

SOCIAL MEDIA AS A LAW ENFORCEMENT TOOL USED BY PERSONNEL ASSIGNED TO THE BOSTON POLICE BUREAU OF INTELLIGENCE AND ANALYSIS

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WORKING DRAFT

As a reminder BIA personnel engaging in the use of web based “social media” tools as an official and authorized purpose within the scope of their duties and responsibilities should only do so for legitimate law enforcement purposes, consistent with use of all officially accessed sources of information.

Until such time as formal guidelines have been developed by the BPD the BIA position will be the following:

- The BIA does not “monitor” any specific web based information sources, rather our position is to utilize publicly available internet based capabilities to remain aware of potential situations that could create public safety considerations due to crowds, traffic, or other police deployment issues. In addition these publicly available information sources may offer information about people engaging in criminal conduct or posing a danger to themselves or others. Use of keywords and other publicly available alert mechanisms would be an appropriate use of such tools.
- BIA personnel using such tools must be aware of the privacy and procedural limitations that always exists within the sphere of police work; such as First Amendment and Fourth Amendment protections afforded to citizens. While engaging in the use of web based information tools BIA personnel should be aware of the distinction of the publicly accessible domain and other information that may rise to the level of being “less than public” and as such may hold certain protections on how the police may appropriately access the information.
- The BIA has a responsibility to ensure that information being accessed and relied upon in furtherance of the intelligence and police mission is being done in an authorized manner and consistent with lawfully appropriate actions that will allow the information to be authenticated and verified if necessary.