

Behavioral Indicators and the Critical Pathway to Insider Threat

Dr. Robert Gallagher, Sr. Behavioral Advisor

December 5, 2017



DITMAC



What Does an Insider Threat Behavioral Scientist Do?

- ❖ Consult to analysts
- ❖ Consult to leadership
- ❖ Consult to components
- ❖ Assess/contextualize behavior
- ❖ Influence mitigation
- ❖ Train
- ❖ Research / Identify trends





Indicator Lists

- ❖ Number one request I get is a for a list of indicators
- ❖ There is no shortage of group offering lists, algorithms and monitoring tools
- ❖ If there was one definitive list, we could simply monitor the indicators and eliminate insider threat
- ❖ Unfortunately, this is a human problem and humans just aren't that simple
- ❖ Behavioral science is moving away from trying to create a list and moving toward understanding the process a person goes through that leads them to become a threat



List Challenges

❖ Basic list construction:

- Reverse engineer past events (backwards orientation)
- Lists tend to treat all indicators as equally indicative
- Insider Threat itself is a moving target (espionage, sabotage, violence, cyber, leaking, hacking, self-harm, negligence, etc...)
- People tend to personalize and minimize selected items
- Tends to limit critical thinking



"Just a little heads-up, Frank: Most Earthlings refer to what you and I are doing as 'breaking up,' not 'reverse-engineering our relationship.'"



List Challenges

❖ False Positives:

- The base rate of insider threat is very small
- For almost any indicator there will be more non-malicious actors doing it than malicious actors
- Vast resources are spent running down false positives





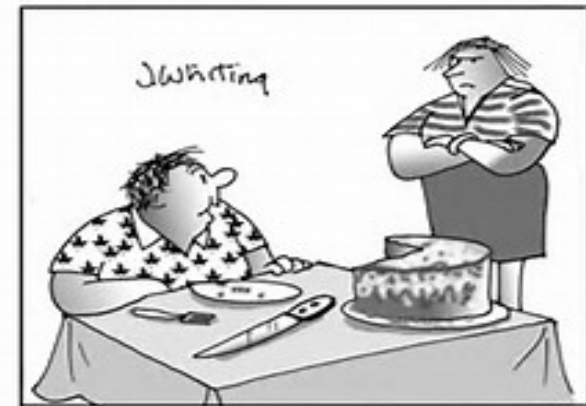
List Challenges

❖ Humans are Messy:

- An indicator in one setting may not be an indicator in another
 - (E.G. Two privates settling a dispute with fists in a deployed environment vs. two generals doing it in a Pentagon conference room)

- An indicator for one person may not be an indicator for another
 - (E.G. Office complainer sending another angry email versus the normally quiet patriot sending an angry email)

- An indicator for me one day may not be an indicator on another day
 - (E.G. Display of emotional instability the week my wife left me versus identical displays of emotional instability when I get a promotion)



"The computer predicted that I would have a sandwich for lunch. I ate cake!"



My Approach

- ❖ Almost any behavior can be an indicator of increased risk under the right conditions

- ❖ Thus the focus is not on a single list of indicative behaviors, but rather on the psychological and behavioral path an individual follows that ultimately leads him or her to commit a malicious act

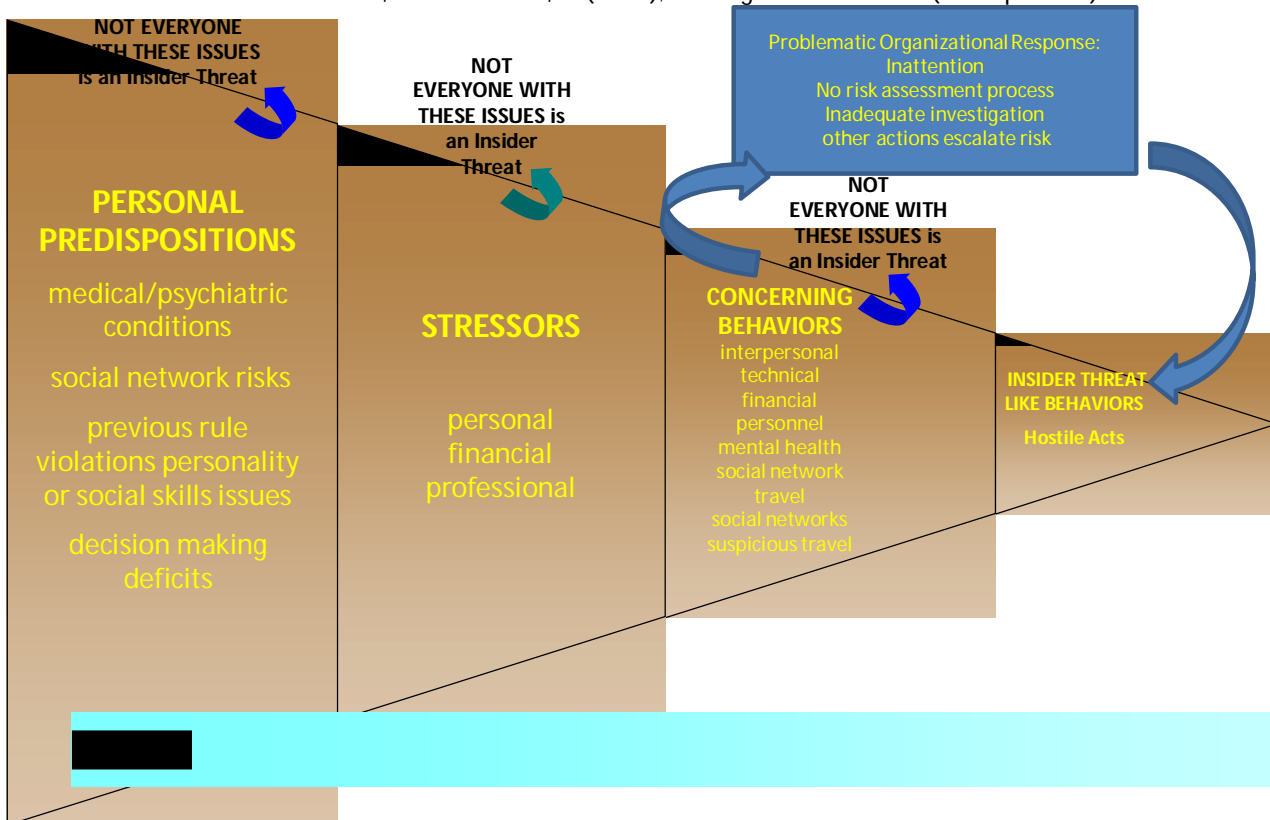
- ❖ There are two key questions to determine if a behavior increases risk:
 - Is the behavior directly or potentially threatening to DoD personnel, resources or capabilities?
 - Is the behavior aberrant to the culture and context in which it occurred?

- ❖ Answering these questions relies on vigilance of the workforce, the experience of the insider threat personnel and the good judgment of leadership



The "Critical Path" to Insider Threat Risk: A Behavioral Model

Sources: Shaw, E. and Sellers, L. (2015); Carnegie Mellon Univ. (2006-present)





Case Study



NIDAL HASSAN : THE FORT HOOD SHOOTER



Case Study: Nidal Hassan

- ❖ Born 1970- Arlington , VA
- ❖ Parents were Palestinian, moderate Muslim household
- ❖ Reasonably happy childhood, went by "Michael"
- ❖ Younger brothers were very social
- ❖ Nidal was "studious"
- ❖ Few if any friends, no girlfriends
- ❖ 1985 moved to Roanoke, helped in parents' restaurants
- ❖ Wandered after HS, Community college in California, Community college in Virginia (Associates), Virginia Tech – Biochemistry degree is 1997
- ❖ Joined ROTC at Va Tech over parents objections because "it is my duty to my country and the military is my life"
- ❖ 1998 Father dies of heart disease
- ❖ 2001 mother dies of kidney disease





Case Study: Nidal Hassan

- ❖ 2001 Gains admission to USUHS
- ❖ 2003 Graduates with med degree
 - Promoted to O-3
- ❖ Residency in Psychiatry at Walter Reed
 - Cited for absenteeism, poor performance
 - Did not meet fitness standards (weight)
 - Inappropriate discussions of religion
 - All noted only in desk file
- ❖ 2004 Consults lawyer about getting out of military commitment
 - Not considered as psychiatry was vastly undermanned
- ❖ 2004 Aunt appeals for his discharge based on religious harassment
 - Denied
- ❖ 2004 Presentation to fellow residents on Quranic World View as It Relates to Muslims in the US Military
 - Posits that Muslims should not have to serve if asked to harm or be exposed to the harming of other Muslims (Sharia law is a higher duty for Muslim soldiers than Constitution)
 - Not well received by superiors or fellow residents (Hassan shocked that they didn't understand and agree)
 - Felt misunderstood by and isolated from peers and superiors
 - Superiors cast his views on Islam as "Religious Research" and given him generally positive ratings.





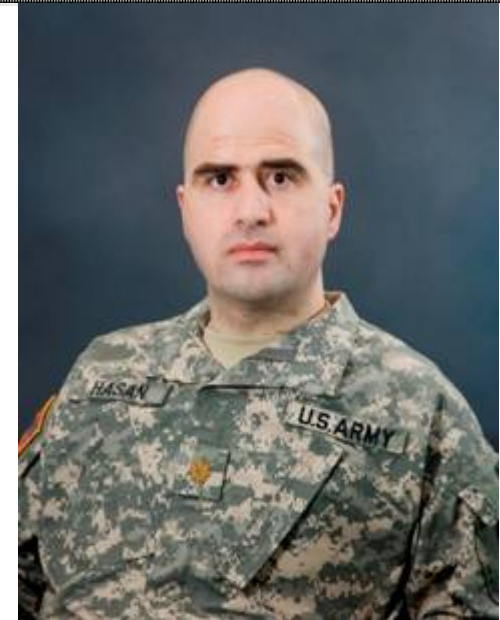
Case Study: Nidal Hassan

- ❖ 2004-2008
 - Made numerous statements against military action in Muslim countries
 - Sympathizes with Muslims who stand against aggressors
 - Justifies suicide attacks
 - Attends "moderate" mosque in Silver Spring, MD
 - Experience the horrors of war daily through therapy sessions with soldiers - Vicarious exposures, PTSD? - Daily accounts of Muslims being murdered by US soldiers
- ❖ 2008 - Makes contact with radical imam Anwar al-Awlaki – personal visits in Falls Church and over 20 emails exchanged
- ❖ Claimed in email to al-Awlaki that he had become devout in 2001
 - JTTF flags first email – Would Muslim soldiers who commit fratricide be seen as martyrs in eyes of Islam
 - FBI routes to DoD rep who checks OPRs
 - Solid OPRs and no indications of bad behavior or terrorist activity in file, no effort to hide identity or activity
 - Determines email to be "research" and recommends case to be closed
 - FBI saw no indication of active terrorist involvement. Case closed with no interview or further investigation
- ❖ May 2009 - Promoted to O-4 (Almost inevitable as a psychiatrist)
- ❖ June 2009
 - Finds out he is being transferred to Ft. Hood and deployed to Afghanistan later that year (28 November)
 - Posts comments on social media comparing suicide bombers to soldiers throwing body on grenade
 - Defends shooter in Little Rock recruiter shootings as justly fighting against an aggressor
 - Social media posts brought to attention of local law enforcement but no investigation opened



Case Study: Nidal Hassan

- ❖ July 2009 -Transfers to Ft. Hood
 - Back channel from supervisor – “You are getting our worst”
- ❖ July 2009 – Tells supervisor as an infidel she will be “ripped to shreds” and “burn in hell”
- ❖ Joins Mosque in Killeen, TX
 - During services announces that infidels should have heads cut off and boiling oil poured down their necks
- ❖ Connects with 18 year old convert Duane Reasoner
 - Parents work at Ft. Hood (army brat)
 - Strong anti-US military social media statements
 - Self proclaimed extremist
 - Advocates for Muslim soldiers to follow demands of Sharia law
 - Regular dinner at Denny’s with Hassan (friend? student? co-conspirator?)
 - After attacks publically defended Hassan’s actions as a just defense of Muslims





Case Study: Nidal Hassan

- ❖ August 2009 – Buys Pistol (first gun ever) and multiple high capacity magazines at Guns Galore in Killeen
- ❖ August 2009 – Multiple visits to Starz Strip Club in Killeen – Purchased high cost lap dances, but brought his own beer
- ❖ Aug-Sep 2009 – Takes gun safety/shooting classes, and practiced frequently at Stan's Gun Range in Florence, TX
- ❖ October 2009 - Makes police report about neighbor keying car with anti-Muslim graffiti
- ❖ October 2009 - Asks superiors about how to handle reports of soldier misdeeds that he learns about in therapy (wants to punish soldiers revealing mistreatment of Muslims)
- ❖ November 1-4, 2009 – Gives belongings (including Koran) away to neighbors

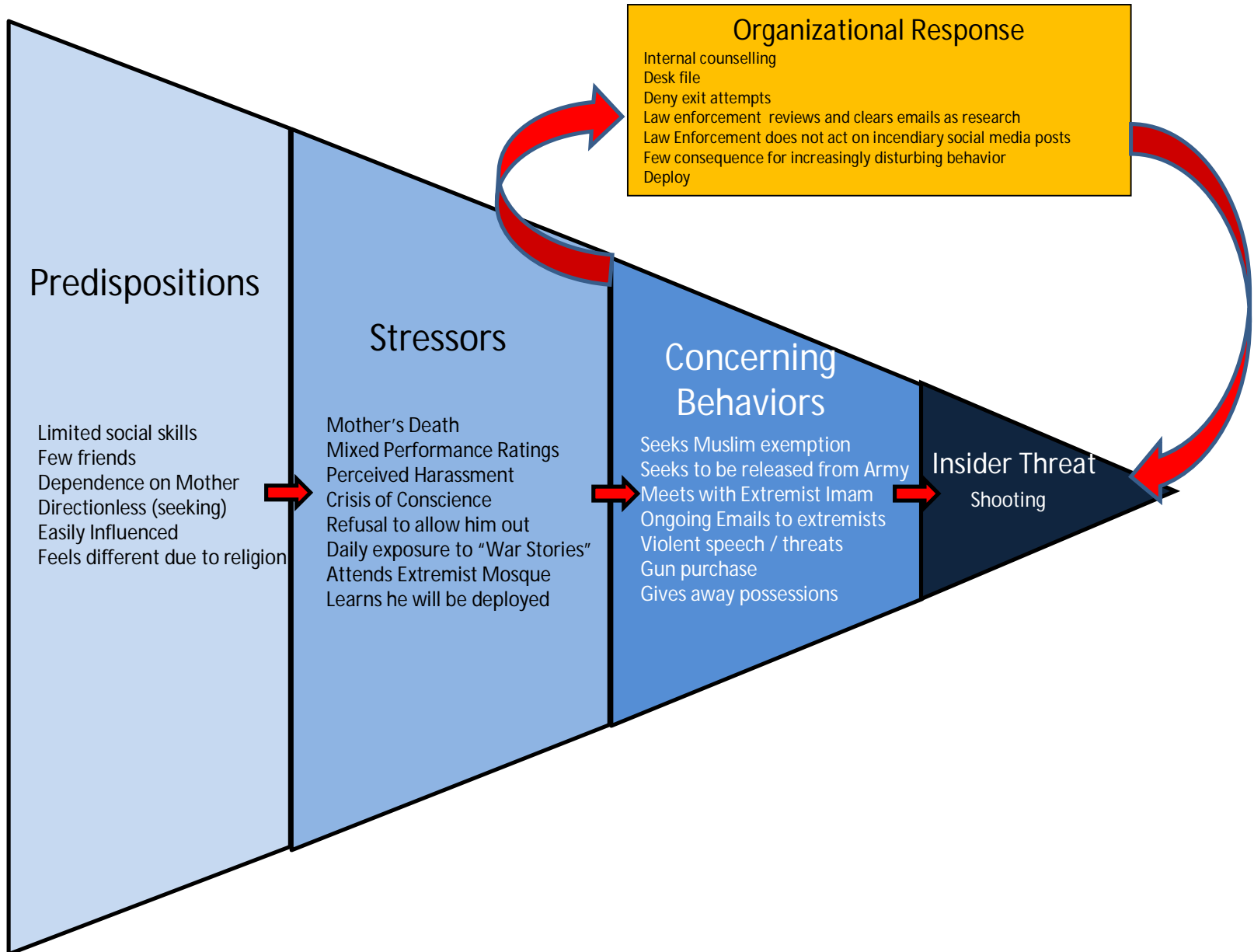


Case Study: Nidal Hassan

- ❖ November 5, 2009 - Enters Solider Readiness Center shooting and yelling "Allahu Akbar"
 - Kills 13, wounds 30 (appears to target only those in uniform)
 - Shot by civilian police officer and military police officer
- ❖ 2013 - Court martial
 - Delayed when he was held in contempt of court for growing a beard
 - Filed for formal religious exemption
 - Exemption was denied and he was forcibly shaved so court martial could move forward
 - Acted as his own attorney (never testified or called any witnesses)
 - Defense was that US had declared war on Islam and he had "switched sides" and was a legitimate fighter for the Taliban
 - Defense was rejected and he was sentenced to death
 - Currently on death row at Ft. Leavenworth. When asked about his motivation, he said that the idea of deploying to Afghanistan and participating in the killing of Muslims was unbearable to him and that drove him to violence
- ❖ Execution date has not been set because he grew another beard in prison and was forcibly shaved again. Now suing US Army on grounds of religious harassment – execution date can not be set until case is settled



Nidal Hassan Critical Path





Critical Path

❖ The Critical Path:

- Organizes data in a coherent and digestible fashion
- Shows the logical progression from thought to action
- Highlights the potential intervention points
- Identifies stakeholders/potential influencers and focuses resources
- Emphasizes the value of early and definitive intervention



QUESTIONS?

CONTACT US

Dr. Robert Gallagher
Sr. Behavioral Advisor,
DITMAC
571-357-6862
Robert.W.Gallagher8.ctr@mail.mil



VISIT US ONLINE

<https://intelshare.intelink.gov/sites/ditmac>

/