Weaponizing Social Media:
How Terrorists use Twitter & Co. as Weapons and how Such Attacks can be Countered

13 June 2018
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University of Antwerp, Antwerp, Belgium
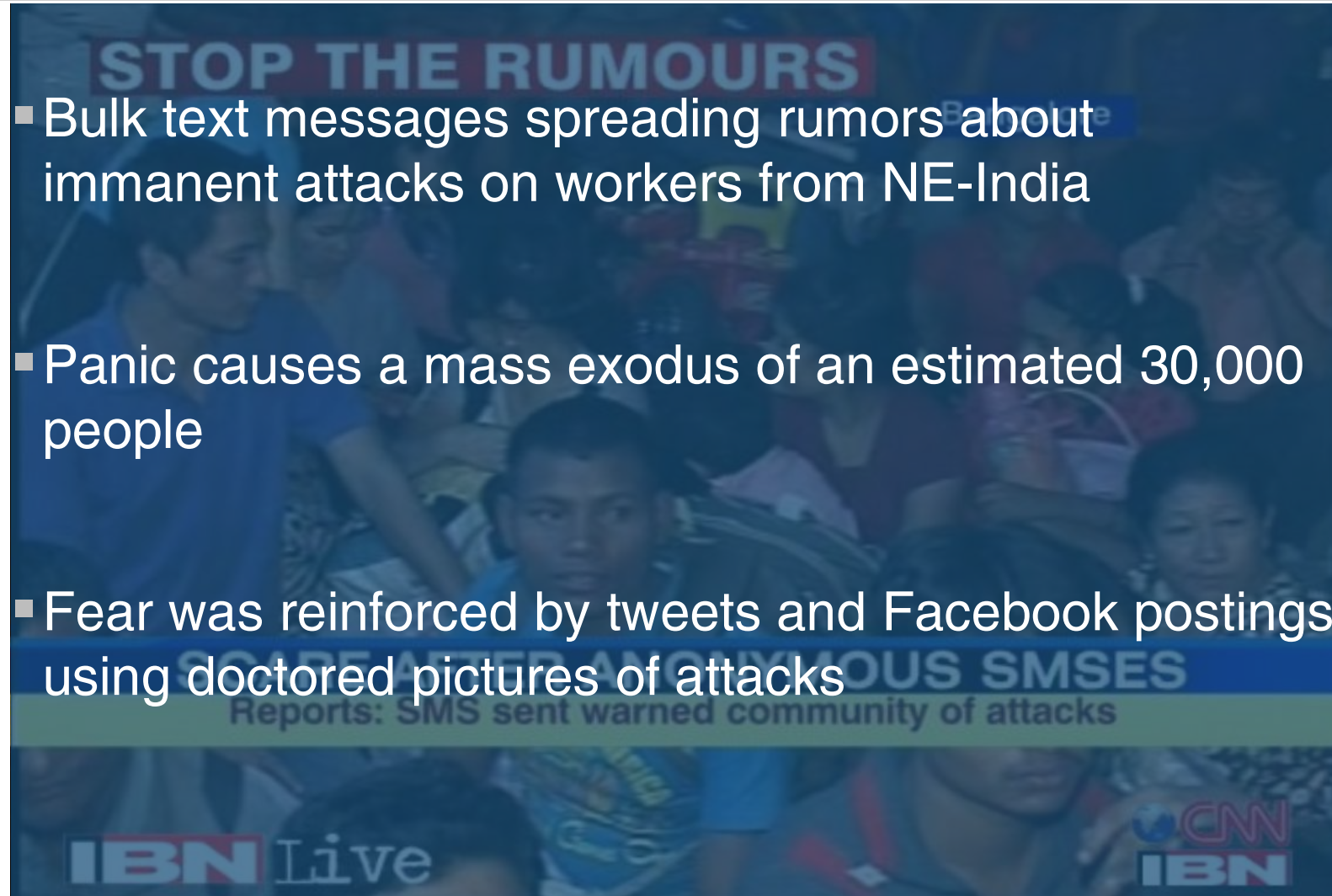
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India, August 2012: The Assam Panic

- Bulk text messages spreading rumors about immanent attacks on workers from NE-India

- Panic causes a mass exodus of an estimated 30,000 people

- Fear was reinforced by tweets and Facebook postings using doctored pictures of attacks

STOP THE RUMOURS

SCARE AFTER ANONYMOUS SMSES
Reports: SMS sent warned community of attacks

IBN Live
CNN IBN

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India, August 2012: The Assam Panic

Wall Photos

Album: Wall Photos
Shared with: Public

www.facebook.com/Siyasi.Records

this is Media :@ A Muslim was burned in Burma and journalist are Taking pictures instead of saving him !! WTF

Muhammad Younus, Kamran Sheikh, Bushra Raheel and 164 others like this.

175 shares

Download
Report This Photo

Tibetan Activist Sets Himself On Fire To Protest Chinese President's Visit To India [PHOTOS]

By DAVE SMITH Subscribe to Dave Smith's RSS feed
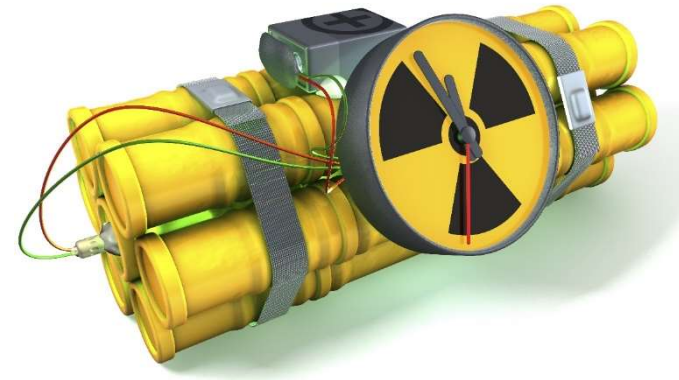March 27, 2012 4:12 PM EDT

Tibetan Activist Sets Himself On Fire To Protest Chinese President's Visit To India [PHOTOS]

Prior to the arrival of Chinese president Hu Jintao in the Indian capital of Delhi, a Tibetan activist named Jamphel Yeshi set himself on fire in protest during a demonstration, suffering severe burns that covered most of his body.

Source: http://zuhaybshah.blogspot.com/2012/07/fake-pictures-of-muslims-being-killed.html (Accessed 10 June 2018)

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Why did it work? The Ingredients

- Threat to safety and security

- An ongoing conflict and a tiny bit of truth

- Seeming plausibility

- Uncertainty/unverifiability

- Stress/deadline

- Use of mobile communication

- Lack of timely official information

- Social media chain reaction

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Deception is incredibly easy to achieve…

And we have seen this before:
Fake Fukushima nuclear fallout map

How to counter such attacks?
Elements of a rumor „control" system

- **Media monitoring** to detect prodromes and assess tactical situation

- **Timely communication**

- **Transparent communication** (admitting what is not known)

- **Intense use of social media** to update the public

- **Building relationships with Twitter&Co admins** to identify fake and bot accounts

- **Emergency website** with debunked rumors section

- **An effective safety/security interface**

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How to identify fake news

- Is the source reliable?

- Is the author credible?

- Crosscheck quoted sources

- Could it be clickbait? Read beyond the headline

- Check the date

- Check spelling and language

- Ask experts

- Check official and other rumor control sites (e.g. snopes.com)

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