

Where Are Your Enemies?

You may have seen recent newscasts and newspaper articles regarding an amazingly unrecognized resource that apparently allows outsiders to track and measure activities within military bases. Soldiers need to keep fit. So what do they do? They run! Many people who exercise this way (not just military personnel) like to keep track of how long they run, the rate at which they run, etc. Data from a company, which provides this service and keeps track of this information via electronic devices worn by a runner, was found to be accessible on the web via social networks. This potentially allows “enemies” to actually see personal activities, the outlines of bases, and other potentially sensitive information. This raises interesting questions from the TRIZ view of resources. Information is one of the 7 key elements of resources within TRIZ. Information can be deliberately generated and used, such as in a chemical process control system or in a medical monitoring display. But often a system is generating information indirectly without consideration for its use or consequences. Information used in a positive sense by a runner can also be used to determine their location, their rate of speed, their patterns of behavior, etc. Depending on your point of view, this example (currently being investigated by the military after its initial reporting by the press), this is an example of a negative resource being used in a positive way (by an enemy) or a positive resource (physical fitness information). It’s good to think about both perspectives as well as “what else could this information be used for?”