

ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SUPPORT OF WMD DETECTION, IDENTIFICATION AND RISK MITIGATION IN SYRIA

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ABSTRACT:

This project will consider two chemical weapon attacks in Syria as a case study for characterizing the nature, accuracy, and timeliness of information from social media platforms in support of disaster preparedness, including post-disaster risk mitigation. When a sarin gas attack struck a suburb of Damascus in August 2013, killing an estimated 1,400 people, first hand reporting posted to social media platforms were some of the first eyes on the ground. At approximately 2:30 a.m. the first reports began to appear on social media, and in the hours that followed, thousands of similar reports emerged from at least 12 different locations. By dawn, media outlets around the world had picked up the story, supported by shocking images of the situation on the ground. The objective of this study is to identify lessons regarding ways social media might support U.S. personnel operating in complex threat environments, including those involving weapons of mass destruction. While this proposed research will be conducted in the context of a specific case study, the intent is to contribute to the development of more general conclusions.

Research in Progress describes ongoing PASCC research. For more information please contact INSS@usafa.edu.