

Twitter says no to law enforcement protest policing tool

Media Sonar was used to track protestors by hashtag and keywords.



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December 10th, 2016



Mike Blake / Reuters

Twitter has cut off access for a tool that law enforcement was using to monitor the social network for protest-specific keywords. Those included "Mikebrown," "Blacklivesmatter" and "imunarmed" according to documents obtained by *The Daily Dot*. Media Sonar has been selling [social media surveillance software](#) to police departments for thousands of dollars. Twitter, for its part, cut off the firm's API keys in October and has vowed to

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Remember, using Twitter's data feed for spying and surveillance is a violation of the service's developer agreement. With the list of keywords, the Northern California chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union's evidence suggests that Media Sonar was selling itself as a way to monitor African Americans specifically. One column groups keywords together under a heading named "Mike Brown Related." Mike Brown was the unarmed black teenager shot by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014.

[Further documents](#) (PDF) show that the firm pitches itself as a way to "avoid the warrant process when identifying social media accounts for particular individuals."

What's more, the company apparently directed law enforcement officials to not mention the Media Sonar by name in court, instead using "proprietary search engine" or "internet tools" when pressed for information under oath. It's a far cry from issuing cyanide capsules to its customers, but still pretty telling of the company's intent to keep its secrets safe.

This isn't the first time Twitter has done this, and it likely won't be the last organization to [mine social media data](#) for policing. This fall, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter cut off access to tracking systems [from Geofeedia](#). We've reached out to Twitter for more information and will update this post should it arrive.

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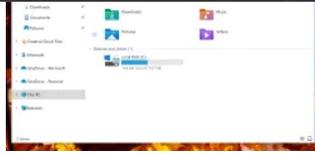


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p51d007

11 December, 2016

So twitter, by it's TOS, is not allowing police to data mine, to help prevent police from knowing, that, people using twitter, to "assemble" a riot?

Reply 1



HughesNet > p51d007

12 December, 2016

No

Reply



canisminor

11 December, 2016

"Mike Brown was the unarmed black teenager shot by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014. "Seems Timothy Seppala is reading too much of that "fake news" that has had the Engadget staff angrily editorialising since mid-November. Mike Brown was a strong arm, violent thug that assaulted a police officer, tried to grab his weapon, and then still tried to violently attack him again, before he was finally shot.

Now, I'm no expert on law enforcement, but currently I am in Germany. I am pretty sure that if tomorrow morning I walked up to an average German policeman, assaulted him and tried to go for his gun, I'd end up dead a lot quicker than Mike Brown did. Heck this will probably happen in any liberal European country.

As for Twitter, private company, so they can do what they want within the law. But if they have the capability to allow police to better respond and protect the citizens in Baltimore and Ferguson, who had their shops and livelihoods destroyed by rioting thugs, then I hope they see the value in that. Instead, it seems Twitter is more interested in allowing ISIS to have a recruitment platform, while raising hurdles for police to protect law abiding citizens.

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what am I missing here: Agreed, Twitter, being a privately held company can set its own TOS to prohibit this activity. BUT, who has any expectation of privacy when using Twitter or virtually any form of social media? Twitter is the Internet equivalent of putting your comments on Post-It notes and sticking them on the bulletin board at the supermarket. Users post their tripe (OK, that's a bit harsh, but not too far off the mark in most cases.) so that everyone can read it. Not just some people - everyone. Then they get bent out of shape when it gets read by law enforcement.

Reply 2

Brewboy > stevehogan

11 December, 2016

Very well said.



The irony here is that Twitter and their followers get to live a safe, free society, only because of the efforts to protect them by Law Enforcement.

So Twitter Exec's sleep tight under that blanket of security the government provides, try not to be the ultimate hypocrite when you wake up safe and sound.

Reply 2

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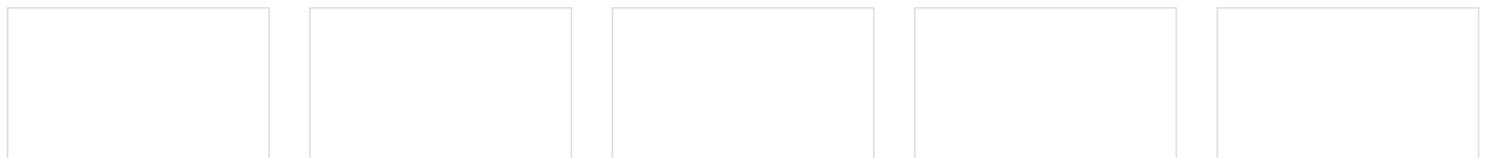
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