



COVID-19 Outbreak: Investigating a Threat Actor

March 2020

Introduction

- In March 2020, New York City-based Muslim Brotherhood activist Bahgat Saber publicly urged his friends and followers to take any opportunities they may have to infect Egyptian government officials and supporters with COVID-19/coronavirus.

NY-Based Muslim Brotherhood Activist Bahgat Saber To Egyptian Nationals: Give Coronavirus To Officials, Staff At Egyptian Consulates And Embassies; If I'm Infected, 'I Will Go To The Egyptian Consulate' In New York

March 16, 2020



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Introduction

- Saber posted this video on his Facebook page – [REDACTED]
- Analysts quickly identified two other social media profiles belonging to Saber – a Twitter account [REDACTED] and a personal Facebook profile [REDACTED]

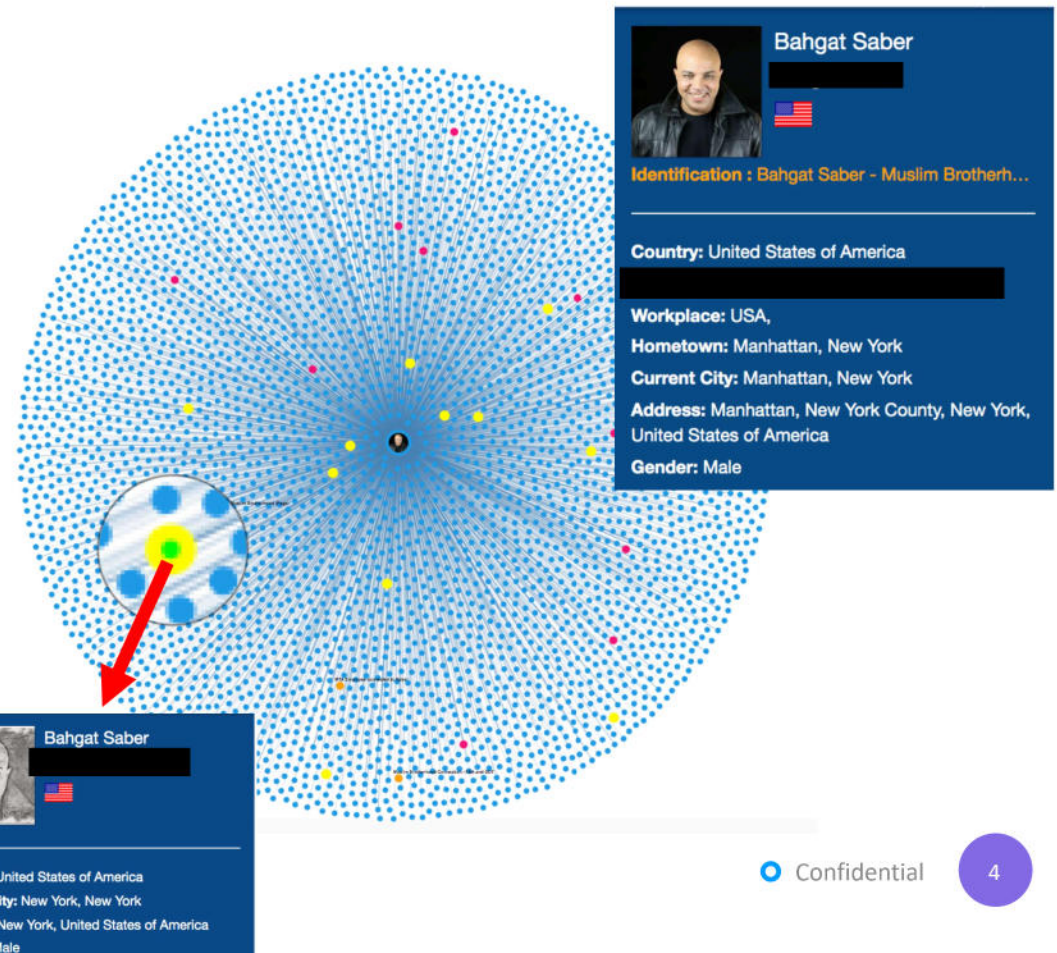


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Saber Profile Query: Direct Connections

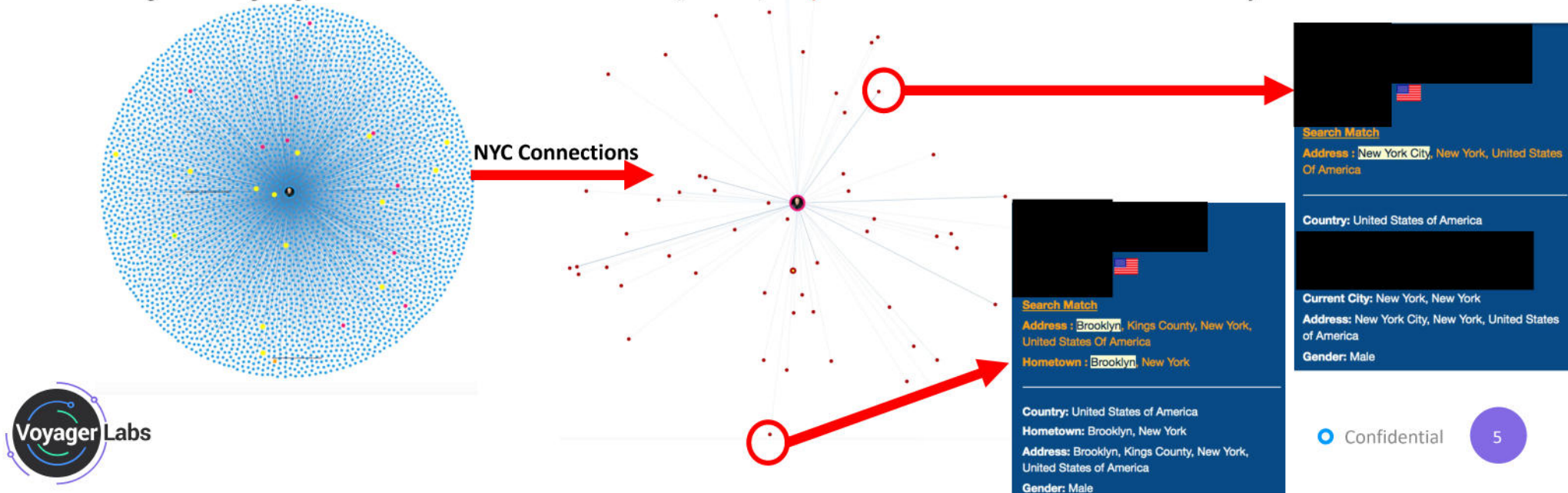
- VoyagerAnalytics' collection and analysis of Saber's personal Facebook profile collected information about 3,959 of Saber's publicly-available friends.
- **Blue nodes:** Each node represents one of Saber's friends.
- **Pink nodes:** The system highlights Saber's 10 **top connections** – those who interact with him the most and share the most mutual connections, among other determining factors.
- **Yellow nodes:** The activist's **mediators**– accounts that are not only strongly connected to him, but also to other connections within him network.
- **Green nodes:** The system highlights the Saber's **ghosts** – accounts that have similar networks and behaviors on social media. In this case, the one ghost account in this network appears to be a second profile of Saber's.



Profile Query: Searching a Network

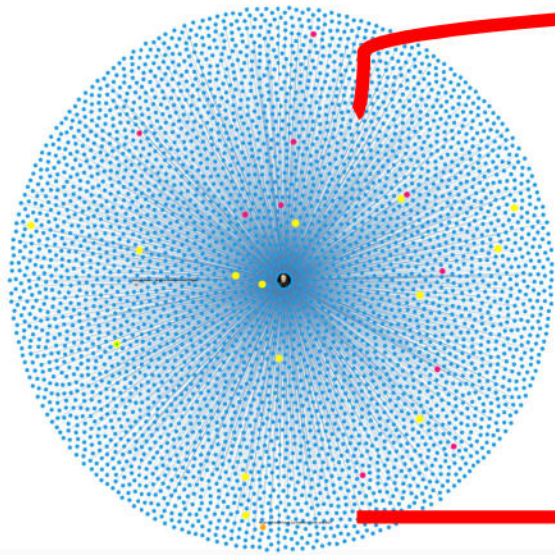
VoyagerAnalytics' collection methodology means that users do not only have access to Saber's publicly-reported biographical data – but also to his friends' publicly-reported biographical data. This information is all keyword searchable and filterable, allowing us to:

- Identify 58 of Saber's nearly 4,000 friends who list a location in or affiliation with New York City (see attached "Bahgat Saber NYC Friends" spreadsheet)
- Clicking on a highlighted node shows where in the public profile the owner of the account said they were NYC-based.



Profile Query: Searching a Network

The same search tools were used to identify two individuals connected to ██████ who work for State and Federal Government agencies and therefore may have easier access to U.S. officials who have a similar profile to the Egyptian officials and government supporters who ██████ was urging his followers to target.



████████████████████
████████████████████
Search Match
████████████████████
Country: United States of America
████████████████████
Hometown: Brooklyn, New York
Current City: New York, New York
Address: New York, United States of America
Gender: Male

████████████████████
████████████████████
Search Match
████████████████████
Country: United States of America
████████████████████
Hometown: Chicago, Illinois
Current City: Chicago, Illinois
Address: Chicago, Cook County, Illinois, United States of America
Gender: Male

Note ██████████ Facebook profile is no longer active, but ██████████ profile is ██████████



Profile Query: Indirect Connections

In addition to analyzing Saber's direct connections, VoyagerAnalytics' Target-Nontarget-Target (TNT) function allowed users to see Saber's indirect connections to dozens of previously identified both in the Middle East, Europe, and within the United States – including individuals connected to persons and pages of interest in the Pensacola attack in December 2019.



The **Blue Nodes** are Saber's friends who have connections to previously-identified individuals, who are all labeled and highlighted in **Orange**, whom Saber is not directly connected to.

- Although Saber himself is not directly connected to anyone who had been previously flagged as an extremist threat, many of his followers are.



Please see attached "Bahgat Saber Top Indirect connections" spreadsheet for the URLs of Saber's closest indirect connections.

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Profile Query: Post Analysis

- Along with public network data, Saber's 3,663 public posts were collected. This collection includes likes and comments, and all content is fully searchable and translatable with the click of a button.

The screenshot displays a social media post analysis interface. On the left, a 'Posts List' table shows various posts by Bahgat Saber, with one post highlighted in red. On the right, the 'Full Post Display' shows the selected post in detail, including a translation from Arabic to English and a list of comments.

Post Content	Impact	Date	Time
Bahgat Saber	1%	03/08/2020	3:52 PM
Bahgat Saber is feeling determined.	1%	03/08/2020	5:46 AM
Bahgat Saber shared a memory.	2%	03/07/2020	11:39 AM
Bahgat Saber	1%	03/06/2020	6:04 AM
Bahgat Saber was live.	8%	03/04/2020	4:05 AM
Bahgat Saber	1%	03/03/2020	6:51 PM
Bahgat Saber	2%	03/03/2020	3:52 PM
Bahgat Saber	1%	03/02/2020	10:00 PM

Full Post Display Details:

- Post Title:** Bahgat Saber was live.
- Translation (From: Arabic To: English):** Corona claimed dozens of lives yesterday in Cairo.
- Date:** 03/04/2020, 4:05 AM
- Impact:** 8%
- Caption:** كورونا تحصد ارواح العشرات أمس بالقاهرة
- Engagement:** Likes (299), Comments (160)
- Comments:**
 - في ٧ حالات أصابة مؤكدة بكورونا في مستشفى بولاق الشكور 03/04/2020 5:42 PM
 - Bahgat Saber:** برجاء نشر الفيديو لتخثير الناس وعمل حظه 03/04/2020 5:42 PM

Profile Query: Post Analysis

- Posts can also be viewed by media only and by public geotags, which are then displayed on a Google Maps interface, as shown below.

The image displays three screenshots from a social media analysis tool. The leftmost screenshot, titled 'Posts List', shows a grid of nine posts from the user 'Bahgat Saber'. The middle screenshot, also titled 'Posts List', shows a Google Maps interface with a grid of pins representing geotagged posts. A red circle highlights a pin in Manhattan, and a red arrow points from this pin to the rightmost screenshot. The rightmost screenshot, titled 'Full Post Display', shows the details of a specific post. The post text is in Arabic, and a translation is provided below it. The post includes a video thumbnail with the text 'FROM THE LATE WAR CRIME IN YEMEN JOIN US NYC DEMONSTRATION' and 'AUGUST 26, 2019 IN FRONT OF THE UN, NYC'. The post also shows engagement metrics: 1% impact, 83 likes, and 2 comments.

The media view only shows users posts that included pictures and/or videos

The map view shows all of a user's publicly geotagged posts in a Google maps interface. Clicking on an individual pin will highlight the post in question.



Summary

- VoyagerAnalytics identified information about nearly 4,000 of Bahgat Saber's friends, including 58 who publicly claim a connection with or location in New York City, and two who claim to work for government agencies.
- Indirect connections to dozens of known extremist accounts were identified, confirming the affinity of at least some of Saber's network for violent, radical ideologies.
- Over 3,600 of Saber's posts were collected and analyzed, including 2,211 pictures and videos and 260 geotagged posts – the vast majority of which were in or around New York City.
- Similar collections and analysis can be conducted on people who – unwittingly or deliberately – are placing themselves and others at risk with reckless behavior related to the spread of COVID-19.

