



# COVID-19 Outbreak: Investigating a Threat Actor

March 2020

# Introduction

- In March 2020, New York City-based Muslim Brotherhood activist Bahgat Saber publicly urged his friends and followers to take any opportunities they may have to infect Egyptian government officials and supporters with COVID-19/coronavirus.

## NY-Based Muslim Brotherhood Activist Bahgat Saber To Egyptian Nationals: Give Coronavirus To Officials, Staff At Egyptian Consulates And Embassies; If I'm Infected, 'I Will Go To The Egyptian Consulate' In New York

March 16, 2020



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# Introduction

- Saber posted this video on his Facebook page – [REDACTED]
- Analysts quickly identified two other social media profiles belonging to Saber – a Twitter account [REDACTED] and a personal Facebook profile [REDACTED]

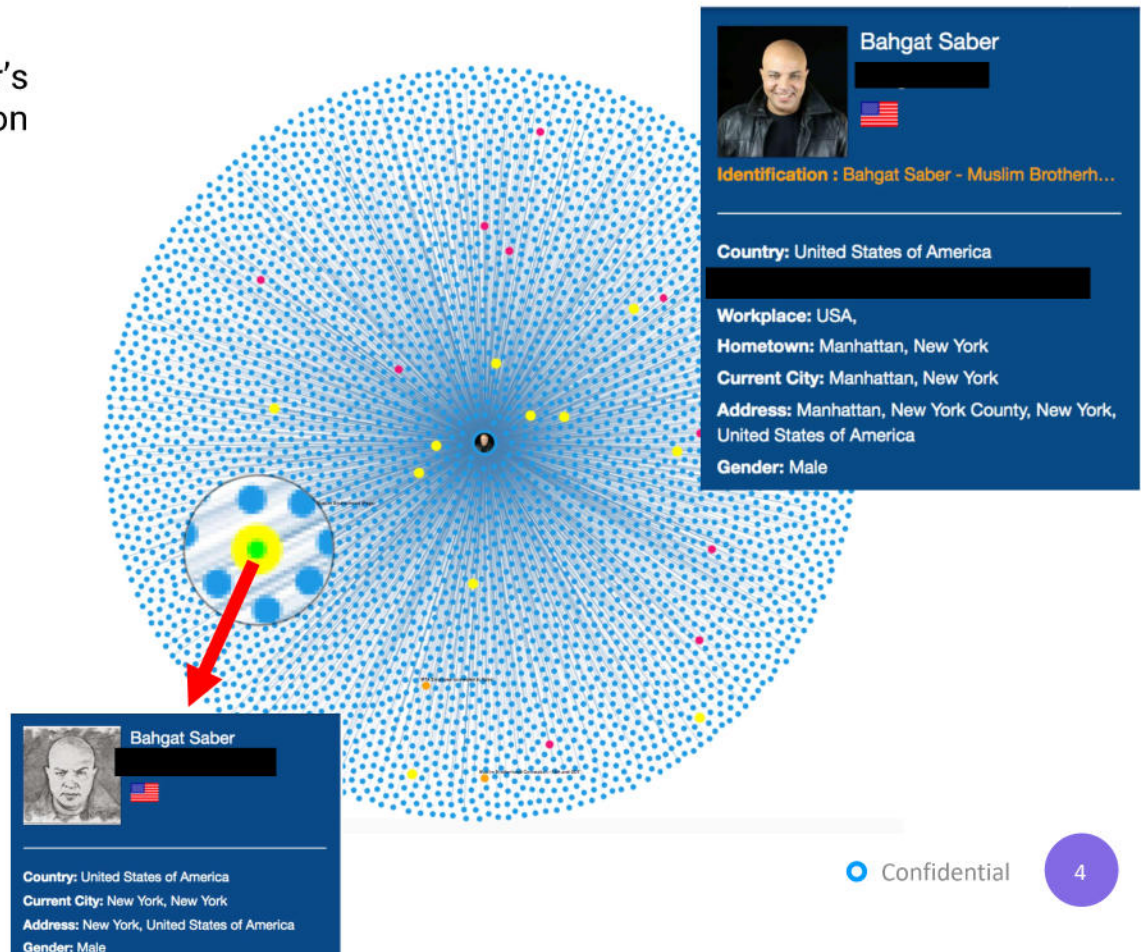


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# Saber Profile Query: Direct Connections

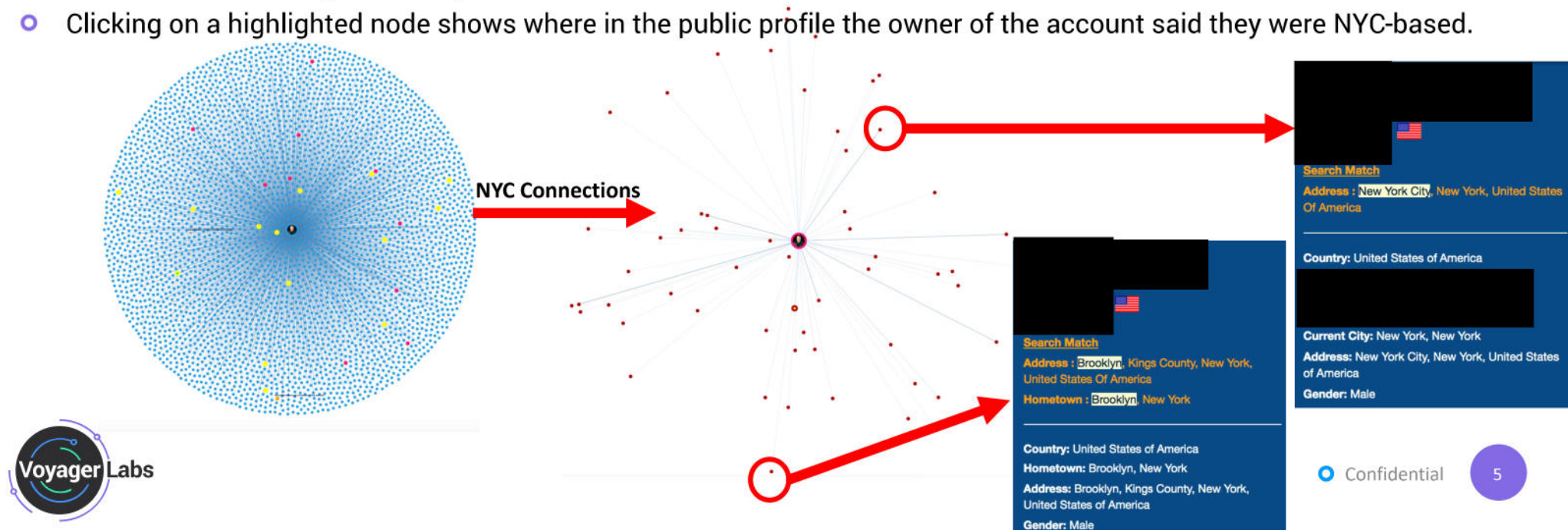
- VoyagerAnalytics' collection and analysis of Saber's personal Facebook profile collected information about 3,959 of Saber's publicly-available friends.
- **Blue nodes:** Each node represents one of Saber's friends.
- **Pink nodes:** The system highlights Saber's 10 **top connections** – those who interact with him the most and share the most mutual connections, among other determining factors.
- **Yellow nodes:** The activist's **mediators**– accounts that are not only strongly connected to him, but also to other connections within him network.
- **Green nodes:** The system highlights the Saber's **ghosts** – accounts that have similar networks and behaviors on social media. In this case, the one ghost account in this network appears to be a second profile of Saber's.



# Profile Query: Searching a Network

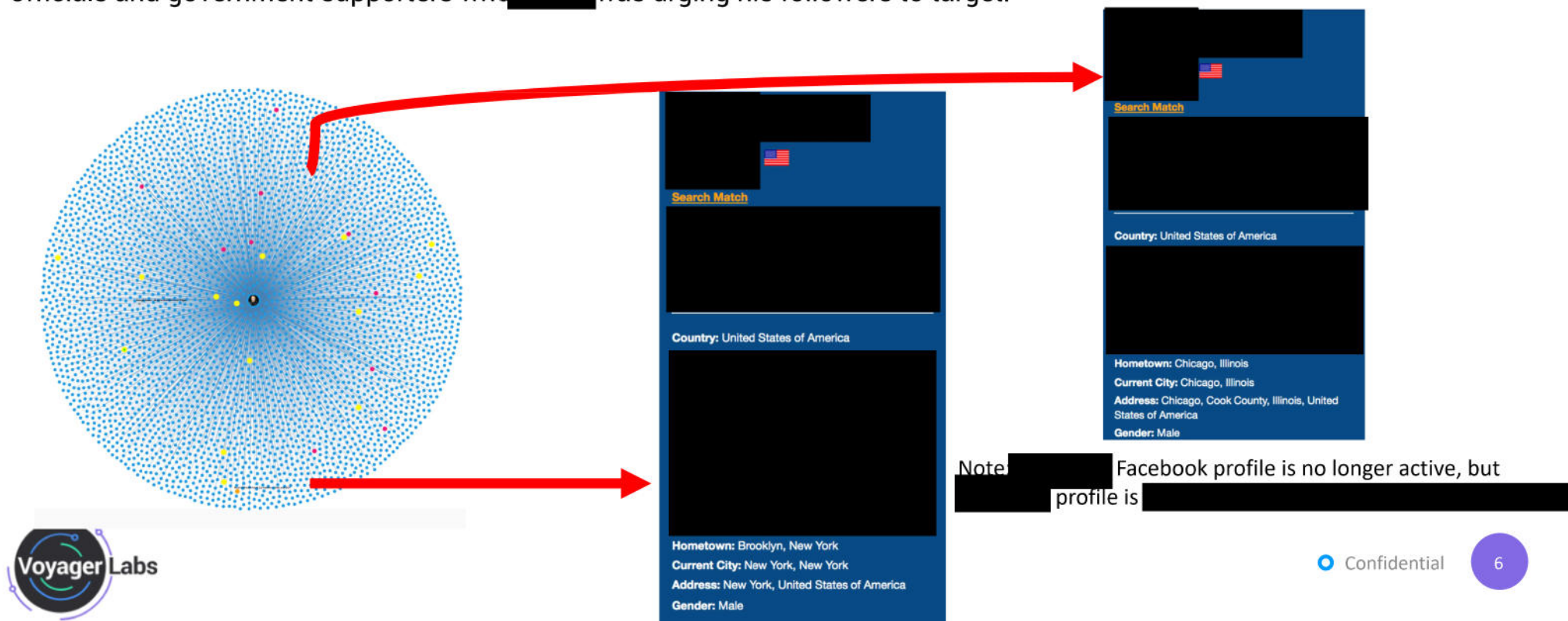
VoyagerAnalytics' collection methodology means that users do not only have access to Saber's publicly-reported biographical data – but also to his friends' publicly-reported biographical data. This information is all keyword searchable and filterable, allowing us to:

- Identify 58 of Saber's nearly 4,000 friends who list a location in or affiliation with New York City (see attached “Bahgat Saber NYC Friends” spreadsheet)
- Clicking on a highlighted node shows where in the public profile the owner of the account said they were NYC-based.



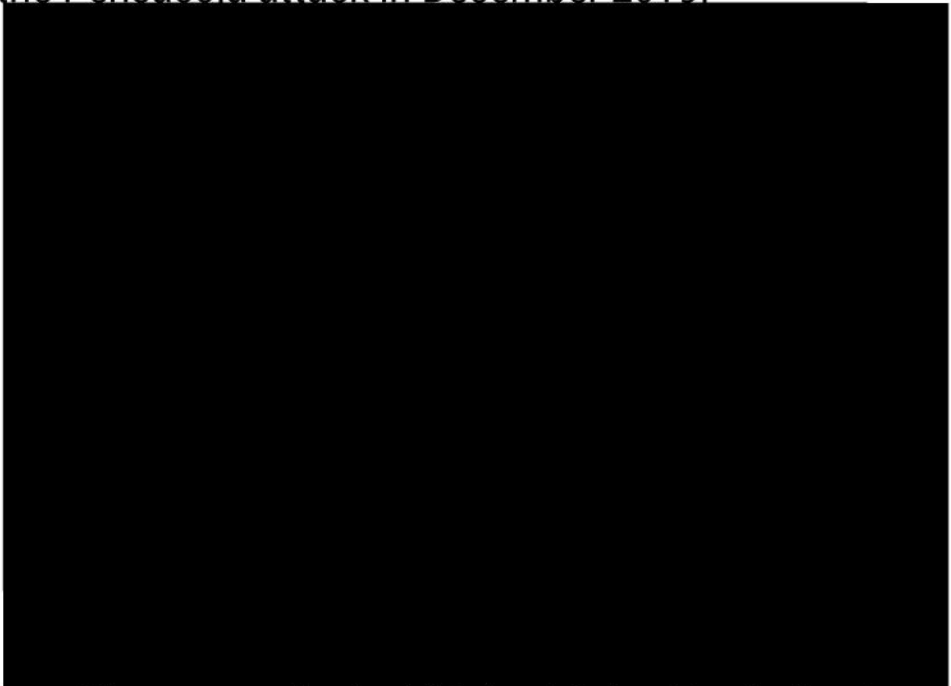
# Profile Query: Searching a Network

The same search tools were used to identify two individuals connected to █████ who work for State and Federal Government agencies and therefore may have easier access to U.S. officials who have a similar profile to the Egyptian officials and government supporters who █████ was urging his followers to target.



## Profile Query: Indirect Connections

In addition to analyzing Saber's direct connections, VoyagerAnalytics' Target-Nontarget-Target (TNT) function allowed users to see Saber's indirect connections to dozens of previously identified both in the Middle East, Europe, and within the United States – including individuals connected to persons and pages of interest in the Pensacola attack in December 2019.



The **Blue Nodes** are Saber's friends who have connections to previously-identified individuals, who are all labeled and highlighted in **Orange**, whom Saber is not directly connected to.

- Although Saber himself is not directly connected to anyone who had been previously flagged as an extremist threat, many of his followers are.



***Please see attached "Bahgat Saber Top Indirect connections" spreadsheet for the URLs of Saber's closest indirect connections.***

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# Profile Query: Post Analysis

- Along with public network data, Saber's 3,663 public posts were collected. This collection includes likes and comments, and all content is fully searchable and translatable with the click of a button.

The screenshot displays a social media post analysis interface. On the left, a 'Posts List' table shows a collection of posts from 'Bahgat Saber'. The table includes columns for the post content, impact percentage, and date/time. One post, 'Bahgat Saber was live.', is highlighted with a red box. On the right, the 'Full Post Display' section shows the selected post in detail. It includes a translation button, the post content in Arabic and English, a video thumbnail, and a list of comments. Red boxes highlight the translation controls, the post content, the video thumbnail, and the comments section.

Post Content	Impact	Date/Time
Bahgat Saber البيت المبشر علي اليوتيوب	1%	Date: 03/08/2020 Time: 3:52 PM
Bahgat Saber is feeling determined. كهرزوا الصور يا عسكر	1%	Date: 03/08/2020 Time: 5:46 AM
Bahgat Saber shared a memory. مع الخلق عيد الله الشريف في التيم سكرين نيويورك	2%	Date: 03/07/2020 Time: 11:39 AM
Bahgat Saber لعل يا سيسي عشرات الإصابات بكورونا كلها عائد من مصر	1%	Date: 03/06/2020 Time: 6:04 AM
<b>Bahgat Saber was live. كورونا تحصد ازواج العشرات أمس بالقاهرة</b>	<b>8%</b>	Date: 03/04/2020 Time: 4:05 AM
Bahgat Saber سد التهذه وكورونا والسيسي اير لونه	1%	Date: 03/03/2020 Time: 6:51 PM
Bahgat Saber محتاج دعم يمكن القوس يسمح بيت مباشر	2%	Date: 03/03/2020 Time: 3:52 PM
Bahgat Saber كورونا هل سينجح السيسي في القضاء علي الكورونا؟ المواجهه الثانية	1%	Date: 03/02/2020 Time: 10:00 PM

**Full Post Display**

**Bahgat Saber was live.**

Translation (From: Arabic To: English)  
Corona claimed dozens of lives yesterday in Cairo

03/04/2020  
4:05 AM

8%  
Impact

كورونا تحصد ازواج العشرات أمس بالقاهرة

View original post

Likes (299)

Comments (160)

في ٧ حالات أصابة مؤكدة بكورونا في مستشفى بولي الشكور  
03/04/2020 5:42 PM

**Bahgat Saber**  
برجاء نشر الفيديو لتخفيف الناس وعمل حلقه  
03/04/2020 5:42 PM

# Profile Query: Post Analysis

- Posts can also be viewed by media only and by public geotags, which are then displayed on a Google Maps interface, as shown below.

The image displays three screenshots from a social media analysis tool. The first screenshot, titled 'Posts List', shows a grid of 12 posts by user 'Bahgat Saber'. The second screenshot, also titled 'Posts List', shows a map view of the same user's posts, with a red circle highlighting a specific location in New York City. A red arrow points from this circle to the third screenshot, titled 'Full Post Display', which shows the details of the selected post. The post is dated 08/30/2019 at 11:35 PM and has a 1% impact. The text of the post is in Arabic, and a translation is provided: 'Tomorrow demonstrations to support Yemen against the sons of Zayed in front of the United Nations'. The post also includes a photo of a demonstration and a link to the original post.

The media view only shows users posts that included pictures and/or videos

The map view shows all of a user's publicly geotagged posts in a Google maps interface. Clicking on an individual pin will highlight the post in question.



# Summary

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- VoyagerAnalytics identified information about nearly 4,000 of Bahgat Saber's friends, including 58 who publicly claim a connection with or location in New York City, and two who claim to work for government agencies.
- Indirect connections to dozens of known extremist accounts were identified, confirming the affinity of at least some of Saber's network for violent, radical ideologies.
- Over 3,600 of Saber's posts were collected and analyzed, including 2,211 pictures and videos and 260 geotagged posts – the vast majority of which were in or around New York City.
- Similar collections and analysis can be conducted on people who – unwittingly or deliberately – are placing themselves and others at risk with reckless behavior related to the spread of COVID-19.

