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Afghanistan Collection: Kabul, NATO
Base Attack

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With all of the new forms of communication available in the world, we want to know who is actually communicating with whom. Are people communicating internationally or is there one country or language that dominates? We conducted a study of two attacks in Afghanistan that took place in May, 2010. One was an attack on the capital of Kabul and the other was an attack on a NATO base in southern Afghanistan. We want to find out who is commenting on an event like this and also how they are communicating. We used Twitter as our main source of information and data. We searched for Kabul or afghan bomb or attack for the attack on Kabul and found that these search words yielded the best results. For the other event, we used the search words attack or hit or assault afghan base and these yielded the best results also.

There were problems with both searches, however, but the data was not affected and we continued with the search. For the attack on Kabul, the problem was knowing when to end the search and the problem with the attack on the NATO base was deciding what to do with 2/5 of the total 1500 tweets because that amount came before the date of the attack. We decided to document all tweets related to the incident and not cut any out. We then used Archivist to monitor the twitter streams for a two week period from 5/18/2010 – 5/31/2010 and document the amount of twitter messages attributed to each attack.

Throughout this timeframe we found data that we could use to document the amount of announcements for each tweet and we created a timeline from 5/18 – 5/31 and found the distributed amount of tweets for each day as well as the total number of tweets. Finally, we found the number of different languages during each twitter stream. This is important because we are trying to find out the amount of Global Communication going on, especially in Twitter.

This particular Twitter stream consisted of tweets about a Taliban suicide bomber attacking a NATO convoy in Kabul. Six people in the convoy were killed, five of them American, and 12 civilians were killed. This was the first attack from the Taliban for a few months and security had vowed to tighten their operations, people may have been communicating on the deaths, the surprise attack, or the lack of security in the area.

The total number of tweets was 6228 between 5/18/2010-5/31/2010. Out of 6228 total tweets there were only 12 messages and the rest were headlines and announcements from The Washington Post simply stating there was an attack in Kabul. This May attack was the first of its kind since suicide bombers attacked two hotels in Kabul in February. The majority of the tweets come in the first few days after the attack, this can be attributed to the surprise of the attack and the attention it gets being the first major attack in four months.

We had to cut out half of the tweets due to the large quantity we had when trying to figure out the languages used. We started with 6228 and took a sample of 3794 tweets for the language. There were four languages used throughout the Twitter stream. The majority of tweets

were in English (3785) and the rest of our sample included African (3), German (5), and Arabic (1).

This twitter stream dealt with an attack on a NATO base in Afghanistan. It was reported in the Washington post on May 22. The Washington post reported that rockets were fired at Kandahar Air Field, quickly followed by a ground assault. No one claimed responsibility for the attack, but it was the third major assault on NATO’s military hubs in six days.

For this search, the terms used were attack, hit, and assault afghan base. The total number of tweets was 2,391 from 5/18/2010-5/31/2010. The distribution over time peaks on 5/22/2010 and goes substantially downward following that. This peak is attributed to the fact that the article was released on this day for the Washington Post. Out of the 2,391 tweets, all of them were announcements about the incident. The results from this data, show a massive jump in tweets, when the article was released. It is interesting to note how fast that number drops following the initial spike. Throughout all the tweets, there were three languages used: English, Malay, and Vietnamese. English was the majority with 2,386 tweets while Malay had 3 and Vietnamese had 2.

Twitter use internationally has gone dramatically up recently. Currently it accounts for over 60% of all accounts on Twitter. In our studies we looked at all the languages in our collection of tweets. For all of the specific searches, English had the majority, while they were only a few other languages used. This is common for all the searches other than Afghanistan. In the Afghanistan search, English still had the most tweets with 3,887, but the amount of tweets in other languages numbered 353. The results of these collections show that in specific searches the majority of people interested in the topic are from English speaking countries. For the general topic Afghanistan, there were far more tweets from other languages. The results show that the Afghanistan search draws a far wider audience than the more specific search.

The following table consists of the number of tweets per day in the 14 day range: Kabul

Date	5/18	5/19	5/20	5/21	5/22	5/23	5/24	5/25	5/26	5/27	5/28	5/29	5/30	5/31
# of Tweets	2494	848	186	158	1253	404	205	36	169	27	158	187	39	22

Total: 6228

The following table consists of the number and quantity of languages that tweeted: Kabul

Language	# of Tweets
English-En	3785
Afrikaan-Af	3
German-De	5

Arabic-Ar	1
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Total 2391- Language Distribution: Base Attack

Language	Number
En-English	2,386
Ms-Malay	3
VI-Vietnamese	2

Total 2391- Date Distribution Base Attack

Date	5/18	5/19	5/20	5/21	5/22	5/23	5/24	5/25	5/26	5/27	5/28	5/29	5/30	5/31
# of Tweets	124	419	50	30	1406	304	29	2	3	1	0	1	2	14

	Afghan	Base Att	Kabul	Obama	Clinton	Afghanistan	Kan Karzai cor	8 troops	Gates to Afghanistan
AF Afrikae	4		3						
AZ Azerba	1								
BR Breton	3								
CY Welsh	1								
Da Danish	7								
De Germa	100		5						1
En English	3887	2386	3785	2385	444	##	257	317	930
ES Spanish	9								1
FIL Filipino	5								3
FR French	103								
GL Galatian								1	
HU Hunga	1								
ID Indone	22							1	1
IT Italian	70			1					
JP Japanese					1			5	2
KU Kurdis	1								
LT Latvian								1	
MS Malay	23	3		3					
NI Dutch	30							2	
NO Norwe	30								
PT Portug	1							2	
RO Romar	7								
SQ Albani	6								
SU Sudanese									1
SV Swedis	16								
TR Turkish	1								
UZ Uzbek	4								
VI Vietnar	8	2		2					
Ar Arabic			1						