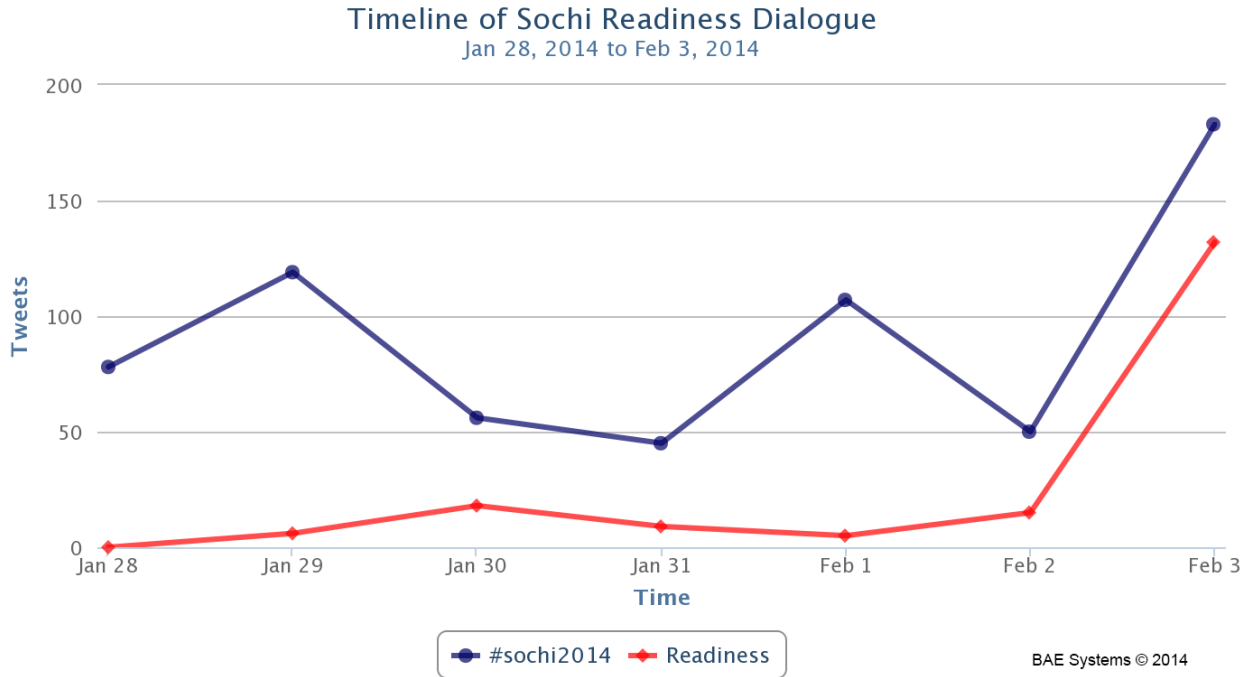


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SPOTLIGHT ON SOCHI: Social Media Analysis Series



READY OR NOT?

BAE Systems is partnering with Homeland Security Today magazine to produce a daily report that provides a unique perspective on the 2014 winter games in Sochi, Russia.

Throughout the duration of the winter games (February 5-23), the BAE Systems Advanced Analytics Lab will be studying social media data to convey trends in the public dialogue around security, infrastructure, transportation, cyber events, and environmental concerns.

Few, if any, events can match the resource demands placed upon a host nation. It is a huge undertaking, requiring long term planning and a structured approach to logistics management. With an estimated budget of \$51 billion, the 2014 winter games will be no exception.

As Russia prepares to welcome athletes and spectators from around the world this Friday, officials would have you believe that all is well. Sochi Mayor, Anatoly Pakhomov, appeared on RT television January 29, asserting, "The city is completely ready — a huge amount of work has been done...The infrastructure is sound." International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach in an interview with AFP Monday echoed: "We can say the Russians have delivered on their promises". But amidst these successes, reports are beginning to trickle in from social media that suggest perhaps some loose ends remain, specifically those centered on the integrity of critical infrastructure surrounding the event

January 28, 2014 to February 3, 2014

#sochi2014

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264

Readiness

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grounds.

Today the BAE Systems' Advanced Analytics Lab set out to understand social media users' assessment of the preparations for the games. In this case, we focused on Twitter messages emanating from the Sochi area in the past week.

First, it is helpful to understand the volume of social media activity in Sochi to begin with. Naturally, much of the dialogue in Sochi is focused on the athletes, their journey to get to the games, and the promise of victory. Using a unique search framework to surface 'readiness'-related issues, we found that over the course of the week, those concerns made up only 18% of the total Twitter conversation, compared to 82% of tweets using the official hashtag, #sochi2014. One user, for example, tweeted on January 29: "The freestyle ski course is one of many Olympic sites in Sochi that remain under construction." Another provided a photo of a sporting venue on January 30 and commented, "Ski jump venue for Sochi games- still working on the snow! But organizers say they aren't...", suggesting there may be some discrepancy between official reporting mechanisms and perceptions on the ground.

At the end of the week, however, the use of readiness-related terms has actually begun to accelerate at about the same pace as the #sochi2014 hashtag and is reaching nearly the same level of prominence.

The acceleration of readiness concerns we've observed can be partially explained by hotel construction issues, which dominated the readiness-specific dialogue, accounting for about one third of the posts. This was corroborated by news outlets reporting Monday, February 3 that only six of the nine hotels reserved for media were fully operational. One user wrote on February 2, "A stray dog inside the hotel, building dust everywhere and debris scattered all around."- an example of the compounding challenges faced by the lodging industry. Local organizations have attempted to control the stray dog population in the area by clearing them off the streets, also drawing an influx of unwanted social media attention from animal rights groups.

It may be too soon to tell whether these infrastructure snags will unravel into greater, cascading problems in Sochi, or be tied up in the nick of time. We will continue to monitor the impact of social media discourse at the games as it pertains to infrastructure, security, environment, and cyber events.

The BAE Systems Advanced Analytics Lab integrates analytic expertise, technology and tradecraft to make sense of big data and support critical customer missions. Much of the data analyzed in this series was processed and visualized using cutting-edge BAE Systems' Applied Intelligence solutions, such as the Open Source Intelligence Product. All geospatial images were produced using BAE Systems' enterprise solution suite of Geospatial eXploitation Products®.

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