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# SPOTLIGHT ON SOCHI: Social Media Analysis Series

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## VIDEO EVIDENCE

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.

As we previously reported in our February 6 post “Spotlight on Sochi: Sizing up Security,” security was a major concern in the build up to the winter games. Despite Russian assurances of a safe and secure winter games, on February 7, the Department of State issued a travel warning which warned that the games would “present an attractive target for terrorists.”

But in addition to concerns about sufficient security, there were also concerns about the potential threat from security forces themselves. Many journalists and international visitors anticipated having to deal with the heavy security presence. Twitter users advised travelers not to “reach in your purse suddenly” lest they be confused with a “black widow” suicide bomber. Others pointed out that, in contrast to previous games, the security model for Sochi was to have “more guns in the venues.”

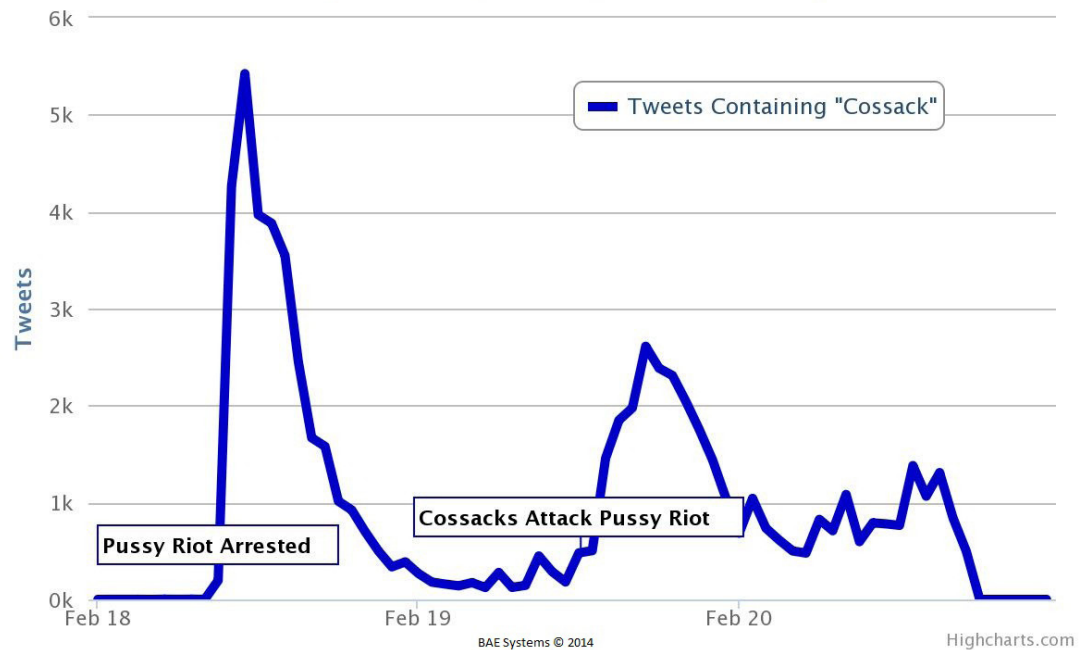
Once visitors began to arrive, the tone of the social media discussion about security forces in Sochi began to change. As we reported in February 16 “Spotlight on Sochi: Security Atmospherics”, most visitors were largely positive or sarcastically neutral in their tweets, and generally view the enhanced security presence as a necessary nuisance. Many users tweeted about “Sochi’s Purple-Colored Police”, a reference to the uniform security forces were wearing to blend in with civilian volunteers. One traveler noted that “security is high, but guards and volunteers are very friendly.” Another Twitter user joked about receiving pat downs “galore” at “every security checkpoint” and chalked it up to it being Valentine’s Day. On February 17, a visiting athlete tweeted a photo with a “friendly #cossack security patrol.”

As part of the enhanced security presence in Sochi, Russia brought in hundreds (figures range from 400 to 700) of Cossacks to help maintain order. Cossacks are revered in Russian folklore as fierce warriors, and in the Putin era have taken up a role as an extra-governmental security force. In a 2012 speech, the governor of Krasnodar Krai – himself a Cossack colonel – told law enforcement officials, “What you can’t do, Cossacks can.” Cossacks carry out self-appointed policing duties in parts of Russia, including augmenting regular security forces in markets and enforcing parking restrictions in Moscow. The conservative Cossacks see themselves as a form of “morality police”, and have patrolled the streets of Sochi over the last few weeks.

The warm feelings for Sochi security forces began to evaporate on social media following an incident with the Russian protest punk band Pussy Riot, whose troubles were discussed in yesterday's reports. Social media discussion of Pussy Riot and the security forces saw a major spike in on February 18 when news broke that Pussy Riot members had been arrested on questionable grounds. The spike quickly reached a peak of more than 5,000 tweets per hour in the morning of the 18th, but quickly came down later that same day. On the morning of the 19th, news broke that Cossacks had again confronted Pussy Riot members, this time attacking them with fists and whips in broad daylight as they again attempted to record a music video. Social media again responded with a surge that did not quite match the initial spike but lasted well into the next day.

### Sochi-tagged Tweets containing "Cossack" or "Pussy Riot"

February 18 - February 19 GMT (Select Area to Zoom)

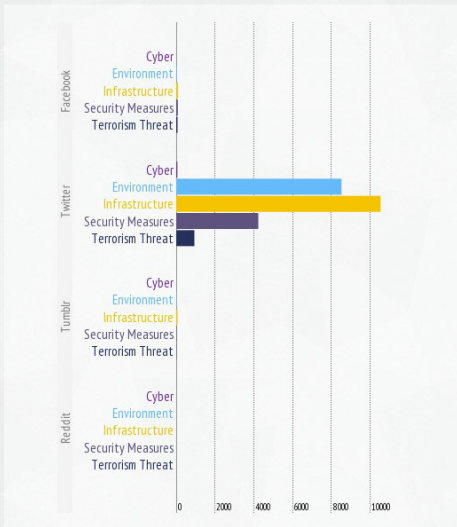


Using the same techniques discussed in our February 12 article "Spotlight on Sochi: Tonal Shift," we used sentiment analysis to measure tone of the discussion regarding the Cossacks following the incidents. Among tweets where a clear sentiment could be determined, only 130 were classified as positive, while 39,716 were negative. When the positive tweets were examined more closely, the vast majority were sarcastic praises of the Putin regime or expressions of admiration for the protesters. Virtually 100% of tweets mentioning Russian Cossacks were negative following the incidents with Pussy Riot.

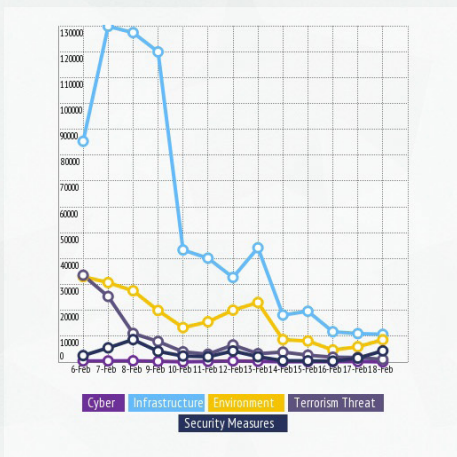
A video, apparently released by Pussy Riot members themselves, also surfaced on the 19th and quickly spread across social media. Approximately 10,000 tweets sharing the video were posted from February 18-19. The most popular version of the video on YouTube was shared on Twitter nearly 1,000 times. Comments on the videos were similar in tone to the tweets about the incident.

## Sochi Trend Tracker

Theme Distribution by Platform  
(24 hrs Feb 19-20)



### Theme Tracking Feb 6-19



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Social media empowers security administrators to monitor, collect, and disperse information on potential threats, yet enables others to criticize their actions. Anyone can record beatings on a cellphone and millions of users will eagerly share evidence of abuse. Security officials must understand this dynamic as public servants, and when planning for special events.

Concerns about security issues, and likewise the social media chatter about them, change constantly as the environment around the winter games evolves. Understanding how and why those changes occur will help us better understand both the mood on the ground in Sochi and emerging concerns from the worldwide audience. For the duration of the games, the BAE Systems Advanced Analytics Lab is tracking dynamic social media activity related to common security issues by category and will report daily on how that discussion progresses.

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