both cases, native Arabic language and subject matter expertise in regional culture, religion, and terrorism was needed to fully vet the information on the accounts.
- [redacted] provided some machine translation but was unable to translate text on images and had trouble with translating hashtags.
- [redacted] can only provide translation for Arabic; other language populations would have to be added to the tool for any future caseloads.

5. *The [redacted] population continues to present unique challenges.*

- Based on initial analysis, many [redacted] do not appear to have social media accounts of any kind.
- From the [redacted] analysis, it was suggested that eliciting social media accounts may assist in the social media screening process. Based on analysis in this pilot, elicitation may also encourage applicants to edit accounts, remove derogatory information, increase privacy settings, or abandon accounts altogether.
- While having elicited account information assisted in confirming accounts, officers were still unable to review content in many of the elicitation cases. It is unclear if applicant privacy settings were changed as a result of the elicitation or if the accounts were always private.

6. *Timing of [redacted] extracts is critical.*

- The data from [redacted] is a spreadsheet extracted to conduct Interagency Checks. The spreadsheet should be tweaked to meet the needs of social media queries, including the addition of pictures for each applicant, and the inclusion of ALL known email addresses, aliases, related U.S.-based phone numbers and addresses, and elicited social media handles, user names, and URLs (if applicable).
- Given that the [redacted] data in [redacted] is a static, one-time extract, officers had to review [redacted] with every case to ensure they had the most up-to-date information.

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7. *HAG use has limitations.*

In order to fully evaluate an applicant's social media, officers must visit the social media platforms through the HAG to review the content. The HAG has a number of limitations:

- It only uses the Internet Explorer Web browser, which prevented FDNS officers from using it in combination with [REDACTED]
- It restricts the normal copy/paste function going into and out of the HAG. This requires users to manually enter information, such as complicated URLs, which can lead to mistakes.
- Officers were occasionally identified as potential bots and were asked to confirm CAPTCHA (Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart) images in order to proceed with searches.

8. *Tools matter.*

- [REDACTED] attempts to automate the account identification process proved largely unsuccessful.
- Providing elicited data to [REDACTED] did not improve outcomes in any way.
- Officers found reliable results using [REDACTED]. However, [REDACTED] public search engine temporarily blocks out users who conduct repeated queries in a short period of time.¹¹
- The HAG has limitations that were not experienced by the initial pilot team using DHS S&T's open network.

¹¹ [REDACTED] does offer business solutions that may mitigate this challenge.

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APPENDIX A

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Platform Details

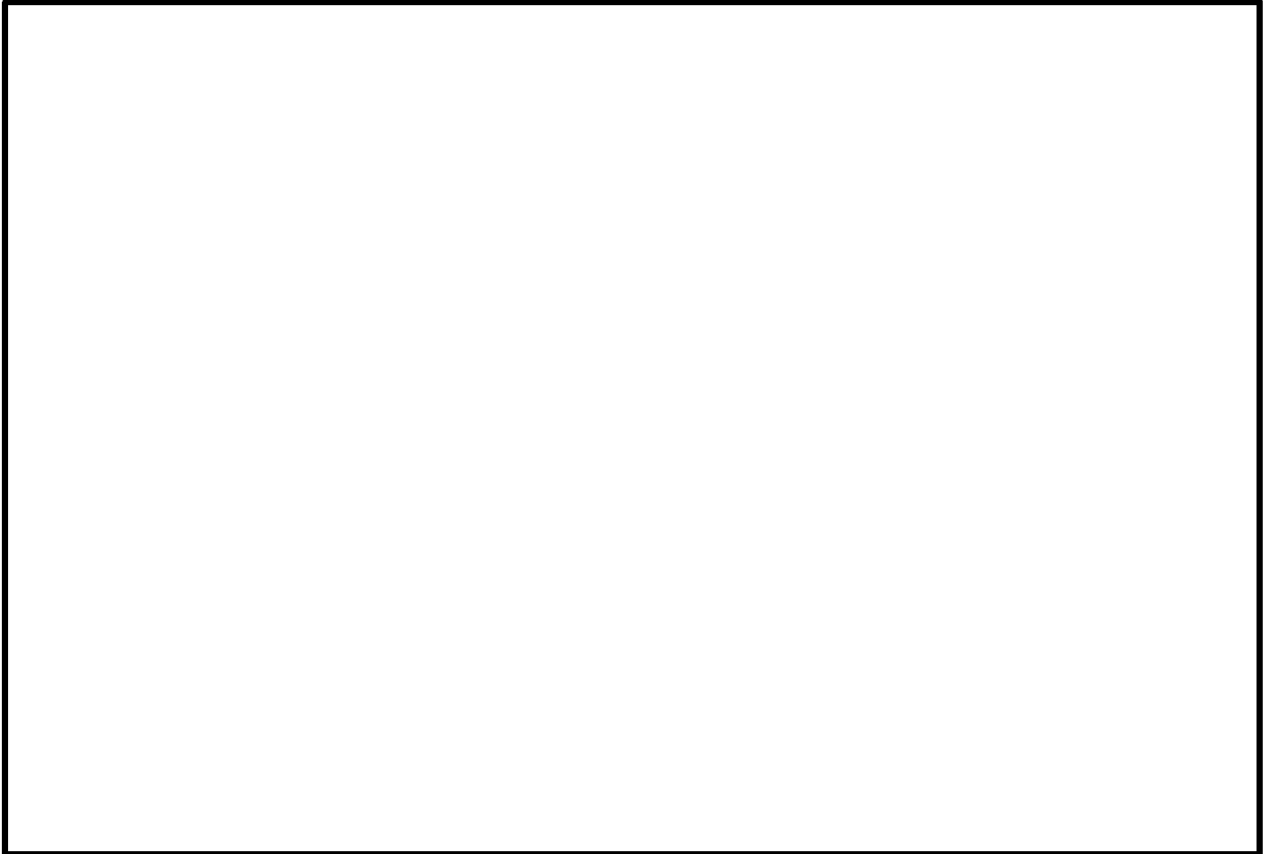
has a simple user interface with four main tabs: Dashboard, Online Persona Resolution, Derogatory Resolution, and Report.

Dashboard

Dashboard allows a user to search for all available cases that have been ingested by the tool. The Dashboard also has two lists of cases: My In-Progress Cases and My Completed Cases. Any cases that have been recently manipulated will appear in the My In-Progress Cases side of the platform.¹²

Online Persona Resolution

Once a user clicks on a case moves to the Online Persona Resolution page. This page has many features and presents a wealth of applicant information:



¹² Due to a glitch in this tab during the pilot, FDNS officers noted that cases appeared as “in progress,” even after the officers had reviewed all of the accounts and social media posts associated with the case. After FDNS informed the DARPA team, they added a “Completed Case” button that allowed officers to manually mark the case as completed.

¹³ FDNS officers were unable to utilize these links due to current USCIS policy and the inability to access via Internet Explorer, which is the only search engine supported by the HAG.

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Derogatory Resolution

The Derogatory Resolution tab includes some of the same features of the Online Persona Resolution Tab as well as additional features:



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Although FDNS officers did not utilize the Report tab during this pilot, it represents the final step in the workflow. It is accessed after a user scores (or “resolves”) all of the social media posts attributed to the Potential Matches.

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Report

The Report tab offers a number of features:

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The Report tab is a summary of the work completed in the prior tabs. At the present time, there is no function to export the results, or view the results in the aggregate.

USCIS/State Social Media Elicitation Plan – [REDACTED] Applicant Pilot

Concept of Operations

Tasking

As requested by the National Security Council staff, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the Department of State (“State” [REDACTED]) [REDACTED] have been asked to develop a joint Concept of Operations (CONOP) to pilot the elicitation of social media identifiers of [REDACTED] under consideration for resettlement through the United States [REDACTED] in an effort to include this additional data element as part of the inter-agency refugee screening process.

Background

There are currently over 100 mobile social networking platforms that are active and known to USCIS and State. Additionally, these platforms may be collectively referenced interchangeably by various terms, such as: social media, blogging, micro-blogging, photo-sharing, etc. For the purposes of this pilot, these platforms will be collectively referred to as “social media.” As the pilot progresses and more information is learned about this capability, this set of specific social media platforms may grow or shrink depending on utility identified. During the pilot period, applicants will be asked to provide their username or “handle” for these various social media platforms by the State contracted [REDACTED] at the time of pre-screening. These additional data elements will be captured and stored within State’s [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. These data points will be forwarded by State to various organizations that support the [REDACTED] for screening and vetting.

The pilot will focus on assessing: (1) standard procedures for collection; (2) the method for dissemination of collected data to the organizations using the data for screening and vetting; (3) the value of social media screening, including whether derogatory information is obtained; and (4) the time expended on collection and screening, to inform a workload analysis in the future.

Outline of Approach





This CONOP provides the implementation details for launching this pilot, including:

- What is collected (i.e., specific data elements);
- Who collects the information;
- Scope of the pilot; and
- Where, how, and at what point in the process will the collected data be sent for screening.

What to Collect:

There are dozens of social media platforms and platforms, and the social media landscape is constantly evolving and changing. However, for the purposes of the pilot, the [REDACTED] will focus

on collecting usernames and handles for a few commonly used platforms according to independent research and intelligence community reports: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. To aid collection, making a list of the social media platforms and symbols available to applicants during the collection process may assist in their understanding of the specific information being sought. This would give the applicant the opportunity to be presented with the symbol of the platforms requested, allowing for a visual interpretation not just a verbal prompt. However, even with this assistance, it is important to note that in many cases individuals may need additional explanation/support that will lengthen pre-screening times. For example, in most cases applicants will not know their Facebook username / identifier, and may need to either use their phone or help the caseworker locate the account on their computer in order to retrieve the information.

Social Media Networks	
Facebook	
Twitter	
Instagram	
YouTube	

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Who Collects the Data - [] Staff:

The [] who has applied to be resettled in the United States is first prescreened by the [] which consist of non-U.S. Government personnel funded by State. This prescreening includes the collection of biographic data, such as names, aliases, document numbers, contact information, and addresses. The benefits of having [] staff collect social media identifiers at the beginning of the [] admissions process include:

- Maintains consistency in the collection of applicant identifiers used for screening;
- Ensures information is collected at the earliest point in the process, allowing social media screening to occur simultaneously with other parts of the process;
- Provides relevant information to the [] Officer for exploration at the time of the [] status interview; and
- Provides opportunity for [] to provide potentially exculpatory explanations, because the [] Officer could raise social media concerns at time of interview;

In addition [] collection of the social media data at prescreening is likely to be perceived by the applicant as simply an intake of data, rather than a “vetting” procedure.

State with the assistance of USCIS will update any required guidance to [] staff to collect information related to social media handles, ensuring that [] staff accurately captures the

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information of interest and is also prepared to provide reasonable explanations justifying this collection in the event applicants ask why such information is required and how it will be used.

The collection of social media information at prescreening will extend the amount of time it takes for the [redacted] to interview the applicants. The pilot will include a plan to track the amount of time that the collection of social media information adds to the pre-screening stage and whether it impacts the number of cases that an [redacted] caseworker can interview per day. Additionally, it will be important to track the impact that the screening, translation, and analysis portion have on overall program efficiency.

Pilot Scope: The pilot phase of this project will be focused on a discrete population and implemented in one processing location in order to identify best practices, understand workload implications, assess value, and ensure any appropriate modifications are made before a decision is made to apply the process to a broader population.

As such, the pilot will take place during a one week period in [redacted]. Based on the planned circuit ride schedule, a one week sample will yield approximately [redacted] cases and approximately [redacted] depending on case size. This sample will allow for a statistical representation from various nationalities to include high risk populations such as [redacted] nationals. The specific timing of the pilot is dependent on when technical changes to [redacted] can be completed. State estimates that these technical changes will take approximately 30 days; therefore, the pilot will likely begin at the end of Q2 or the beginning of Q3 at the latest.

Pilot Logistics: During the pilot period, the [redacted] will collect the user names and handles for each applicant and enter the information into [redacted]. Once the information is collected, PRM will produce a report extract which includes the social media data, along with all the additional identifiers associated with the Interagency Check data fields. Note that applicant information may need to be translated so that it can be entered into [redacted], which does not accept non-alphanumeric characters such as Arabic. The [redacted] will keep track of how many of the cases prescreened during the week of the pilot presented social media handles in Arabic that required transliteration.

[redacted]

[redacted] PRM will instruct the [redacted] to place all cases in this pilot on hold pending receipt of results. USCIS and State are requesting that results be provided back to USCIS and State within 30 days of receipt of data affirming whether there is a positive match to possible derogatory social media information. Cases identified as not relating to information of concern would be released for normal processing, while those with potentially derogatory information would be reviewed closely to ensure accurate determinations are made on their ability to continued seeking admission to the United

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States. There may be an additional resource need for translation of matches and results. This pilot may impact the number of cases presented to USCIS for interview in Q3 if there is a delay longer than 30 days in receiving responses for this pilot.

Next Steps:

- PRM will begin the technical changes to [REDACTED] to collect the information
- USCIS, in conjunction with DOS and its screening partners is developing guidance and procedures for the collection and transmission of data as well as communication of the results. These procedures will take into account any legal and policy issues to maintain consistency with the processes developed for the three previous [REDACTED] social media pilots.
- PRM and USCIS is working with screening partners to establish a process for transmitting data and communicating results, which for the pilot will likely be manual.

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- PRM and USCIS, in conjunction with USDS, will develop an assessment tool to record findings, develop a workload analysis, and make recommendations for changes and future expansion, as appropriate.

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REVIEW OF [REDACTED] SCREENING SOCIAL MEDIA PILOT

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Fraud Detection & National Security Directorate
16 March 2016

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(b)(7)(e) 50-50 Review: [REDACTED] Pilot

Overview

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) asked United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to examine the feasibility of using social media for screening [REDACTED] applicants. USCIS sought to determine if reviewing the social media presence of these individuals could provide useful information for adjudicating their applications, and gauge how resource intensive this screening could be.

While USCIS had used social media in a limited capacity for the enhanced vetting of certain [REDACTED] it does not have any experience in using it as a large scale screening tool. The agency therefore decided to approach this work as an open-ended exploration with very flexible research parameters. The team supporting this pilot utilized an adaptive approach to create, implement, and continually revise its social media screening procedures.

[REDACTED] as a Screening Platform

Starting in December 2015, a team of USCIS personnel worked closely with DHS Science and Technology (S&T) to establish a pilot leveraging a commercially available tool for social media screening. After reviewing more than 16 different companies and their existing data analysis capabilities, S&T experts selected [REDACTED] for the pilot. S&T worked with DHS OGC and [REDACTED] to execute a [REDACTED] to support joint experimentation with social media analytics.

S&T selected the [REDACTED] social media analytics platform due to its coverage of a [REDACTED]

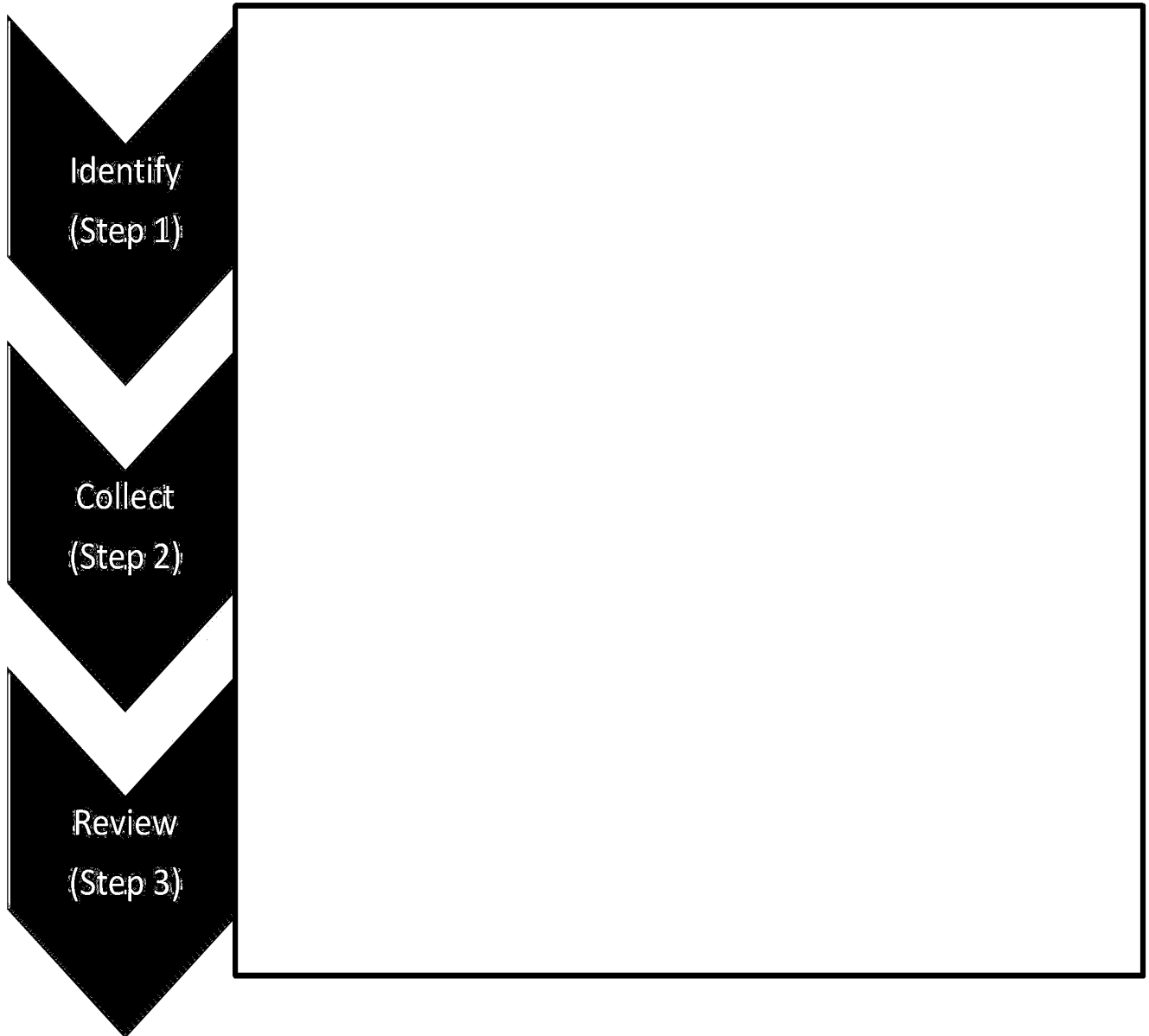
Of note, due to restrictions Facebook has placed on its Application Programming Interface (API) [REDACTED] (and many other social media tools) is unable to screen social media content posted on that platform.

While other government agencies are using [REDACTED] no agency has evaluated its use for mass screening. Therefore, this pilot utilized an iterative approach that enabled the S&T/USCIS team to begin identifying technical limitations and

desired enhancements to tailor [redacted] to better fit USCIS’s unique screening requirements. Additional enhancements to the tool were implemented on a weekly basis throughout the pilot.

Methodology

USCIS identified [redacted] applicants (the 50-50 population) to serve as the focus of this pilot. These cases were processed through [redacted] using a three-step methodology: 1) Identify social media accounts; 2) Collect social media information using Data Streams;¹ and 3) Review and analyze filtered results.² Parts of the process were repeated as technical improvements and lessons learned were identified and applied.



[redacted]

² These results are referred to in this paper as social media documents (such as a Twitter or Instagram post). Each document is reviewed to determine whether it has any linkage to a member of the 50-50 population.

Social Media Presence and Platform Utilization

In Step 1, the identification phase, Officers closely examined the overall social media presence of the 50-50 population. [redacted] Officers determined that:

- [redacted] had confirmed social media accounts, which accounted for [redacted] total accounts.
- [redacted] had a likely social media account but due to privacy settings and platform restrictions this match was unable to be confirmed.
- [redacted] had possible accounts that could not be confirmed because they did not clearly relate to the applicant, which accounted for [redacted] total accounts.
- [redacted] had no identified social media accounts.

Note: A subject could have multiple social media accounts, which could be determined as confirmed, likely, or possible.

In terms of actual confirmed social media accounts associated with the 50-50 population, Facebook was the most popular platform. See the table below for additional information about platforms associated with the 50-50 population.

<i>Confirmed</i>	<i>Likely but Unconfirmed</i>	<i>Possible but Unconfirmed</i>
[redacted]		

Note: As with the K-1 pilot, the 50-50 results do not incorporate social media posted on Facebook, due to limitations preventing third parties from collecting its API. [redacted] only collects on platforms that allow collection – [redacted]

[redacted]

Results

In keeping with the adaptive learning approach, USCIS ran the 50-50 population through the

[redacted] screening process multiple times to [redacted]
[redacted] This was aided by the nature of [redacted] data collection and retention capabilities - [redacted]

[redacted] This data may then be re-screened using [redacted] to determine how it impacts the number of social media documents returned.

Round 1 (Ending 3/3/16)	
<i>Average Time, Step 1: 97 mins.</i>	
<i>Average Time, Step 2: 3 days</i>	
<i>Average Time, Step 3: 42 mins.</i>	
<i>Median Time, Step 3: 5 mins.</i>	

Round 2 (Ending 3/14/16)	
<i>Average Time, Step 1: 45 mins.</i>	
<i>Average Time, Step 2: 5 days</i>	
<i>Average Time, Step 3: 22 mins.</i>	

Analysis of Results

Members of the 50-50 population had minimal presence on the U.S.-based social media platforms accessible through [redacted]. Beyond that baseline finding, each round of screening yielded valuable insights to inform technical, policy, and programmatic decision-making. To help ensure consistency with the approach used in the [redacted] pilot, Officers recorded the same metrics to evaluate each social media document associated with a member of the 50-50 population:

- Filter Category
- Social Media Platform

- Translation Time Required (where machine translation did not adequately translate into English)
- Confirmed Social Media Account

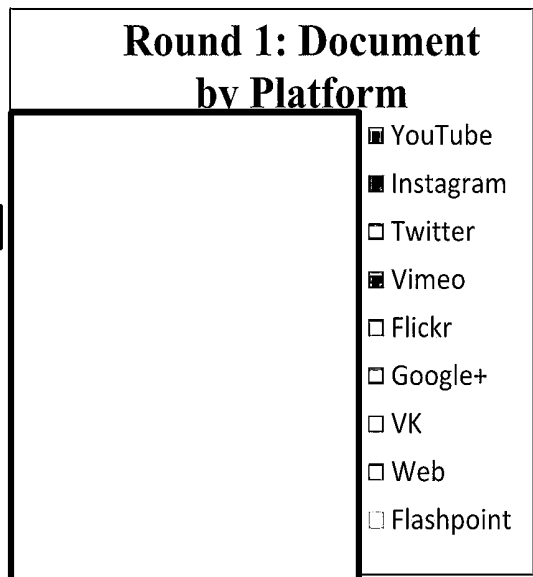
Round 1

Round 1 identified a number of key results:

- No derogatory information was attributed to any member of the 50-50 population.
- Only [redacted] had a confirmed social media account (Instagram) that returned documents via [redacted] filters, though, as previously stated, this account was determined to not have derogatory information. Of the [redacted] documents associated with this applicant, [redacted]
- The average review time for each document was approximately 1 minute, 40 seconds.
- One hundred and eighty documents required human translation. On average, these documents required 1 minute and 20 seconds to resolve. [redacted] who was very active on Instagram, was responsible for 141 of the 180 documents requiring translation.
- The median number of documents per applicant was 1 (which would require 1 minute, and 40 seconds to review), with the average number of documents being 24 (which would require 40 minutes to review).

Nearly half [redacted] of the 50-50 returned no social media documents when filtered through the [redacted]. The remaining [redacted] subjects returned [redacted] documents when filtered through the [redacted] the vast majority of which were not related or linked to the subject. Only one of the 50-50 subjects had a confirmed social media account that contained material that matched [redacted] filters.

Approximately [redacted] of social media documents filtered through the [redacted] came from YouTube, followed by Instagram [redacted] and Twitter [redacted]. Similar to the [redacted] pilot results [redacted]



Round 2

The reduced set of [redacted] [redacted] – coupled with improvements in [redacted] API matching, led to a major reduction in social media documents returned during Round 2. Key results included:

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Lessons Learned

S&T/USCIS piloted the use of [redacted] for over ten weeks – testing capabilities, finding bugs, developing enhancements, learning about our applicants’ use of social media, searching for derogatory information, capturing metrics, and demonstrating use cases to decision makers. With each week, the Pilot team continued to improve its ability to utilize [redacted] to screen social media, [redacted]



Many of the lessons learned derived from the [redacted] pilot remain applicable to the 50-50 population, including [redacted]



In addition, a number of distinct lessons have been learned, which can shape what social media vetting can look like in this setting and in future scaled-up operations.

1. The [redacted] population presents unique challenges.

- Based on the results of this pilot, the [redacted] population may have a minimal footprint on common U.S.-based social media platforms. Those over age 60 and those under age 10 can be expected to have little social media presence, and the remainder may be active on platforms other than those collected by [redacted]
- [redacted] remain the best elements of applicant data for identifying and confirming social media accounts. Eliciting this information and specific social media account handles from [redacted] applicants should assist the social media screening process. [redacted]



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2. Timing of [redacted] Extracts is Critical.

- The [redacted] spreadsheet should be tweaked to better facilitate social media screening of [redacted] including the addition of pictures for each applicant, and the inclusion of all known [redacted]
- In at least two instances, Officers found new email addresses for applicants in [redacted] a week or two after they had already screened the subject through [redacted] [redacted] – timing of the extracts is critical.

3. Filtering for Relevant Information is Essential.

- Based on lessons learned in previous pilots, Officers used custom-built [redacted] for the 50-50 pilot. These [redacted] were refined between rounds and yielded progressively better results.
- Conducting English-language biographic searches (First Name, Last Name) proved unhelpful for both the [redacted] and 50-50 pilots. Biographic-based searches can be useful, however, if performed in the applicant's native language, such as Arabic, since it returns more accurate results (The name Mohammed can be spelled dozens of ways in English, for example, but only one way in Arabic). For this pilot, that required a linguistic expert to enter each name in Arabic into the [redacted]

4. Social media screening benefits from officer continuity.

- Using the same Officer for each step of the [redacted] process (Identify, Collect, and Review) is more effective and efficient versus having a different person be responsible for different elements of the process. By conducting Step 1, officers quickly become familiar with each individual's personal information (biographical information, familial relationships, etc.), which enables them to build [redacted] for collecting in Step 2. In order to accurately assess the results returned as part of Step 3, an officer needs to be intimately familiar with the facts of the case.

U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES



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**REVIEW OF ADJUSTMENT OF STATUS
SOCIAL MEDIA PILOTS**

(b)(7)(e) **Executive Summary**

USCIS examined three techniques to screen [redacted] adjustments of status cases: manually searching social media sites; using a commercial application [redacted] scores to select cases for manual review; and using another commercial application [redacted], to filter social media information, [redacted] through DHS S&T. USCIS has determined that neither of these techniques are ready for use in large scale social media screening. While the S&T/USCIS team using [redacted] has learned many significant lessons about social media and has become more efficient, [redacted]

[redacted] USCIS recommends continuing research and development on [redacted] and other services and tools to build the capabilities necessary for screening on the large scale envisioned and, until such capability is delivered, [redacted]

Other lessons learned:

- **Manual reviews take USCIS personnel about 1.5 hours. This time is contingent on the particular platforms to be reviewed and the type of identifying information available pertaining to the subject.** [redacted] [redacted] make it easier to locate social media accounts and may reduce processing time.
- **Social media screening requires dedicated, and preferably on-site, language support.**
[redacted]
- **Close collaboration between S&T SMEs, USCIS officers and [redacted] technicians led to rapid improvements in the technology and its use.**
- **Photos contained in government systems also helped confirm identities when photos on the social media site are available.**

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- **Derogatory information found in other government systems can provide a more complete picture of the applicant’s background and risk profile.**

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- **Identifying potentially derogatory social media records is only one step in the adjudicative process.**
 - USCIS must determine how evidence will be used to reach an adjudicative decision.
 - USCIS must determine how it can share the evidence that it collects with other internal DHS components, other federal agencies, and state and local law enforcement.
- **Social media research on USCIS applicants falls into three discrete steps:**
 - Use all available information to identify social media accounts pertaining to the applicant;
 - Collect content from the pertinent social media platforms; and
 - Analysis the content to identify information that will impact USCIS decisions or other actions.
- **S&T is a highly capable USCIS partner and can establish operationally relevant technical capabilities to address emergent requirements for operational organizations**

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- Effective pilot operations can be created by combining S&T and USCIS authorities
 - S&T coordinated Department level approvals for the pilot and rapidly established a Privacy Impact Assessment to complement USCIS privacy policies within several days
 - S&T made space, equipment, and expertise available to work with immigration officers and accommodate pilot operations in 2 days.

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Introduction

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) asked United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to examine the feasibility of using social media to screen individuals in the United States who entered via [redacted] visas and who are now seeking adjustment to [redacted] status. USCIS sought to determine if reviewing the social media presence of [redacted] applicants could provide useful information for benefit adjudication and how resource intensive the screening would be.

While USCIS had used social media in a limited capacity for the enhanced vetting of certain [redacted] it did not have any experience in using it as a large scale screening tool. The agency therefore decided to approach this work as an open-ended exploration with very flexible research parameters.

USCIS identified a population of approximately [redacted] seeking adjustment. Each of the [redacted] Adjustment of Status pilots studied part of this population. The teams supporting each pilot were granted limited autonomy to create, implement, and continually revise their own social media screening procedures.

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Manual Reviews and [redacted] at the National Benefits Center

Manual Reviews

The USCIS National Benefits Center (NBC) is a central hub for the processing and adjudication of many immigration benefit requests, which includes the screening and vetting of the applicants. USCIS took advantage of this expertise and had the NBC Fraud Detection and National Security Immigration Officers (IOs), Supervisory IOs (SIOs), and an Intelligence Research Specialist look for and review social media accounts related to [redacted] of the [redacted] nonimmigrants seeking adjustment to [redacted] status¹.

Using the High Assurance Gateway, the NBC used biographic information available in the A-file [redacted] to search Facebook, Twitter, and Google for social media accounts. NBC personnel started each search with [redacted]
[redacted] The NBC only detected social media accounts for [redacted] nonimmigrants.

The NBC reviewed the parts of the social media accounts visible to the general public (they did not “friend” or “direct message” anyone) and tried to find records that could potentially impact the adjustment of status application. The personnel chose a very expansive approach to

[redacted]

[redacted] In addition, automated translation tools were not able to translate foreign language writing in picture and video files nor spoken words in video and audio files. Only [redacted] nonimmigrants that had social media accounts had potentially derogatory social media records related to national security or public safety despite the notably low threshold for being flagged.

¹ This pilot was ended after [redacted] reviews because NBC personnel were using their own personally identifiable information to create accounts to log into Facebook. [redacted]

² NBC personnel relied heavily on biographic information pulled from the following forms: DS-156 (Nonimmigrant Visa Application); DS-2054 (Medical Exam for Immigrant or Refugee); DS-230 (Application for Immigrant Visa and Alien Registration); I-693 (Report of Medical Exam and Vaccination Record); and I-94 (Arrival and Departure). [redacted]

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[redacted]

Manual reviews require a significant time investment. USCIS staff at the NBC explored [redacted] [redacted] to determine if it could be used to automatically detect which cases have social media accounts in order to avoid spending time investigating applicants with no social media presence. [redacted]

[redacted]

When searching for an individual, the [redacted] will signal, on a [redacted] scale, the confidence in having found the right person and the recentness of the data. A Reliability score of [redacted] indicates high confidence; a Reliability score of [redacted] indicates low confidence. Likewise, a Relevance score of [redacted] indicates high probability of current actionable information. For example, returning a [redacted] score would indicate successful entity resolution but out of date location information. A score of [redacted] indicates high confidence at identifying information on the entity of interest and recent social media information on that person.

Cases with [redacted] scores should be less likely to have social media than those with [redacted] scores. Among the [redacted] cases manually reviewed by the NBC, [redacted] had scores of [redacted]. Among these, [redacted] had scores of [redacted] and [redacted] had scores of [redacted].

- Among the [redacted] scores, upon manual review, [redacted] (54%) had no detectable social media accounts and [redacted] (15%) had potentially derogatory information.
- Among the [redacted] scores, upon manual review, [redacted] (47%) had no detectable social media accounts and [redacted] (11%) had potentially derogatory information.

While this is a very simple comparison, it suggested that USCIS will not be able to leverage [redacted] scores to meaningfully prioritize screening efforts without significant changes to the technology.

In January 2016, NBC reviewed an additional [redacted] cases with [redacted] scores. NBC also reexamined the [redacted] scores from an earlier review in December 2015, this means NBC personnel manually reviewed a total [redacted] cases with [redacted] scores.

- Among the [redacted] scores, upon manual review, [redacted] (29%) had no records and [redacted] (10%) had potentially derogatory information.

The additional case reviews did not establish that [redacted] scores are a reliable indicator pointing toward a social media presence. Furthermore, NBC was often able to locate a social media presence for [redacted] scores. The [redacted] scores and [redacted] scores had similar proportions of potentially derogatory information under the broad definition used at the NBC.

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USCIS language support staff provided translations of social media records for some cases flagged as potential national security concerns. Each translation took about 3 hours⁴. While the translations resolved some potential issues, most were not, as shown in the table below. If USCIS officers need to determine which social media records are potential national security concerns, and which are not, they will need training and clear guidance.

Effect of Translations on Potentially Derogatory Information

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Final Steps

The NBC will collect and review all necessary translations, work with partners in law enforcement and intelligence to determine if the social media records are still potentially derogatory, and then work with other USCIS stakeholders to determine how to resolve potentially derogatory social media records for adjudication.

Lessons Learned

- **Officers took about 1.5 hours to locate and review social media accounts.**

⁴ Social media records are an unusual workload for the language support staff and many documents were difficult to read due to image quality.

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- **Automatic foreign language translation was not sufficient.**
- **Additionally, USCIS language support staff spent about 3 hours on each case that needed translation.**
- **Identity verification is crucial.** If USCIS cannot prove that an individual is the account owner, the evidence cannot be considered in adjudicative decisions.

- (b)(7)(e) **scores are not ready to be used to prioritize manual reviews.** The search parameters will need significant changes in order to better identify social media accounts and to triage social media records for review.
- **Officers will need clear guidance on what type of social media records are potentially derogatory and worth further investigation, and if determined to be derogatory, how to use that information.**
 - **Derogatory information found in other government systems can provide a more complete picture of the applicant's background and risk profile.**
 - **Officers will need clear guidance on how to share potential concerns with colleagues in law enforcement.**

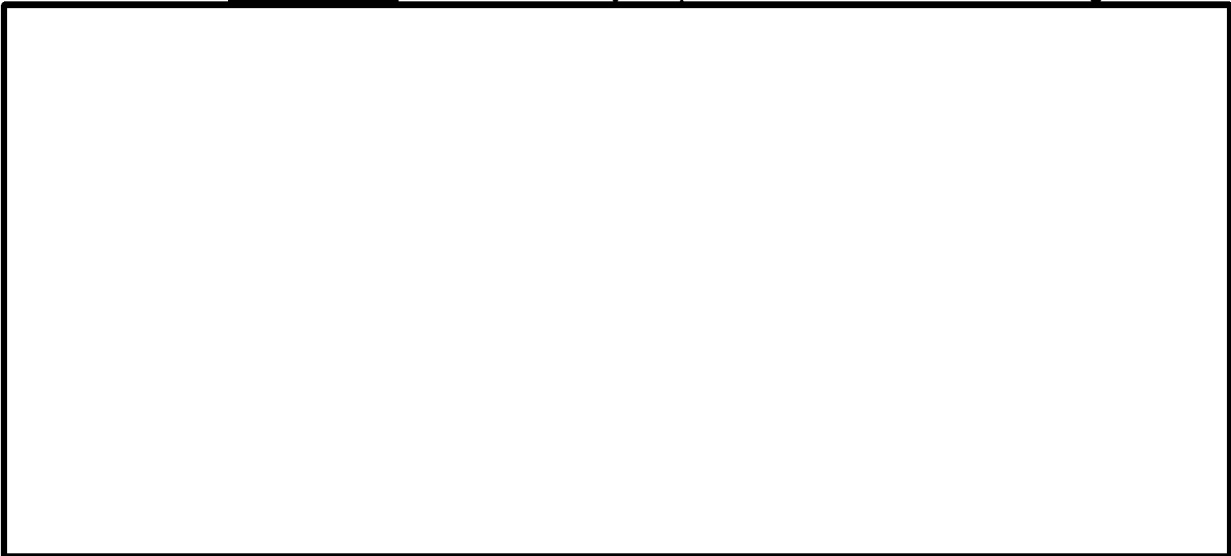
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[REDACTED] Pilot

[REDACTED] as a Screening Platform

Starting in December 2015, a team of USCIS Immigration Officers worked closely with DHS Science and Technology (S&T) to establish pilot operations and begin to develop baseline requirements for social media screening, utilizing currently available social media data analysis capabilities. After reviewing more than 16 different companies and capabilities, S&T experts selected [REDACTED] for the pilot. S&T worked with DHS OGC and [REDACTED] to execute a [REDACTED] to support joint experimentation with social media analytics.

S&T selected the [REDACTED] social media analytics platform due to its instant coverage of a



Data retention policies are automatically enforced and can be configured per data source or user. While other government agencies are using [REDACTED] no agency has evaluated its use for mass screening. Therefore, this pilot utilized a cooperative, iterative approach that enabled the S&T/USCIS team to revamp [REDACTED] to better fit its unique screening requirements. Personnel from USCIS and S&T identified technical limitations and desired enhancements to [REDACTED] technicians, which were generally resolved or implemented. Additional enhancements to the tool continue to be implemented on a weekly basis as the joint pilot operations continue. According to [REDACTED] this process had the added benefit of improving the platform for the law enforcement and intelligence community partners already using the tool.

Methodology

After a review of an initial population of approximately [REDACTED] adjustment applicants against [REDACTED] resulted in [REDACTED] results, USCIS prioritized [REDACTED] interview-ready cases from that population for review. The [REDACTED] cases were processed through [REDACTED] using a three step methodology: 1) Identify social media accounts; 2) Collect social media information; and 3)

Review and analyze filtered results. Because this pilot was breaking new ground, using an advanced social media analytics capability, the methodology was under constant refinement. Parts of the process were repeated as technical improvements and lessons learned were identified and applied.

Step 1 – Identify



Step 2 – Collect



Step 3 – Review



⁵ Presently [redacted] relies on the website [redacted] to generate People Search results. [redacted] is currently identifying additional data sources to enhance its People Search function, including [redacted]



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Results

In keeping with the iterative learning approach described above, USCIS ran the [redacted] applicants through the [redacted] screening process multiple times, primarily to gauge the impact of refining the [redacted]. This was aided by the nature of [redacted] data collection and retention capabilities – once an initial collection is performed on a given [redacted] [redacted] This data may then be re-screened using [redacted] to determine how it impacts the number of potential social media matches returned.

Round 1 (Ending 1/21/16)	
[redacted]	[redacted]
<i>Average Time, Step 1: 2 hours⁶</i>	
<i>Average Time, Step 2: 5 days</i>	
<i>Average Time, Step 3: N/A</i>	

Round 2 (Ending 2/13/16)	
[redacted]	[redacted]
<i>Average Time, Step 1: N/A⁸</i>	
<i>Average Time, Step 2: 12 hours⁹</i>	

⁶ In this instance, due to a software error, the returns [redacted]

⁷ Officers were instructed to take no more than two hours for Step 1, although some cases took less time.

⁸ Officers relied on the Step 1 results for rounds 2-4.

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Average Time, Step 3: 1.2 hours

[Redacted]

Round 3
(Ending 2/13/16)

Average Time, Step 1: N/A

Average Time, Step 2: 24 hours

Average Time, Step 3: N/A

[Redacted]

[Redacted] is able to store results and rounds 2-4 rescreened these results using the smaller [Redacted] thus the Step 2 times are artificially shorter for Rounds 2-4.

Round 4 (Ending 2/23/16)	
<i>Average Time, Step 1:</i> N/A	
<i>Average Time, Step 2:</i> 12 hours	
<i>Average Time, Step 3:</i> 68 mins	
<i>Median Time, Step 3:</i> 28 mins	

Round 4 – In Depth

The dramatic reduction in social media matches returned during Round 4 enabled Immigration Officers to essentially redo the Step 3 process for the [redacted] while capturing a number of critical metrics to aid in evaluating the pilot’s accomplishments. For each social media match, Immigration Officers recorded the following:

- Filter Category
- Social Media Platform
- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- Translation Time Required (where machine translation did not adequately translate into English)
- Confirmed Social Media Account

Round 4 identified a number of key results:

- No derogatory information was attributed to a [redacted] applicant¹⁰ or petitioner.
- Only one [redacted] applicant’s social media account returned matches via [redacted] filter. These matches were linked to innocuous Instagram posts that featured common words [redacted]
- The average review time per potential match was two minutes.
- Only [redacted] matches required human translation. On average, these matches required 1.5 minutes to resolve. One match, however, led to a social media account possibly linked to a [redacted] applicant, which contained numerous [redacted] videos that required approximately two hours of translation.
- The median number of potential matches per applicant was 14 (which would require 28 minutes to review), with the highest number of potential matches being 198 (which would require 2 hours and 30 minutes to review) and the lowest number being 0.

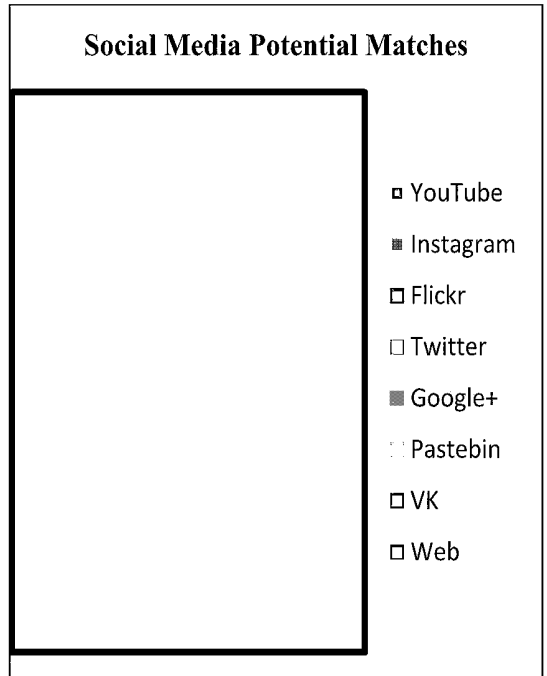
¹⁰ This result is validated by the (non-social media) retrospective [redacted] review conducted by NCTC that found no derogatory information.

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Round 4 – Social Media Platforms (b)(7)(e)

Some [redacted] of matches, the largest group, came from YouTube. Missing from this pie chart is Facebook, due to its corporate decision to prevent third parties from collecting on its API feed.

[redacted] only collects on platforms that allow collection – [redacted]



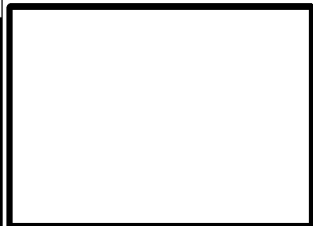
To address this shortcoming, Immigration Officers used [redacted] to identify potential Facebook accounts for the [redacted] applicants and their petitioners, and then manually reviewed each of them, where privacy settings allowed. By clicking on the cover photo of the account, Immigration Officers were occasionally able to review other photos, albums, and mobile uploads. Potentially derogatory information was discovered on one of the [redacted] applicants through this manual review [redacted]

In addition to reviewing each potential match returned by [redacted] data collection process, Immigration

Officers also more closely examined the overall social media presence of the [redacted] and their petitioners (see *Figure 1*). Approximately [redacted] of the [redacted] or their petitioners, had confirmed social media accounts. A social media account is considered confirmed when it contains

identifiers that match an applicant’s data,

Social Media Platform Accounts		
Confirmed	Likely	Possible
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]



Some applicants have profile pictures of themselves, which facilitates this

Figure 1

process. Others choose stock images or landscapes for their profile pictures, making it difficult to confirm the account without substantial other evidence.

[redacted] of the [redacted] or their petitioners, had likely social media accounts. Likely social media accounts are found by using applicant information [redacted]

[redacted] but privacy settings or platform restrictions prevent the officer from full confirmation of the account or verification of the images.

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[redacted] or more of the [redacted] or their petitioners, had possible social media accounts. Possible social media accounts are those where the applicant’s biographic information matches that of a social media account, but there are no other data points available to make an informed determination.

[redacted] of the [redacted] had no accounts identified by this process. The applicants may not use social media, or the applicant may have such a common name that confident identification of the account is too labor-intensive. Privacy settings set by the applicant may also impact whether social media accounts can be identified or confirmed.¹¹

Lessons Learned

The S&T/USCIS Pilot Cell has been using [redacted] for nine weeks – testing capabilities, finding bugs, developing enhancements, learning about our applicants’ use of social media, searching for derogatory information, capturing metrics, and demonstrating use cases to decision makers.

During this time, a number of significant lessons have been learned, which can shape what social media vetting can look like in this setting and in future scaled-up operations.

- **Optimal results come from richer and more refined data sets.**
 - U.S. government metrics and vernacular, such as a receipt number, are not useful for either identifying social media accounts, nor are they discussed on social media.
 - Common names and famous names are noisy. [redacted]
 - [redacted]
 - Richer data sets upfront reduce officer “swivel chairing” between U.S. Government holdings and commercial databases for additional leads to identify accounts – expediting Step 1 in the Babel Street process.

- **Filter management is key.**
 - This pilot began with a data call to USCIS components for [redacted] [redacted] were collected, provided to S&T and uploaded into [redacted]. The result was 2.4 million potential matches to the applicant pool, and it bogged down the accounts, exceeding the initial thresholds established for the pilot.

¹¹ Restrictions on the Facebook API may have also affected the officers’ ability to confirm accounts.

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- [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED] should aim to reduce potential matches and identify truly derogatory information.
 - Choosing [REDACTED] that generate false positive results (e.g. social media matches with no actionable information or relevance to the applicant) may cause [REDACTED] to miss truly derogatory information.
 - New filters with relevant [REDACTED] tailored to the target population’s socio-cultural characteristics, will need to be tested and analyzed.
- **Account restrictions inhibit success.**
 - At the present time, officers are unable to log-in to the various social media platforms, and can only see what is 1) public, as set by the applicant and 2) public, as available by a search in the platform.
 - The team will be able to more easily and accurately confirm accounts with access to the social media platforms.
 - **You have to choose the right social media platforms to search.**
 - [REDACTED] has API feeds to [REDACTED] social media sites plus deep and dark web.
 - The team decided in the beginning to select ALL available platforms to screen our applicant information against.
 - [REDACTED]
 - Based on this [REDACTED] pilot, Facebook is potentially a rich source of social media for USCIS applicants. Barring changes to Facebook’s API restriction, however, [REDACTED] and similar social media analyzers will not be able to provide an automated data collection capability for Facebook accounts.
 - **More than just translations are needed for foreign language records.**
 - While [REDACTED] has machine translation capabilities, at times the translations are imperfect and require human review. Subject matter experts who can comprehend the essence of videos, postings, text, and other various media, and who understand cultural, religious, and colloquial terminology, must be available in either a reach-back capacity or onsite to facilitate this work.
 - Having said that, only [REDACTED] of the [REDACTED] potential matches required additional human translation, and only one required extensive review.

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- Developing a list of [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] may help reduce noise and find truly derogatory records.
- **Close Collaboration with technicians rapidly improved capabilities.**
 - The USCIS team has been in constant contact with S&T experts and [REDACTED] technicians to develop new capabilities related to our unique mission and evolving use case. Officers have helped to develop “user stories” and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] has conducted testing and implemented changes to their platform. S&T translated technical requirements and needs to [REDACTED] for implementation. This type of close collaboration in an open research environment is the main reason for the rapid reduction in social media record matches.
 - S&T is working through automated interface standards so that [REDACTED] and other social media tools can interface directly with USCIS system. This work is advanced and will accelerate potential future implementation of automation for screening and vetting workflows.
 - The collaboration resulted in 17 major fixes and enhancements to [REDACTED] and another 23 are in progress.

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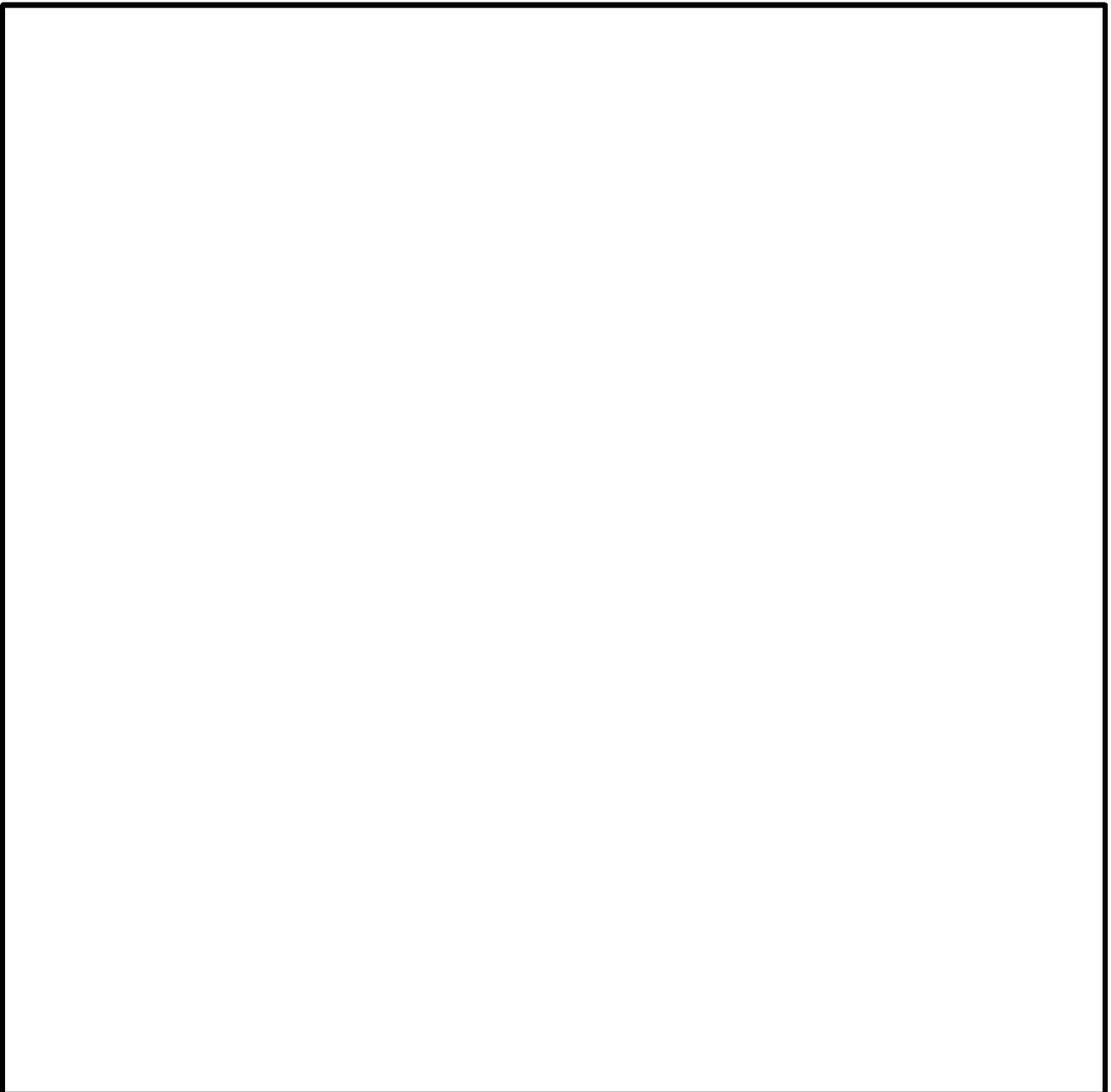
September 16, 2016

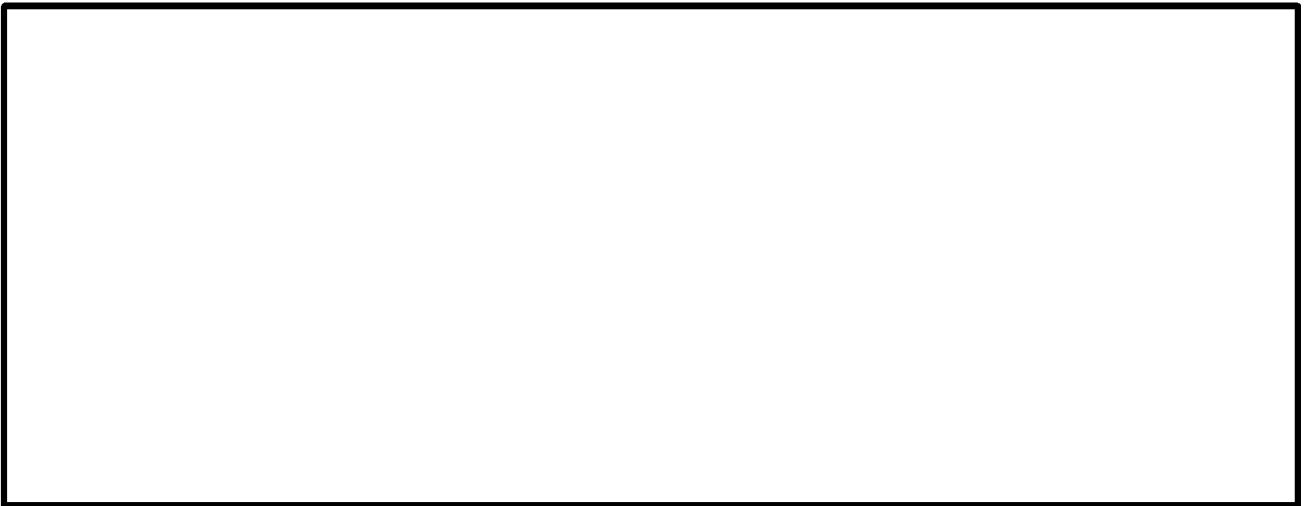
Briefing Paper/Way Forward – [REDACTED] Social Media Screening

Source: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' (USCIS) Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate (FDNS) and Refugee, Asylum and International Operations Directorate (RAIO)

Problem or Issue:

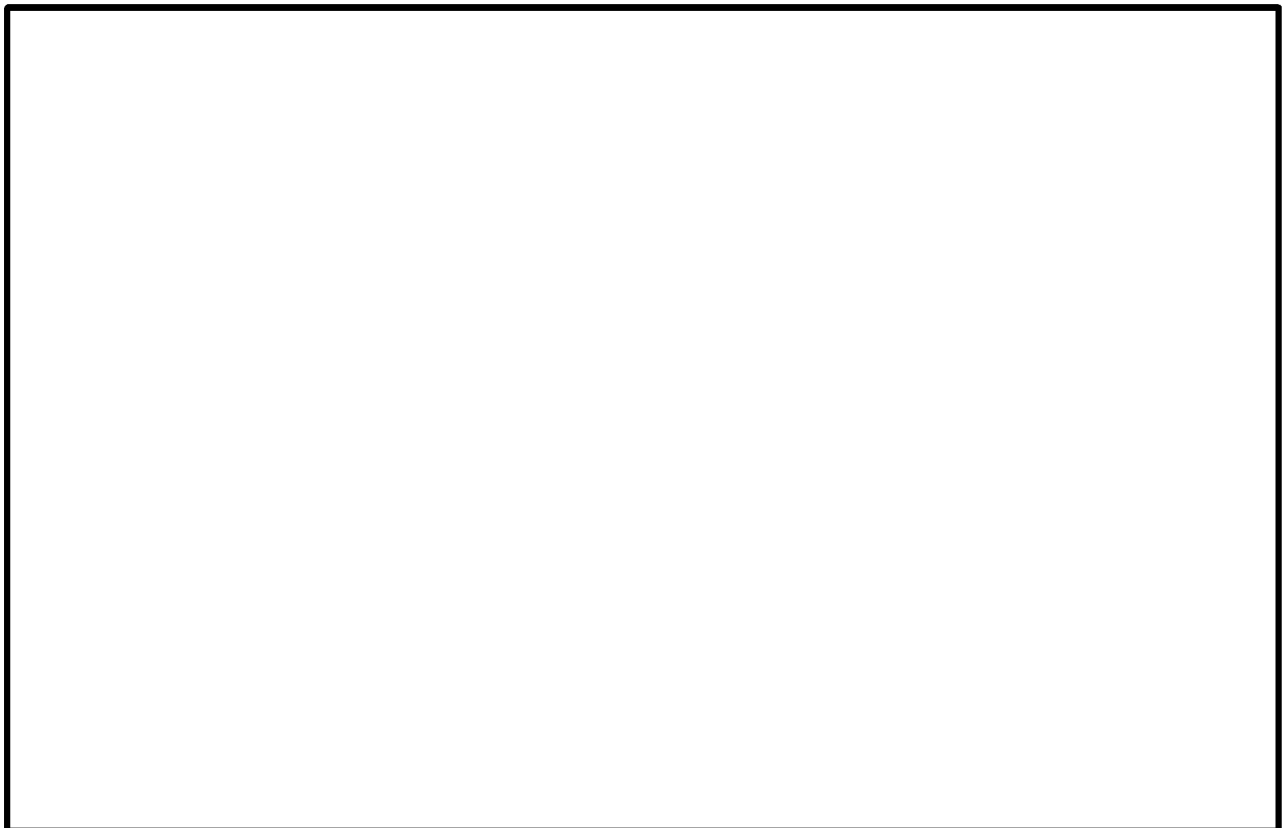
A case of interest has arisen related to [REDACTED] and social media screening. This document provides a high-level overview of the case, FDNS social media screening efforts to date, and the lessons learned from this case. It also charts the way forward with FDNS social media screening based on these lessons learned, taking into account USCIS resource and other constraints.





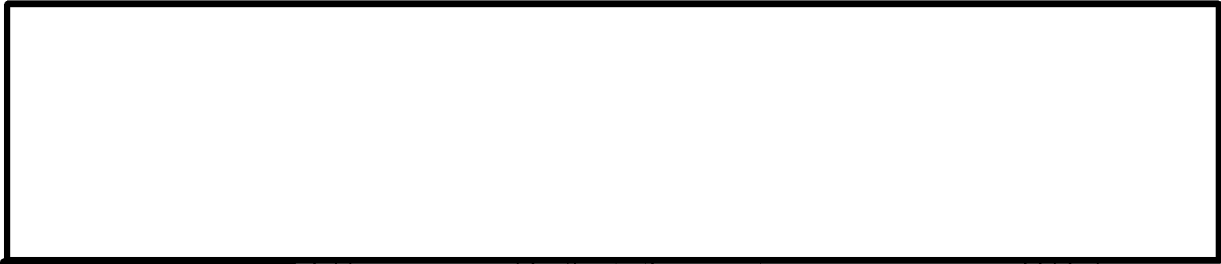
- **USCIS/FDNS Social Media Timeline:** From late 2014 through June 2016, USCIS/FDNS participated in six pilot programs with interagency partners on the proof of concept of leveraging social media in the screening of [redacted] benefit populations.
 - On July 10, 2016, USCIS/FDNS stood up a Social Media Branch to leverage the work of the pilots and incorporate social media checks into routine refugee screening for certain limited populations identified as high risk.
 - Focus of Screening: RAIO and FDNS have collaborated to provide for enhanced review of certain [redacted] cases as well as [redacted] who have had possible national security concerns identified during or after initial interview.

Challenges:



Finding an account when the applicant does not provide all selectors is an intensely manual process, not well-suited to screening large volumes of applicants. A case like this one would have required

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Adding processes like this to the current screening review would likely move processing time up to an estimated three to four hours per case rather than the current rate of one hour per case.

- Restrictions on USCIS's use of social media impact our ability to search certain social media sites. USCIS uses a number of different ways to search relevant social media sites, but some sites block otherwise publicly available, relevant information from investigators, unless the investigator has an account. Facebook, in particular, only shows a limited amount of information and makes searches more difficult if the user is not logged into a Facebook account when searching.

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- Current social media review process is time- and labor-intensive. While USCIS relies on an automated tool to identify social media activity, reviewing the social media information is a very manual process, even with the automated tool in use, and is different from most other screening conducted on immigrants. USCIS's other screening processes (i.e., those unrelated to social media) rely on records created by law enforcement or intelligence community partners in databases searchable on identifiers provided by applicants. Each record in those systems is created with the intention of notifying others in the law enforcement or screening communities (including USCIS) of particular activities or other issues of concern. Social media information is created for very different purposes. When a user creates a Facebook post or Twitter message, it almost never takes a form naturally suited to screening purposes. As such, all information uncovered must be manually reviewed to determine how, if at all, it could impact adjudication.

This manual review renders the social media review process a relatively time-intensive operation in terms of staff hours required to conduct reviews, and an expensive one in terms of salary and related costs. Based on current staffing projections for the immigration officers conducting the review, as well as the leadership and support staff required to support the team, the personnel costs are, on average, approximately \$48.70 per person screened in social media.¹ This includes costs associated with training and overhead, but does not include licensing costs for the automated software.² If

¹ By way of comparison, the average cost for an FBI Name Check is \$18/person, and an FBI Fingerprint Check currently costs \$12.75/check. As of October 1, 2016, FBI Fingerprint Check costs will decrease to \$10/check.

² FDNS' Social Media Branch comprises approximately twenty full time employees, including Immigration Officers, Supervisors, Intelligence Research Specialists, and Management and Program Analysts. The annual yearly cost is approximately \$3,000,000.

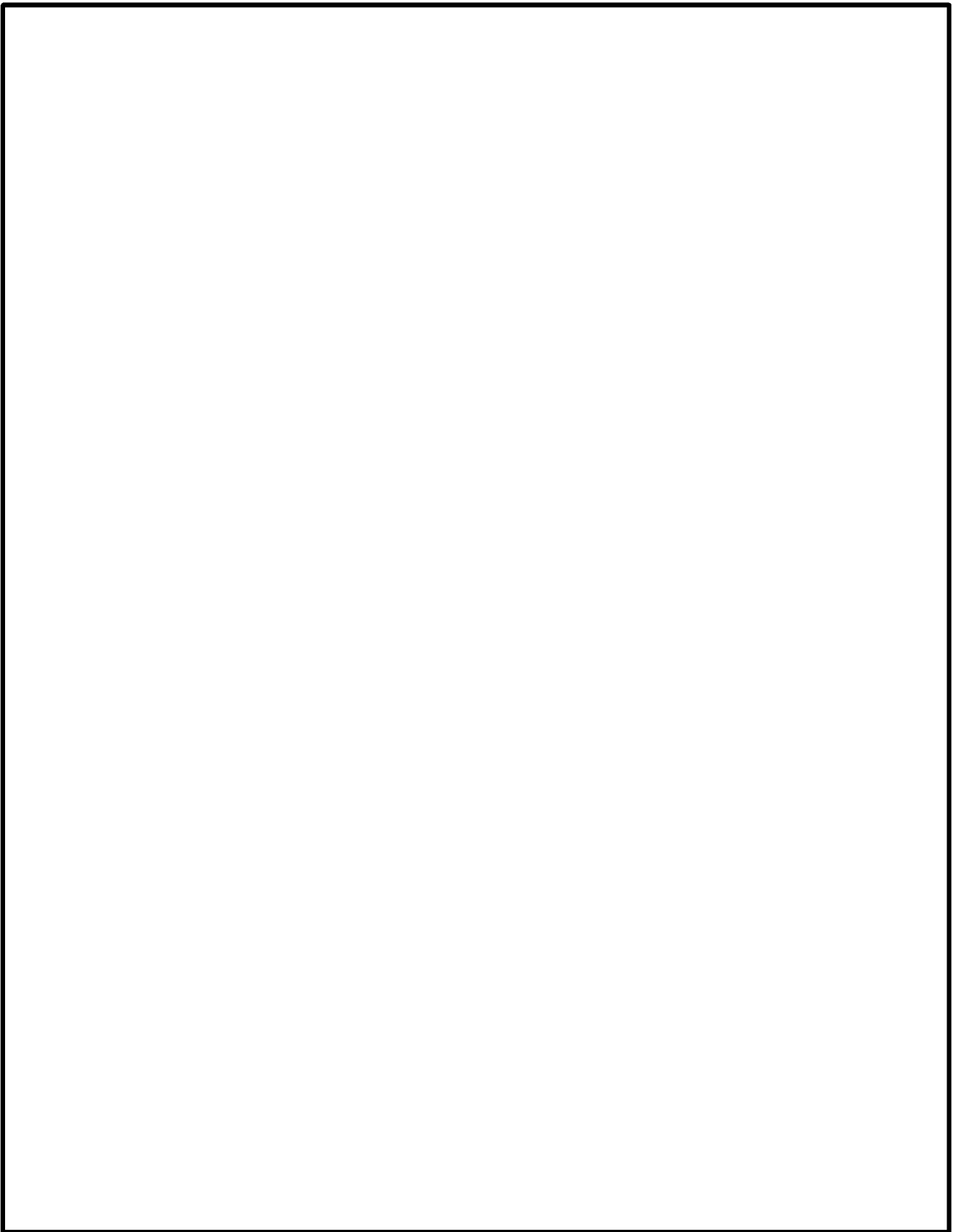
additional manual processes were added to the social media check, throughput would go down, and the costs of screening per person would rise.

Options for Process and Systems Improvements:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Proposed Populations for Expansion:³

³ Note that we are currently operating under the assumption that we will have an admissions target of inclusive of approximately next year.



⁴ USCIS estimates an need for additional support staff at the following ratios to screeners:
Management and Program Analysts 1:12
Intelligence Research Specialists 1:12
Supervisory Immigration Officers 1:8

Recommendation:

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**U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services**

Fraud Detection and National Security USCIS Social Media Update

Fraud Detection & National Security Directorate
January 18, 2017

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USCIS [redacted] Pilots




- USCIS has been developing social media review for [redacted] casework since FY2015
 - Pilot 1: [redacted] Denied [redacted] Cases
 - Pilot 2: [redacted] Approved or Denied [redacted] Cases
 - Pilot 3: [redacted] Pending [redacted] Cases
 - Pilot 4: [redacted] and [redacted] Applicants
 - Pilot 5: [redacted] Primarily [redacted] Applicants
 - Operational: Over [redacted] Enhanced Review and [redacted] and [redacted] CARRP Cases

Pilot	Prior FY	Dec-15	Jan-16	Feb-16	Mar-16	Apr-16	May-16	Jun-16	Jul-16	Aug-16	Sep-16	Oct-16	Present
Pilot 1									Assistance: I&A, IC, and/or DOD				
Pilot 2									Assistance: I&A, IC, and/or DOD				
Pilot 3									Assistance: DARPA				
Pilot 4									Assistance: I&A, S&T, Commercial Tool				
Pilot 5									Assistance: DARPA				
Operational									Assistance: I&A, S&T, Commercial Tool				

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USCIS Progress on Social Media Task Force Concept of Operations

	<u>Category of Applicant</u>	<u>Total Estimated Number of Individuals Per Phase (every 2 weeks, unless specified)</u>	<u>Original Launch Date¹</u>	<u>Current Status</u>
Phase 1	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	December 2015	✓ <i>Completed</i>
Phase 2			April 2016	✓ <i>Completed</i>
Phase 3			July 2016	✓ <i>Completed</i>
Phase 4			August 2016 (was contingent on launch of COE to support) ² Actual Launch: April 2017 (capability developed within USCIS to implement)	 <i>April 2017</i>
Phase 5			TBD (contingent on launch of COE or developed capacity within USCIS)	 <i>Future Capability</i>
Phase 6			TBD (contingent on launch of COE or developed capacity within USCIS)	 <i>Future Capability</i>

¹ Launch dates that are TBD are dependent on the implementation and experience with earlier phases.

² Estimate takes into account surge processing in Amman, Jordan.

³ Sample is approximately [REDACTED] expected in a one-week period.

⁴ The Controlled Application Review and Resolution Program (CARRP) is an additional review process USCIS conducts on cases for which national security concerns are raised.

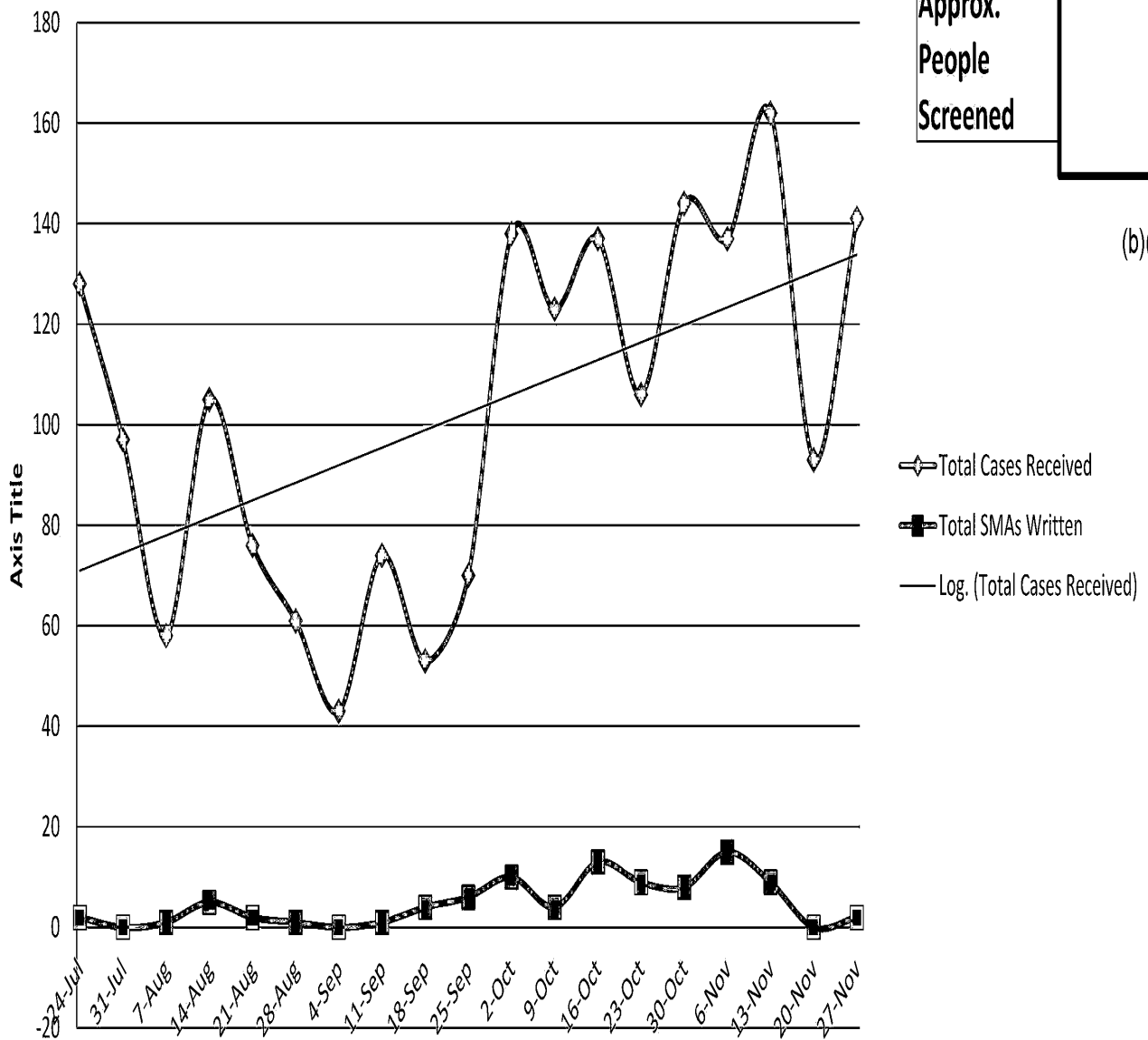
⁵ [REDACTED] cases every two weeks anticipated.

⁶ Estimates based on historical percentages applied to FY 2016 totals. Does NOT assume any overlap among these individuals and the enhanced review/CARRP cases.

⁷ This launch date assumed the Center of Excellence was established and operational in August 2016.

Increased Casework

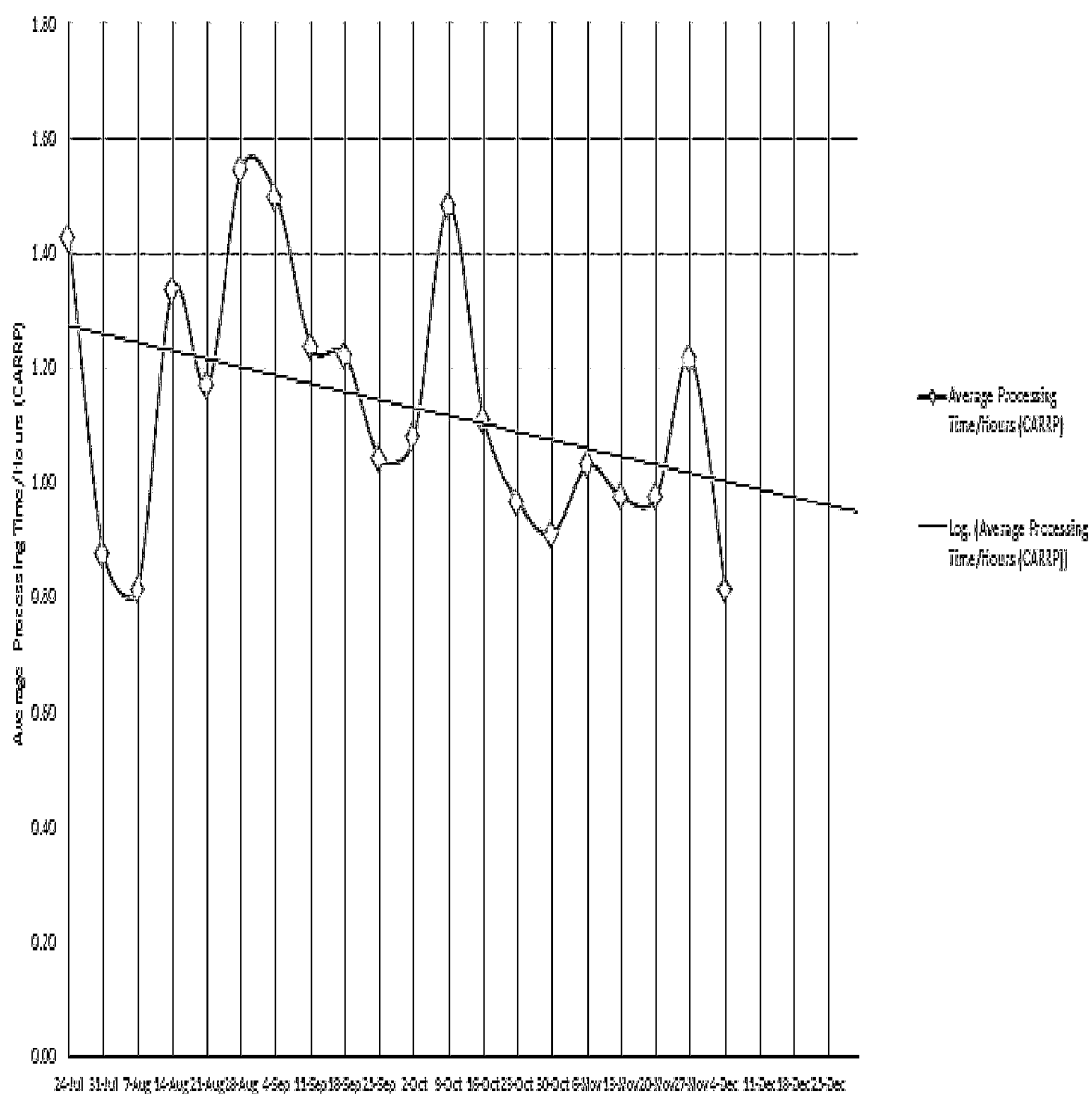
Total Cases Received and Assessments Written



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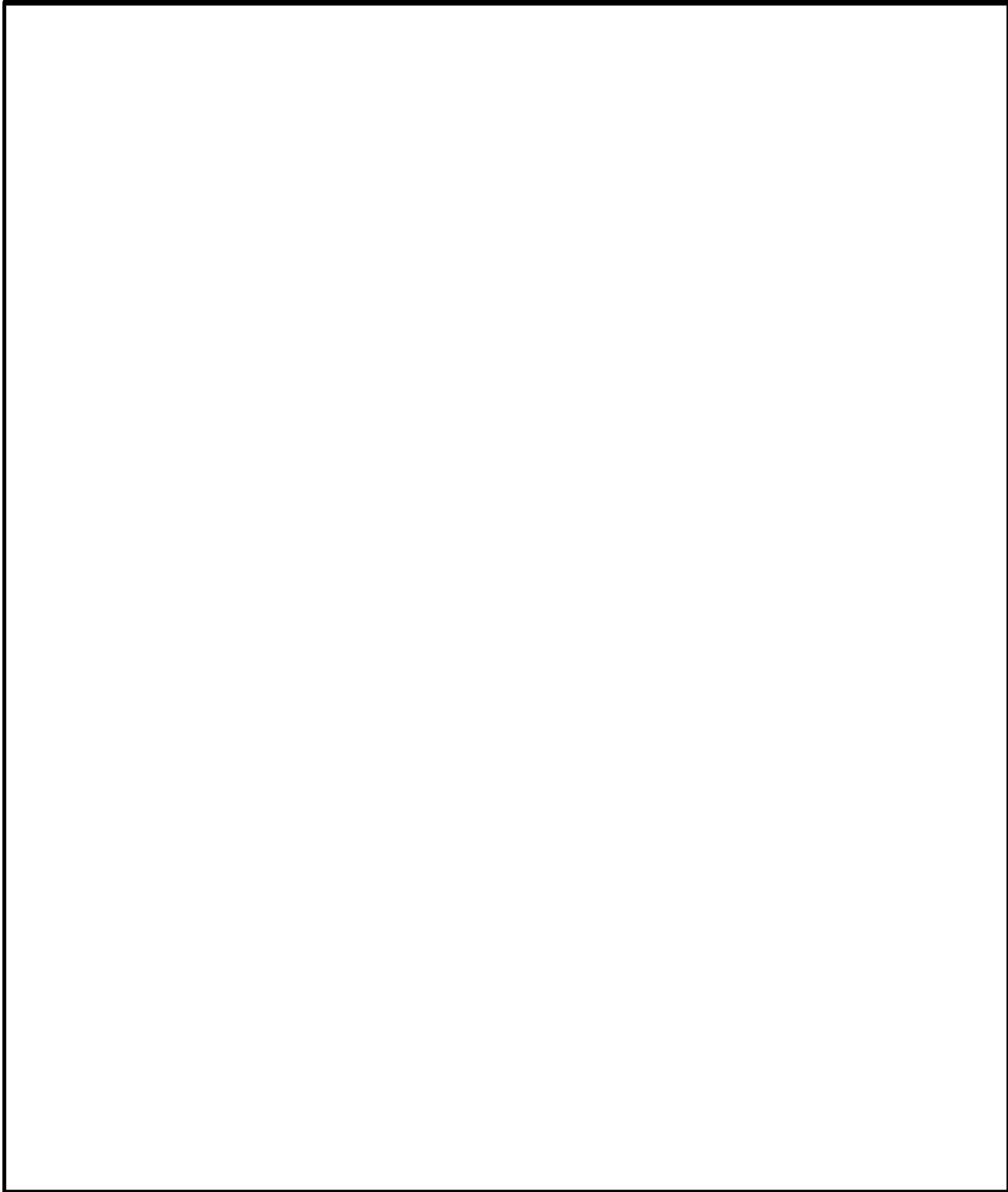
Team Performance

Average Processing Time By Week



Three Examples

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Updated on: March 2, 2017



U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

USCIS Social Media & Vetting: Overview and Efforts to Date

Accomplishments

USCIS has implemented a suite of social media checks for certain [redacted] populations, establishing a team within USCIS’s Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate to oversee and conduct these checks.

USCIS has worked with DHS Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) and DHS Science and Technology (S&T), as well as partners in the law enforcement, defense, and Intelligence Community (IC) to develop tools and techniques for social media research, and continues to improve use of social media for screening and vetting applicants.

Pilots

[redacted] **Pilot 1:** During Q1 of FY15, USCIS, in collaboration with DHS I&A, the Intelligence Community (IC), and/or the Department of Defense (DOD), implemented social media exploitation in [redacted] cases.

[redacted] **Pilot 2:** Following the first sample of cases, USCIS sent an additional batch of [redacted] cases through DHS I&A, the IC, and/or DOD.

[redacted] **Pilot 3:** USCIS tested the use of a social media tool created by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) to screen against Instagram, Twitter, and deep and dark web. USCIS screened [redacted] cases (approximately [redacted] identified for enhanced screening against the DARPA tool in order to assess its capabilities. FDNS encountered a number of challenges, limitations, and inefficiencies with the tool and concluded that it does not meet USCIS needs for social media screening.

[redacted] Pilots 1, 2, and 3 Results

Although applicant data was successfully used to identify some applicants’ social media accounts, the

[redacted]

[redacted]

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[redacted] **Pilot:** Beginning in December 2015, USCIS conducted social media research on [redacted] cases in three ways:

1. Approximately [redacted] cases of [redacted] applicants for adjustment of status were reviewed using the [redacted] commercial social media screening applications under an ICE contract.
 - o The same [redacted] cases were initially screened with the support of DHS/S&T using [redacted] [redacted] of these cases that were pending an interview with a USCIS Field Office were subsequently prioritized for analyst review and evaluation.
 2. Staff at the USCIS National Benefits Center manually searched and reviewed Twitter, Facebook, and Google on [redacted] adjustment applicants.
- As of June 22, 2016, no [redacted] adjustment of status application has been denied for social media information.
 - The results of this vetting, including the [redacted] review, the [redacted] review, and the manual review, were compiled in a final report that identified a number of lessons learned and detailed the challenges in utilizing social media for screening purposes.

[redacted] **Pilot 4:** USCIS ran data from [redacted] applicants and their family members through a commercial application called [redacted] in early January 2016, to screen for social media. The pilot found that this group of individuals had minimal presence on U.S.-based social media platforms accessible through [redacted] (or other social media applications). An analysis of this pilot identified a number of lessons learned.

DARPA 2.0 Pilot [redacted] **Pilot 5:** In April 2016, USCIS began another pilot with the DARPA social media screening tool to vet [redacted] applicants, drawn predominantly from the [redacted] populations. As of June 22, 2016, no [redacted] applications have been denied solely based on social media information found during the pilot.

- Although the tool was improved from the previous iteration, USCIS determined DARPA 2.0 was not a viable option for semi-automated social media screening. An analysis of this pilot identified a number of lessons learned.

Operational Enhancement – Semi-Automated Social Media Review: Beginning in FY16 Q1, FDNS instituted a manual Facebook search and review for [redacted] cases referred for Enhanced Review. FDNS is continuing this check for all [redacted] cases referred for Enhanced Review. On August 1st, 2016, USCIS began conducting semi-automated checks of a number of social media sites for [redacted] Enhanced Review cases and [redacted] cases with national security concerns (CARRP cases). Since January 2017, USCIS has also conducted social media checks on all [redacted] applicants being interviewed in [redacted] regardless of country of origin. USCIS has screened over [redacted] total [redacted] applicants with these social media checks. While at this time, no [redacted] applications have been denied solely based on social media information found during ongoing social media review, USCIS

[redacted]

Additional Populations: In January 2017, USCIS began exploring the expansion of social media checks to additional populations. FDNS is working with counterparts in the Refugee, Asylum, and International Operations Directorate to expand social media checks to [redacted] applicants, beginning with those

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individuals from certain countries of concern. Additionally, FDNS is working to expand social media vetting to certain cases with national security concerns. Each of these programs are planned to be in place by Q3 2017.

Tool-Specific Limitations

- Despite the use of Twitter, Instagram, and deep/dark web data, additional foreign and domestic social media platforms (e.g., Facebook) are not available in the DARPA tool.
- [redacted] offers over [redacted] different social media and dark/deep web searches, including several [redacted] but can return large volumes of data that has to be manually reviewed to determine whether the information relates to the applicant or not.
- For the DARPA tool, searches can only be conducted based on the [redacted] of the applicant. [redacted] is able to search [redacted] related to an applicant and has some capability to identify social media account information based on the [redacted]
- [redacted] appears to mitigate some (but not nearly all) of the language and social media platform limitations, but is not currently capable of analyzing or producing reports on the results it generates.
- No commercial tool is currently able to provide meaningful automated content from Facebook posts, requiring Facebook checks to be conducted manually.

Challenges

- Even when an automated tool is used to search, all social media screening and vetting requires a manual review of information which is labor intensive and time consuming. Officers have to review information first to assess whether the social media accounts identified by the tool are associated with the applicant. If the officer determines the social media accounts belong to the applicant, the officer must then review the content of the social media postings to determine if any national security indicators are present.
- Most of the information derived from social media sites is written in languages other than English and requires translation support. [redacted] has some translation capabilities, and S&T is currently working with the [redacted] for additional ad hoc translation support.
- [redacted]
- Policy and guidelines on the use of social media in adjudications is needed as well as policy and guidelines to define what constitutes a national security indicator in the context of social media.

Preliminary Findings

- Analysis and evaluation of various tools is ongoing. However, tools and processes employed to date need to be improved in order to ensure a viable means of screening immigration applicants' social

media on a widespread basis in an efficient manner. Current tools and processes still require significant manual labor, even for the semi-automated checks.

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- [Redacted]

- Access to social media for immigration purposes is still new, with best practices under development.

- [Redacted]

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Social Media

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Background

USCIS use of social media is governed by DHS Directive 110-01, "Privacy Policy for Operational Use of Social Media." This policy requires USCIS to receive approval from the DHS Privacy Office regarding the privacy implications of any planned operational use of social media. USCIS use of social media also requires authorization from senior agency leadership. A policy memo was signed by USCIS leadership on April 7, 2015, authorizing a small group of USCIS Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate (FDNS) officers to conduct social media research in the [redacted] vetting context. In early FY16, a team of FDNS officers, who received specialized training in social media use, began conducting manual Facebook reviews for certain [redacted] cases referred for enhanced review. FDNS currently conducts routine social media screening for certain [redacted] applicants.

FDNS, in collaboration with the USCIS Refugee, Asylum, and International Operations Directorate (RAIO) and the USCIS Field Operations Directorate (FOD), and DHS partners, including Science and Technology (S&T) and the Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A), has conducted several pilots leveraging the use of social media in the screening and vetting process for certain [redacted] and certain applicants for adjustment of status. Pilot efforts to date include:

- [redacted] Pilot 1: During Q1 of FY15, USCIS, in collaboration with DHS I&A, the Intelligence Community, and the Department of Defense (DOD), implemented social media review on [redacted] denied [redacted] cases.
- [redacted] Pilot 2: Following the first sample of cases, USCIS sent an additional batch of [redacted] approved and denied [redacted] cases through DHS I&A, the Intelligence Community, and DOD.
- [redacted] Pilot 3: USCIS tested the use of a social media tool created by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) to screen against Instagram, Twitter, and the deep and dark webs. USCIS screened [redacted] pending FY16 Q1 [redacted] cases (approximately [redacted] identified for enhanced screening through the DARPA tool in order to assess its capabilities. FDNS encountered a number of challenges, limitations, and inefficiencies with the tool and concluded that it did not meet USCIS needs for social media screening.
 - [redacted] *Pilots 1, 2, and 3 Results: Although applicant data was successfully used to identify some applicants' social media accounts, the information in the accounts did not yield clear, articulable links to national security concerns, even for those applicants who were found to pose a potential national security threat based on other security screening results.*
- [redacted] Pilot: In January 2016, USCIS conducted social media research on certain [redacted] [redacted] adjustment cases in three ways:

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- Approximately [redacted] cases of [redacted] applicants for adjustment of status were reviewed using the [redacted] commercial social media screening applications under an ICE contract.
- The same [redacted] cases were initially screened with the support of DHS S&T using [redacted] a commercial application. [redacted] of these cases that were pending an interview with a USCIS Field Office were subsequently prioritized for analyst review and evaluation.
- Staff at the USCIS National Benefits Center manually searched and reviewed Twitter, Facebook, and Google on [redacted] adjustment applicants.
 - *The results of this vetting, including the [redacted] review, the Babel Street review, and the manual review, were compiled in a final report that identified a number of lessons learned and detailed the challenges in utilizing social media for screening purposes.*
- 50-50 Pilot [redacted] Pilot 4: In January 2016, in collaboration with DHS S&T, USCIS ran data from [redacted] through [redacted] to review social media. The pilot found that this group of individuals had minimal presence on U.S.-based social media platforms accessible through [redacted] (or other social media applications). No derogatory information was identified or associated with the pilot data set.
 - *The results of this vetting were compiled in a final report that identified a number of lessons learned and detailed the challenges in utilizing social media for screening purposes.*
- DARPA 2.0 Pilot [redacted] Pilot 5: In April 2016, USCIS conducted another pilot with the DARPA social media screening tool to vet [redacted] applicants, drawn predominantly from the [redacted]. Although the tool was improved from the previous iteration, USCIS determined DARPA 2.0 did not meet USCIS needs and was not a viable option for semi-automated social media screening.
 - *The results of this vetting were compiled in a final report that identified a number of lessons learned and detailed the challenges in utilizing social media for screening purposes.*
 - *Two of the social media accounts reviewed contained potentially derogatory information:*

[Redacted]

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Current Status

In accordance with the Social Media Expansion Plan for Refugees Concept of Operations (CONOPS), FDNS continues to deploy a risk-based phased approach for the expansion of social media review for [REDACTED]. Beginning in FY16 Q1, FDNS instituted a manual Facebook search and review for [REDACTED] cases referred for enhanced review. On August 1, 2016, USCIS began conducting semi-automated checks of a number of social media sites for [REDACTED] cases referred for enhanced review and [REDACTED] cases with national security concerns.

As of November 4, 2016, USCIS has conducted social media screening on approximately [REDACTED] [REDACTED] cases or approximately [REDACTED]. At this time, no [REDACTED] applications have been denied solely based on social media information.

FDNS, a part of the DHS Social Media Task Force, continues to collaborate with partner components and agencies to explore semi-automated solutions. DHS S&T is currently undergoing an acquisition process to evaluate a number of commercially-available tools to determine if any meet the operational requirements of USCIS and other DHS components that possess a need to access social media information for lawful purposes. USCIS, for both manual searches and semi-automated searches currently in operation, only seeks access to publically available social media information for the purposes of screening and vetting, in accordance with privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties oversight.

As of November 4, 2016, no immigration benefits have been denied solely or primarily because of information uncovered through social media vetting. In a small number of cases, information discovered through social media screening had limited impact on the processing of those cases – specifically in developing additional lines of inquiry. In cases of benefit denial, the denial was based on information found outside of social media, such as through routine security and background checks, or uncovered during an interview.

Challenges

- The process of social media screening and vetting necessitates a labor intensive, manual review in which officers must first attempt to assess whether the content relates to an individual with a pending immigration benefit request. Even if information that definitively relates to such an individual is found, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] but may be helpful in developing additional lines of inquiry when adjudicating the benefit request.
- There are several technical challenges to semi-automated use and access of social media that DHS is working to overcome, such as employing and collating social media data for large numbers of applicants; efficiently automating search algorithms; automated

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language translation; and resolving a person's online identity. In addition, there are further technical limitations. Specifically, USCIS cannot access messages in peer-to-peer messaging systems or the back-end data of social media platforms, nor does it seek to access this information.

- The social media review that FDNS currently conducts is more limited than that conducted by other components, because FDNS does not have the same authorities as other components. [REDACTED]
- Having FDNS personnel dedicated to mass social media screening diverts them away from conducting the more targeted enhanced vetting they are well trained and equipped to do. USCIS is working now on developing greater social media vetting capability on that kind of case-by-case referral basis.
- Content obtained from social media is often in languages other than English and requires translation support.

Milestones

Future milestones related to the Social Media include:

- FDNS will continue a risk-based expansion of social media screening. FDNS is currently working to expand social media screening to all [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- A pilot plan, coordinated by the Office of Policy and Strategy, has been drafted and presented to USCIS senior leadership, which will expand use of social media for referral based vetting more broadly across USCIS. This pilot plan is undergoing final review by senior leadership.

Points of Contact

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