

Al-Qaeda online: understanding jihadist internet infrastructure

- Key Points
- The primary function of jihadist internet sites and forums is as a vehicle for propaganda, proselytising and indoctrination.
- The spread of terrorist tradecraft using internet sites is increasing: the quality of audio-visual training aids is improving although these remain few in number compared to text-based equivalents.
- In addition to propaganda and training materials, a slowly growing number of internet sites are publishing documents on strategic thought, specifically war-fighting strategies.
- Developments in web technology have made real-time online interaction between terrorist leaders and their sympathisers possible.

The online infrastructure of the global jihad has become both resilient and increasingly sophisticated. Its development cannot be seriously controlled without addressing considerable political, commercial and legal obstacles. Dr Brynjar Lia examines current trends.

Terrorist and insurgent groups have exploited the internet and information technology to advance their aims since the mid-1990s. Radical Islamist and jihadist networks are no exception, but their arrival in the cyber arena at this time was accompanied by internal discussions about whether internet activism was compatible with Islamic tenets and doctrines at all. After initial hesitations and disagreements among radical ideologues, some of who condemned the internet as 'a Jewish conspiracy', the internet quickly became a major tool in the hands of jihadist groups and their sympathisers. It has also become a primary avenue for open-source intelligence on radical Islamism, especially on its ideological aspects, but increasingly also on tactical and strategic issues.

The size and scope of the web resources being developed by jihadist sympathisers today is enormous and maintained by thousands of highly IT-literate individuals broadly united by their adherence to a global Salafi jihadist ideology.

The online jihadist infrastructure consists of several interdependent components and is growing quickly, in terms of both quality and quantity. It is also evolving rapidly and, judging from trends visible in other internet communities, we should expect it to become more interactive, and more professional and sleek in layout and design. It is likely that there will be a greater variety of formats and improved access from a greater variety of electronic devices. Jihadist websites will also become increasingly multi-linguistic.

Jihadist use of the internet

This page was saved from <http://search.janes.com>

© Jane's Information Group, All rights reserved

Did you know Jane's Consultancy can provide impartial, thoroughly researched market evaluation, providing you with the same reliable insight you expect to find in our publications and online services?

The internet serves numerous purposes for the jihadist movement, although the primary function remains within the realm of propaganda, proselytising, and indoctrination.

Jihadist propaganda is targeting both internal and external audiences. Internally, it seeks to increase and strengthen morale and provide ideological cohesion; externally, its aims are proselytising and recruitment, as well as waging psychological warfare. For both internal and external communication purposes, jihadists are posting increasing numbers of short video clips on the internet showing 'mujahideen' carrying out guerrilla and terrorist operations, which is designed to boost the morale of supporters while terrorising and demoralising their enemies. Some of these clips are overlaid with group logos, graphics and recitations from the Koran, in particular Sura 8:60 Al-Anfal (The Spoils of War: 'Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into [the hearts of] the enemies of Allah and your enemies.')

The internet has become the main library for jihadist literature. There is already an impressive variety of online ideological-political literature, theological texts, fatwas and khutbas [sermons], dedicated to provide supporters with the necessary theoretical underpinnings for their militant motivations.

Although jihadist websites target primarily young Arab-speaking Sunni Muslim males, especially the internet-savvy youth, there are potentially a variety of audiences. In the past two years, there have been several attempts at reaching out to female audiences, the mujahidat, but indicatively, the only jihadist magazine with a specific appeal to women, the Saudi Al-Khansa' journal, has appeared in one edition only. In terms of recruiting non-Muslims to the cause, efforts appear to have been very limited, although reports on some jihadist websites make reference to the activities of converts to radical Islam, sometimes describing them as 'White Moors'.

Efforts have also been made to reach out to sympathisers whose first language is not Arabic. Although the overwhelming majority of top jihadist websites are currently exclusively in Arabic, a few web forums have begun to offer subsections in English, Spanish and French. There are also a number of websites, including Yahoo message boards, dedicated to translating jihadist literature and communiqués. Furthermore, new extremist web forums with a strong pro-Al-Qaeda profile have also appeared in English, French, Dutch, Swedish and a number of other languages.

The internet has also become the primary media outlet for expressing official views and doctrines in external communiqués or bayanat. Although the focus varies greatly, the Iraqi conflict has been the predominant theme during the past two years. Communiqués and video footage by Iraqi insurgent groups represent a major component of the material posted on jihadist web forums. Far less attention is given to the other jihadist battlefields, such as the Algerian, Saudi, Chechen, Afghan, Indonesian and Kashmiri jihads, although combat videos and communiqués from these battlefields also appear occasionally. Despite the highly symbolic significance of the Palestine conflict, the coverage of Palestinian Islamist groups is limited, due to their ideological differences with the global jihadist movement (there is in fact a separate online infrastructure catering for the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas movements).

In addition to communiqués and combat videos, a small but increasing number of jihadist online documents also outline war-fighting strategies. The document *The Iraqi jihad: hopes*

and risks, posted on the Global Islamic Media Yahoo! Message board in December 2003, is a case in point. This remarkable document outlined an overall strategy for forcing the US-led coalition out of Iraq and recommended 'painful strikes' against Spanish interests during the run-up to the elections in Spain three months later. No further specifics about place and timing were provided, however, but the document could be seen as an ominous forewarning of the Madrid train bombings.

There is currently little hard evidence in the public domain to suggest that terrorists use message boards or websites for operational communications. In fact, there is evidence that use of such a medium for discussion of sensitive operational issues is discouraged for security reasons.

The internet is becoming increasingly important in the realm of terrorist training, although not to the extent that we may realistically talk about a substitute for the now defunct Al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan. There has been considerable improvement in both the quality and quantity of jihadist online instruction manuals. There are at least half-a-dozen large collections or encyclopaedias of terrorist handbooks, offering new groups of amateur terrorists quick access to everything from manuals about how to produce homemade explosives and poisons, to detailed guidelines for guerrilla warfare, hostage-taking and assassination methods, reconnaissance operations, countersurveillance and counterinterrogation techniques.

The most well known of these handbooks (although at 700 megabytes its size is now anything but 'handy') is Al-Qaeda's Encyclopaedia for the preparation for jihad (mawsu'at al-'i'dad), which was first compiled during the 1979 to 1989 Afghan war. A dynamic document, it has been updated numerous times in the intervening years and has now been made available online. A version posted in September 2004 spans a broad range of details on the use of conventional light and crew-served weaponry and military tactics, along with instruction on more specific terrorist tradecraft, with a particular focus on the production of homemade explosives. Although some material in manuals such as the encyclopaedia is clearly designed for novice militants, many manuals demand that the reader already possess significant skills in electronics and chemistry.

A further complicating factor concerning internet distribution of training materials is the near absence of high-quality video instruction manuals. Only a handful of these are circulated regularly on the websites, although they attract a disproportionate level of mainstream media interest. The well known Construction of an explosive belt video, which recently was added to Al-Qaeda's encyclopaedia, has very few parallels. For example, one mujahideen website (reviewed by JIR, although the current web address will not be given here) available in November 2005, contained merely three other instruction videos on explosives, as well as one password-protected video on poisonous gas production. Unless interactive video-sessions, i.e. audio-visual counterparts to today's chatrooms, can be set up and organised anonymously, the current state of online terrorist training will not be an effective substitute for real-life training. There are several examples from Scandinavian countries where young people with criminal, rather than terrorist intent, have accessed this kind of online jihadist do-it-yourself manuals and have been killed or badly injured in the process of producing homemade explosives. Hence, for the purpose of transmitting terrorist skills, it is probably fair to say that the jihadist online infrastructure is still in its infancy. So far, it can only serve as a supplement to real-life training.

From the terrorist standpoint, the internet is perhaps more useful for information-gathering and intelligence purposes, than as a short-cut to expertise in tradecraft. Most terrorist planning depends heavily on detailed analysis of the operational environment and the intended targets of attack. Such information can often be accessed through the internet, despite recent efforts to reduce the amount of sensitive information placed there.

There are occasional examples of web postings offering proposals for future operations with details on weapons and targets. One example was a posting on an Arabic language forum on 12 April 2005 proposing the use of model aircraft carrying 3 kg of TNT or RDX to attack certain Gulf oil installations. The posting included pictures of a variety of aircraft with details on procurement. It also offered a political analysis on why this project would be of benefit strategically for the jihadist movement in the region.

The jihadist movement is still using the internet for fundraising purposes, but less openly today than before the 11 September 2001 attacks in the US, when the public tolerance for overt jihadist activism was greater. For security purposes, fund-raising is rarely undertaken by online soliciting and by posting a bank account number on a website.

Electronic jihad such as various types of information attacks on enemy websites, defacement of websites, or theft of sensitive data through electronic break-ins, has been part of online jihadism for years. Many jihadist web forums contain special sections on e-jihad and technical issues. Distributed denial of service (DDOS) attacks are sometimes organised from well-known jihadist web forums. For example, on 25 September 2005, a web participant on the Muntada al-SafNet posted the following announcement: "The largest campaign to destroy Crusader websites: We need mujahideen! The timing of the electronic attack is Thursday at 19.00 GMT. The attack will last for one hour. We have 50 mujahideen so far who are ready for this campaign." The targets for the attack were two sites for Muslim-Christian dialogue.

Still, for the present, the jihadist movement appears more preoccupied with defensive, rather than offensive measures in cyberspace. The declared aims of e-jihadism are to refute the lies that are being spread by the 'Crusader media', to 'break the media blackout' and to 'defend the ideological borders' of the Islamic nation. Hence, discussions revolve less around hacking tools and far more around techniques for protecting their own websites, ensuring anonymity, bypassing government censorship, or finding new storage sites. Some of the virus recipes recommended on jihadist web posters are unsophisticated, suggesting that offensive e-jihad still has a relatively low priority.

Impact on 'real' terrorism

The growing jihadist internet infrastructure already has a certain impact on 'real-life' terrorism, but if left unchallenged, this impact is likely to grow exponentially. Online jihadism provides ready-made tools to transmit terrorist skills. Despite the limitations of current online terrorist training resources, they nevertheless make it much easier for a terrorist trainer to operate clandestinely since they greatly reduce the need for smuggling, storing and distributing potentially compromising material. By their very existence, online manuals clearly contribute to easing the transition from sympathiser to hardcore terrorist. When all things are equal, these resources are a significant force-multiplier.

The most tangible impact of online jihadism is nevertheless in the realm of propaganda and political communication. The effectiveness of terrorist propaganda is measured in terms of its

ability to regenerate the organisation through recruitment. Graphic video-footage of atrocities against Muslim civilians in various conflict areas has proven to be a powerful vehicle for recruiting youth to militant Islamism.

Unsurprisingly, jihadist audio-visual material has witnessed an exponential growth over the past few years. In general, the internet has revolutionised the world of terrorist propaganda and has drastically lowered the cost of distributing legal and illegal propaganda. A comparison between old and contemporary jihadist journals may illustrate this point. The paper magazine Al-Jihad, edited by Sheikh Abdallah Azzam, one of Al-Qaeda's founding members, during the late 1980s, was distributed widely in the Middle East, the US and in Europe, but only at considerable cost. Furthermore, its distribution depended heavily on whether it was legal and tolerated in the countries concerned. Today, jihadist journals are flourishing on the internet. Unaffected by national borders and geographical distance, journals are reaching a far greater audience at much lower production costs and with a production and distribution system that involves minimal security risks to the distributors.

While the jihadist infrastructure on the internet facilitates terrorism in numerous ways, one of its further-reaching implications is of a more sociological nature. Online jihadism brings geographically scattered and isolated militants together in virtual transnational extremist communities that bind the global jihadist movement together. The internet is arguably an important contributing factor in making jihadist terrorism more global and more transnational in scope. It reduces the need for physical contacts and permits the formation of a decentralised structure of autonomous groups sharing the same mindset. The intimacy of internet interaction should not be underestimated. The protection provided through anonymity allows extremists to interact more freely and with less constraints than in many real-world settings where the eyes and the ears of the enemy are ubiquitous.

A systemic description

While there is considerable literature on various aspects of jihadism on the internet, very few attempts have been made to provide a systemic description of this activism. Jihadist websites often have a very short lifespan and their addresses change very frequently. How can such a confusing jungle of rapidly changing websites fulfil such a wide variety of purposes for the jihadist movement?

The key to understanding online jihadism is to decipher the roles that an individual website plays in this interactive and highly dynamic infrastructure. Jihadist websites can be categorised as follows: the key nodes or 'mother sites', encompassing the official websites of jihadist groups and a range of web forums, serving as outlets for a variety of jihadist groups; the 'distributors', a host of various websites that copy and upload new jihadist material on multiple sites, and direct visitors and newcomers to the top jihadist websites; and the 'producers', a variety of self-styled jihadist 'media companies' that reproduce raw material in sleeker and more accessible forms.

The key nodes: The key nodes in the jihadist internet system are the official homepages of jihadist groups and of key jihadist clerics and ideologues. These are in a sense 'mother sites' since they are authoritative sources of first-hand information, especially on theological issues, ideological debates, strategic thinking and official doctrines and communiqués. One example is alneda.com, Al-Qaeda's unofficial homepage until 2003. Another is the homepage of the famous jihadist intellectual Mustafa Setmariam Naser, better known as Abu Mus'ab al-Suri.

In mid- and late-2005, his website was uploaded in an apparently parasitic fashion on a website owned by a US real estate company. The website contained the entire library of Al-Suri's output since the late-1980s and featured his famous work *The call for an Islamic global resistance*, which is perhaps the most important jihadist strategic study ever written.

The key nodes in online jihadism also include the official websites of active terrorist groups, such as the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (Groupe Salafiste pour la Predication et le Combat: GSPC). The GSPC declared its allegiance to Al-Qaeda in late 2003 and has been involved in several terrorist plots in Europe over the past few years. The GSPC website features five editions of its online journal *Al-Jama'ah* and a host of other material.

Another example is the Ansar al-Sunna Army website. This organisation has been the most prolific in beheading its hostages in Iraq since Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's network introduced this tactic in Iraq in May 2004. Its website contains the most recent communiqués, ideological tracts, religious fatwas, a dozen issues of its online journal, the *Ansar al-Sunna* magazine, video footage from operations conducted, news and encryption software. However, the Ansar al-Sunna Army site has been extremely unstable and it disappears sometimes only hours after it appears at a new address. This is a general problem for many of the official jihadist websites. In practice, they are almost impossible to maintain at the same web address over time.

This is only a minor nuisance for the jihadists, due to the existence of a very flexible distribution system. For example, the Ansar al Sunna Army website has a mailing list, which allows web-surfers to access the site right after it reappears at a new address, download its entire content and upload it on numerous other sites. However, the unstable nature of official jihadist sites illustrates the need for alternative channels of authoritative information.

The jihadist web forums (muntadayat) have emerged as perhaps the most important and authoritative internet source for the jihadist movement today. They have largely replaced websites that were considered Al-Qaeda's semi-official information outlets. These sites often have a specific section or forum in which new jihadist communiqués are posted. Only the administrator is permitted to post new items at this section and he usually receives new communiqués via e-mail directly from 'correspondents' or media departments of various jihadist organisations. Censorship is heavily practised at these jihadist web forums and 'un-Islamic' views and postings are quickly removed.

Jihadist web forums are frequently password protected, such as the extremely popular Muntada al-Ansar al-Islami ('The Islamic Helper Forum'). Although currently offline, it has long been considered the leading jihadist forum on the web.

The jihadist web forums are both key nodes and distributors in the jihadist online infrastructure. A handful of the jihadist forums serve as the originating source for jihadist textual or audio-visual primary material. However, for the most part they are simply distributors, circulating material retrieved from elsewhere, often with an emphasis on battlefield news from Iraq.

The web forums may also be interactive centres for teaching terrorist skills. For example, the extremely popular Muntadayat al-ma'sada al-jihadiyya, ('the lion's den jihadist forums'), named after a famous mujahideen camp in Afghanistan, used to run a special section entitled the 'jihadist cells forum' (Muntada al-khalaya al-jihadiyya). Here, weapons manuals were

posted and a self-styled explosives expert used to respond to requests and inquiries from visitors.

A relatively new feature on jihadist web forums is video footage posted in formats suitable for mobile phones, which illustrates the expanding nature of the internet. Another, and increasingly important, function of these forums is to facilitate direct interactive real-time communication between the masses of rank-and-file activists and jihadist leaders, clerics and commanders. Chatrooms and software designed for direct online audio- or audio-visual communication are very important for networking. They create intimacy and solidarity among jihadist sympathisers across national borders and, in some cases, can facilitate direct access to jihadist leaders.

It appears that top Al-Qaeda leaders are yet to exploit the opportunity for online interactive meetings with their followers via the internet, probably due to security concerns. However, other group leaders do talk interactively with their followers on the internet. For example, recently a web forum hosted by the Egyptian group the Muslim Brotherhood posted the following advertisement: "You have an appointment on Sunday 9 October 2005 at 10PM (Mecca): A direct meeting with a leader in the Islamic Resistance Organisation - Hamas, to discuss the current events and developments." Clearly, if currently available programs to ensure anonymity are significantly improved in the near future, interactive meetings between top terrorist leaders and their sympathisers will be taking place with more frequency on pro-jihadist websites.

Distributors': How would a newborn jihadist sympathiser know where to find official jihadist websites and the most authoritative web forums? This role is performed by a host of different types of websites, which may be termed 'the distributors'. They are not primarily the original sources of authoritative information and material about the jihadist movement, but they are nevertheless the most important vehicles for sustaining the jihadist online infrastructure. Their primary task is to distribute, as widely as possible, material received from the key nodes. They can be divided roughly into four sub-categories, although the last is in many ways a category of its own:

- ? directories of updated links to external websites;
- ? mailing lists and message boards, such as Yahoo! Groups;
- ? non-interactive homepages of sympathisers, such as memorial sites; and
- ? 'producers' - jihadi media groups and online libraries.

The directories fulfil an important function for newcomers by offering them a quick overview of the most important sites. A famous example is the 'meshawir directory' (dalil mishawir). Until recently, it was the most frequently cited directory on jihadist websites. It featured not only an updated list of the 20 top jihadist forums and websites, but it also provided links to a wide variety of downloadable texts, audio recordings and videos.

The entry points to the world of jihadist websites are numerous. Often, it is sufficient to locate only one jihadist website since many of them feature a list of recommended links, although they may not be as up to date as the directories.

The mailing lists and message boards are also important distributors because they provide easy access to jihadist online resources. As opposed to web forums, they rarely host discussions, although the Yahoo! message boards are in principle also interactive. Jihadist Yahoo! Groups have so far been relatively stable and long-lived. In addition, they offer a large supply of free storage space. One good example of the former is a Yahoo! Group, entitled *iairaq* Yahoo! Group. Originally a 'distributor' for one of the most active Iraqi insurgent groups, The Islamic Army in Iraq, it has evolved into a general jihadist distributor site. An example of the critically important role these distributors play for the key nodes is a posting on this message board on 5 October, advertising the well-known Muntadayat firdaws al-jihadiyya (Paradise jihadist forum). On this posting, the *iairaq* Yahoo! Group posting provides not only the new web address for 'Firdaws', but also urges visitors to rush to that site and register promptly in order to obtain a username and a password, since the Firdaws will be open for registration 'for four days only'.

Another Yahoo! Group message board is the *The e3dad_group - mawsu'at al-i'dad*. This message board was apparently created to update online training manuals and handbooks in Al-Qaeda's Encyclopaedia of jihad, hence, the name *mawsu'at al-i'dad*. It did function in that capacity for a period of time, but in reality, it mostly posts random jihadist news, documents and communiqués. A problem for many Yahoo! Groups is that they are being jammed by spam mail, and are therefore often 'infested' by 'infidel' advertisements and pornographic material.

An important category of distributors is regular non-interactive websites maintained by jihadist sympathisers where jihadist materials are posted and sometimes redesigned into sleeker and more user-friendly formats. Some of these are memorial websites dedicated to jihadist commanders such as Emir Khattab, the icon of the Arab mujahideen movement in the Caucasus. Other websites are more closely linked to identifiable terrorist organisations, such as the *Sawt al-jihad* (The Voice of jihad) website. Its proclaimed goal is to distribute the publications of Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia, such as Zarqawi's electronic journal, *Majallat Dharwat al-Sinam*, selected videos, audio-tapes, and ideological tracts such as deceased Abu Anas al-Shami's *Jihad: how we understand it and how we practice it*. It also features a list of 19 of the most well-known jihadist web forums. The site has been relatively stable over the past few months.

Another example is the *Al-Qa'idun* website, which presents itself as a site established by a group of "mujahideen sympathisers", who are dedicated to redistribute the publications of Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia. It also posts new communiqués, Osama bin Laden's most recent speeches in various document formats, including a brief summary of his main points. It also offers the collected works of key Saudi jihadist ideologues, such as the deceased Yusuf al-Ayiri, Sultan Utaybi, Faris bin Ahmad as well as all editions of the famous *Sawt al-Jihad* and *Mu'askar al-Battar* journals.

As opposed to many other distributors, the *Al-Qa'idun* website prides itself in having reproduced all these works in easily accessible electronic book (e-book) formats, which is currently among the most fashionable publication formats.

Producers: The most dedicated distributors are the numerous self-styled jihadist media groups. Their goal is not simply to pass on raw material received from the key nodes in the system, but to reformat and refashion it in a sleeker and more attractive manner. The most active producers today are the Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF), The Electronic Media

Battalion and the Islamic Media Centre. They primarily gather, reshape and distribute jihadist material and increasingly they also serve as recruitment centres for would-be electronic jihadists. Their symbols and colourful images are ubiquitous on nearly every jihadist website and their publications are valuable sources of information about the jihadist movement. In October 2004, for example, the GIMF distributed a new 500-page electronic book they had produced about the Tawhid wa'l-Jihad Group in Iraq, at a time when there was limited information in the public domain about this organisation.

Some of these jihadist media producers are not only effective distributors, but also key nodes and mother sites, such as the Sahab media, often dubbed Al-Qaeda's media company, or GIMF's recently launched Voice of the Caliphate Broadcast, which has started to offer weekly 20 minute news broadcasts, a kind of jihadist version of 'internet TV'. As of November 2005, it had only released four versions and there have been many ambitious jihadist media initiatives disappearing quickly after a brave start.

The Voice of the Caliphate Broadcast has nevertheless been judged a success in the eyes of the jihadist media activists. It was advertised well in advance and has succeeded in gaining significant coverage in Western media. When items such as this are posted around the web on various jihadist forums, it is very common for the distributors to upload the item in various formats and on multiple links. When the video-file to the second edition of the Voice of the Caliphate Broadcast was posted, as many as 13 different links for downloading it were given. The distributor also called upon visitors to 'help us distribute' the video files, posting a link to a specially designed GIMF website containing links to 55 different so-called 'free web-hosting' sites where large video files can be uploaded for free.

Vulnerabilities in online jihad

The jihadist infrastructure on the internet is a very flexible and extremely interactive system with a high degree of redundancy. Its many different types of sites constantly feed and reinforce one another, but it would be wrong to assume that this infrastructure is invulnerable and too elusive to be confronted. Even if online jihadism is extremely effective in withstanding efforts aimed at closing specific websites, there are nevertheless only a finite number of key nodes in the system. Judging by the reactions on web forums to the closure of their most preferred websites, it is evident that closures have a certain effect in terms of reducing access to authoritative information and direct access to the various jihadist organisations.

While it may be theoretically possible to close the 50 most important mother sites, the enormous support infrastructure of distributors and producers would still be there and provide a fertile environment for new mother sites to appear on relatively short notice. Previously posted material is also available in the system even if all mother sites are shut down. Furthermore, there are many examples of files with jihadist training material remaining on the internet even after their original parent sites have been removed. Such material is sometimes deeply hidden on storage sites, which have no 'front door', but has to be accessed from an external website. Hence, determined efforts to go after and close down the most important mother sites would only have a limited long-term effect, so long as the rest of the online jihad infrastructure is left untouched.

The e-jihad depends significantly on free web hosting, such as sites where files, including large video-files, can be uploaded for free and without any ID-control. Much of the high-

quality jihadist material that is being distributed today is dependent on websites offering free and anonymous access to web storage and file sharing.

The crucial issue here is anonymity, however, not necessarily that the web hosting is free. The online jihad would be severely hampered if its activists had to register and pay with a credit card for uploading their files or if internet service providers were legally barred from offering their services to anonymous users. It would surely make a dent in the problem of jihadism on the internet. As of today, the commercial, legal and political obstacles to such measures are likely to be virtually insurmountable. Hence, close monitoring of the internet for intelligence and law enforcement purposes will remain the most viable option for the anti-terrorism community in the foreseeable future.

Related Articles

Islamist groups develop new recruiting strategies

Hamas and Islamic Jihad clash over 'media Jihad'

Internal affairs/Iraq

A screenshot from a jihadist website. JIR has noted a proliferation of websites established specifically to rapidly and widely disseminate jihadist propaganda issued by 'mothersites' - sites most closely linked to terrorist and insurgent groups. This infrastructure has given online jihad high levels of redundancy.

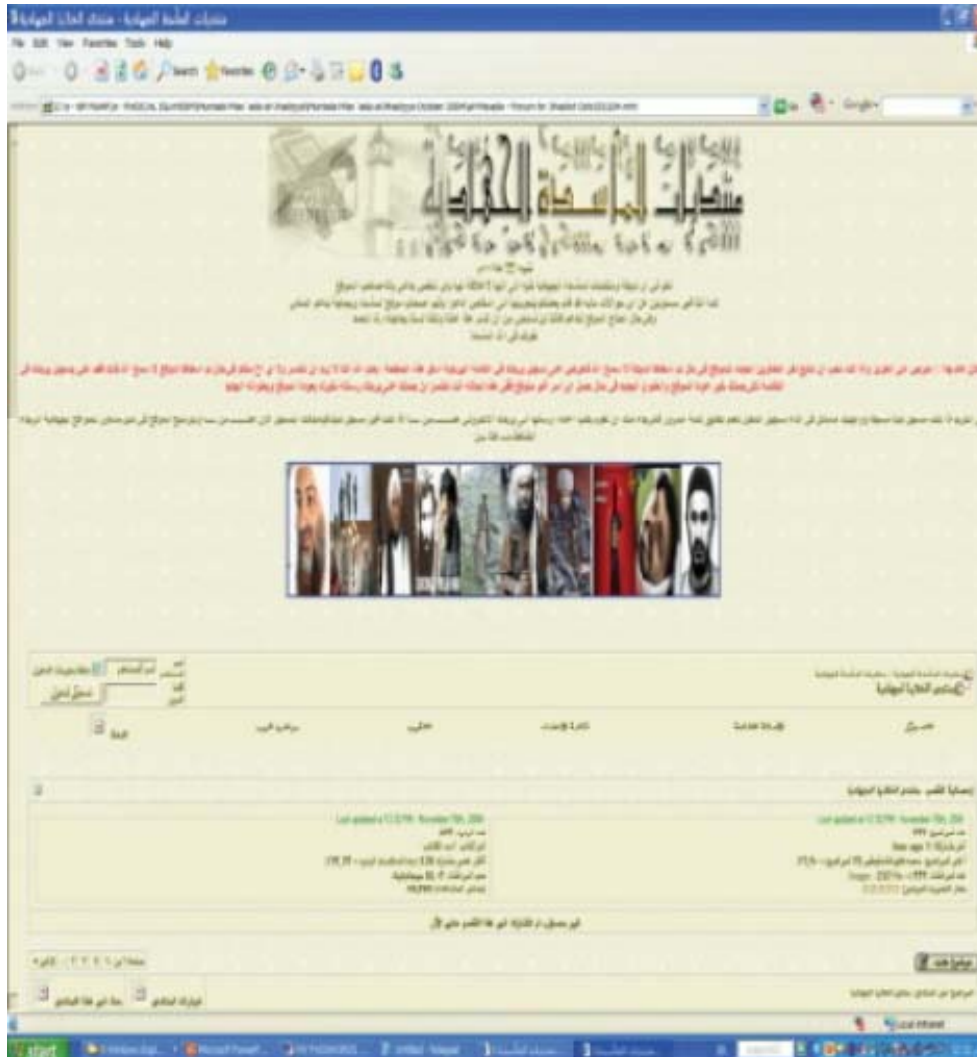




Proliferation of 'distributor' sites (example pictured), which quickly and easily direct traffic to the most popular forums and web pages, have helped grow the interconnectivity and resilience of the online Jihadist web infrastructure.



Screen grab from the home page of Ansar al-Sunna, an Iraqi insurgent group. The site carries regular 'war reports' from Iraq, pictures, and short video clips of insurgent attacks on Coalition forces.



Screen grab showing postings on a popular Jihadist web forum. Such forums promote greater connectivity between disparate Jihadist sympathisers worldwide, but there is little publicly-available evidence that they are used for operations communication s by terrorist networks.



Screen grab from the Al-Multaqa Jihadist web site.



Jihadist forum offering downloadable footage of Jihadist operations in Iraq



Advertisement for Sout al-Khalifa (Voice of the Caliphate), the first online Jihadist 'television news' broadcast. Two such programmes have appeared on the web so far.



Banner advertisement for a Jihadist 'media producer'; organisations such as Global Islamic Media specialise in using modern media production skills to reformat and refashion material received by them or already available on the internet.

2005 Jane's Information Group