BABELSTREET

USE CASE

Using Babel Street to Automate and Improve Intelligence Operations

From assessing the logistical capabilities of adversarial nations to tracking terrorist communications, intelligence has never been more vital to national security. Open-source intelligence (OSINT) — or intelligence gleaned from the analysis of publicly and commercially available information (PAI/CAI) — is vital to modern investigative processes. It can improve military operations planning, counterterrorism efforts, weapons proliferation monitoring, infrastructure protection, and other mission critical actions. In a Center for Strategic & International Studies report, then-Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines called for OSINT to be elevated to "a core INT" — on par with other disciplines including human, signals, and imagery intelligence.[1]

Understanding the OSINT landscape

Every day, the world creates about 328.87 exabytes of new data.[2] Much of it is publicly or commercially available. This data includes mainstream media stories, blogs, social media posts, videos, chat room discussions, posts on surface web and dark web marketplaces and forums, and more. Properly analyzed, this data can provide meaningful intelligence.

The right OSINT platform can help automate intelligence gathering — providing deeper insight with significantly less manual labor. But most intelligence practitioners lack the right OSINT platform. Instead, they are hobbled by inadequate tools and limited access to data sources. Too many current OSINT technologies don't allow for persistent search. They may be unable to understand languages other than English. They may lack the managed attribution capabilities analysts need to hide or mask their online identities.

The Babel Street Ecosystem overcomes these problems.

Babel Street Insights is an AI-powered data analytics platform that provides multilingual, persistent search of thousands of sources of PAI/CAI worldwide. These sources include hard-to-reach dark web marketplaces and forums.

Babel Street Insights Secure Access is a managed attribution solution that offers a combination of advanced anonymization, controlled attribution, and an isolated research environment to help intelligence professionals securely search PAI and CAI emanating from more than 100 countries.

Babel Street Match helps link and match identities across disparate data sources. It also identifies corporate name variations and uncovers potential corporate aliases.

In addition, Babel Street can provide approved organizations with commercial telemetry data to track and geolocate suspected bad actors.

A few specific use cases for Babel Street technology include:

- Monitoring the areas surrounding U.S. embassies abroad for signs of political instability that may affect embassy personnel
- Tracking the flow of small arms and heavy weapons among militias
- Monitoring instances of natural disaster in adversarial nations for potential intelligence inroads

Using Babel Street to broaden intelligence gathering

Here's an example of how intelligence analysts can use Babel Street to protect U.S. facilities and personnel overseas.

Structure the search

Within Babel Street Insights, analysts can enter search terms around a U.S. embassy or U.S. government location that is under threat of attack, for example, the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq. Keyword searches that include locations and threat terminology (bomb, attack, protest) are often used for threat monitoring. Enabling Smart Search ensures the inclusion of multilingual translations of search terms. Specific sites, such as social media platforms, can be selected to narrow the search results.

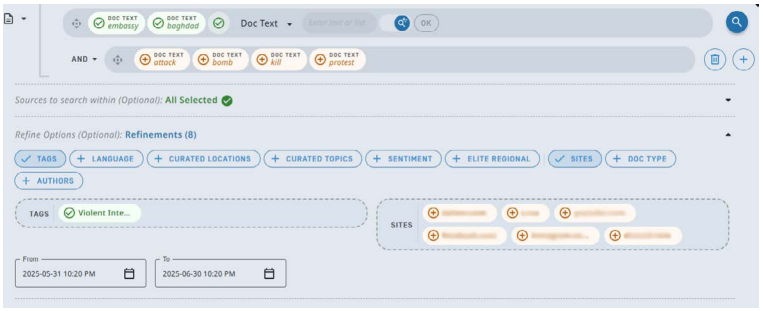

Figure 1: A search in Babel Street Insights to monitor threats against an embassy in Baghdad

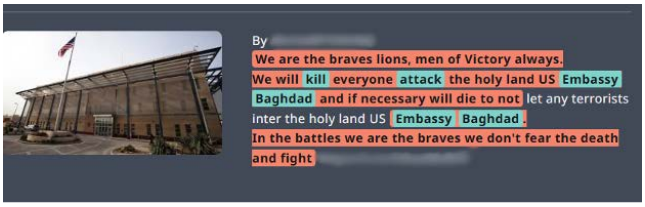

Figure 2: A result showing a username from a popular social media platform

Figure 3: Another result showing a potential threat

Identify individual threat actors

Once threat information is discovered, it is important to determine the identity of the threat actors. Investigators can run usernames, emails, phone numbers, and other identifiers uncovered in the search results through an Insights People Search to discern attribution. Batch People Searches condense the amount of time needed to search identifiers and create usable profiles of individuals.

Map social media networks

In addition to identifying individuals, intelligence gatherers can also map the social media networks of threat actors to determine relationships, online patterns, and behaviors. Babel Street Synthesis identifies influencers within these social media networks and uncovers previously unknown connections. Network graphs, word clouds, and activity charts aid in developing threat networks.

Figure 4: A word cloud showing connected search terms and usernames within a social network

Figure 5: An anonymized social network showing areas of greatest activity within the network

Endnotes

1. CSIS Technology and Intelligence Task Force, "Maintaining the Intelligence Edge," January 2021, https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/210113_Intelligence_Edge.pdf

2. IDC, Worldwide IDC Global DataSphere Forecast, 2024-2028: "AI Everywhere, But Upsurge in Data Will Take Time," May 2024, https://my.idc.com/getdoc.jsp?containerId=US52076424