

Jihad Online: Islamic Terrorists and the Internet



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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Introduction: Holy War on the Information Superhighway.....	6
Sidebar: What is "Jihad"?	6
Al-Qaeda: "The September 11 Blessed Operation"	7
Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad: Terror from the Territories ...	17
Hezbollah: "Psychological Warfare Against the Zionist Enemy"	22
Pakistani Militants:	
Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Taiba & Jaish-e-Muhammad	29
Conclusion	33
Resources	35

Executive Summary

Like hundreds of millions of other people, Islamic terrorists and their supporters use the Internet. In many ways, the Internet is a tool tailor-made for these Islamic extremists, who use it covertly and overtly to plan attacks, raise money, and spread anti-Semitic and anti-American propaganda written in English, Arabic, and other languages. Unlike the online actions of most computer users, the Internet activities of Islamic terrorists, including the planning and coordination of the September 11th attack on America, has contributed to widespread violence, fear and death. Indeed, there is sufficient information to believe that in the future, terrorists may even turn the Internet itself into a weapon, using it to wreak havoc on America's critical infrastructure.

On September 11th, all Americans became aware of the threat posed by Muslim extremists to the United States. Thousands of Islamic militants around the globe believe that it is their religious duty to wage a violent war against non-Muslims. Such extremists, commonly referred to as Islamists, aim to topple all secular, democratic governments and replace them with the rule of Shariah, Islamic law. Because these militants are global, rather than being located in a single geographical area, and because their message is an important tool for recruitment and incitement to violence, the Internet provides them with a new and effective way to attain their goals. Accessible from almost anywhere on the planet and easily used to transmit thousands of pages of propaganda, the Internet helps Islamist terrorists unify and motivate their zealous adherents.

Islamist terrorists do not limit their calls for violence to only American targets. Their call for violent war against non-Muslims includes other "infidel" targets as well, particularly Jews and Israel. Our report details the various Islamist groups which pervert the Internet to their terrorist ends. We discuss their violent message, the various technologies used to operate covertly, the ways in which the Internet abets their organizing and fundraising, the new and complicated challenges posed to

law enforcement and the indications of even greater harm and destruction possible in the future. We also detail some trends and activities that, if properly monitored, can provide law enforcement with information about future terrorist plans early enough for detection and, hopefully, prevention. Finally, we raise concerns regarding Internet accessibility and ease of use, qualities often trumpeted as a means to democratize the flow and exchange of information, which, paradoxically have been hijacked by Islamist terrorists in the service of committing acts of violence against those who do not share their beliefs.

For example:

- In planning the September 11 attacks, Al-Qaeda members sent each other thousands of messages in a password-protected section of an extreme Islamic Web site.
- Hamas, in its war against Israel, has received money raised via the Web site of the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, an organization based in the United States.
- On the Web site of its TV station Al-Manar, Hezbollah started the untrue, anti-Semitic rumor that 4,000 Jews failed to go to work at the World Trade Center on September 11 because they had been forewarned about the impending attacks.

Terrorist use of the Internet poses tremendous problems for law enforcement officers who are trying to thwart attacks. It is easy for terrorists to access and use the Internet anonymously, and by using encryption programs, it is simple for them to encode the messages they send to each other.

For instance:

- Many Web sites operated by Islamic terrorist groups have been removed from the servers hosting them, only to reappear after a short time

on the servers of another Internet Service Provider.

- Al-Qaeda members have accessed the Internet anonymously in America's public libraries and local "hawalas," storefront money exchanges located in Islamic communities around the world.
- Hezbollah has called encryption "brilliant" because its members can use it to "send a verse from the Koran, an appeal of charity and even a call for jihad" and know their messages will not be detected by "the Americans."

Though it is difficult to keep Islamic terrorists off the Internet, law enforcement officers can learn about their beliefs, plans, and activities by monitoring their behavior online. If these officials can translate material in foreign languages, know where to look for relevant information, and can break the code that obscures encrypted messages, then they may be able to use the information they uncover to stop a terrorist attack before it happens.

Suspicious activities and signs include:

Increased frequency of messages - Messages were discovered on Al-Qaeda computers after September 11th, by federal officials. The first relevant messages were dated May 2001 and the last were sent on September 9th, two days before the attack. The frequency of the messages was highest in August 2001. Even when messages sent by Islamist terrorists are encrypted, their increased frequency serves as a warning sign and a signal indicating that further investigation is necessary.

Increased traffic on "sympathetic" sites - Intelligence agents assert that Islamists post logistical information and other relevant data on sites "sympathetic" to the terrorist groups, using phrases and symbols recognizable only by terrorist adherents. Officials have noticed that traffic at these sites surges before attempted attacks.

Terrorist chat rooms - Certain chat rooms are sometimes used to recruit new followers and discuss upcoming attacks. "We have no hatred toward anyone, not even Americans or Jews," asserts one message posted to a chat room allegedly used by Al-Qaeda members. "We just love to send them to hell, where they belong in the eternal flames of fire. God is Great!" A conversation about killing American citizens took place in a Hamas chat room. One participant wrote that an aspiring assailant, who asked for advice about murdering Americans visiting Israel, should "run them over on the road" or "burn them in their cars using a Molotov cocktail." Suspicious chat room messages should be taken seriously and investigated.

Finally, Al-Qaeda operatives have investigated using the Internet itself as a weapon. Some Al-Qaeda computers seized by U.S. forces in Afghanistan contained information about ways to gain control of the computers that run electrical, water, transportation and communications systems. Many of these computers running infrastructure are accessible over the Internet and security is lax. With access to such computers terrorists could potentially shut off the electricity of a city, shut down phone lines, cause a dam to release the water it's holding back, or cause two trains to crash into each other. Many government experts assume that Al-Qaeda operatives will actually launch a cyber-attack of this sort in conjunction with a more conventional attack. For example, terrorists could blow up a building and then disable the phone system in the surrounding area, preventing law enforcement, medical and emergency officials from responding to the attack.

Introduction: Holy War on the Information Superhighway

On September 11, all Americans became aware of the threat posed by Muslim extremists to the United States. Thousands of these militants around the globe, religious radicals like the men who planned and executed the September 11 attacks, believe that it is their religious duty to wage a violent war against non-Muslims. Such religious extremists, commonly referred to as Islamists, aim to topple all secular, democratic governments and replace them with the rule of Shariah, Islamic law. Though Islamists continue to engage in guerrilla and conventional warfare, they have increasingly come to rely on terrorism, carrying out violent attacks that purposefully target civilians.

Like hundreds of millions of other people around the globe, Islamist terrorists and their supporters use the Internet. In many ways, the Internet provides benefits tailor-made for their needs. The Internet makes it easier for them to communicate covertly, preach to the public, and solicit funds. They also use it to plan and coordinate their attacks, such as those of September 11. There is also evidence that they are planning to turn the Internet itself into a terrorist weapon, using it to wreak havoc on America's critical infrastructure.

SIDEBAR: What is "Jihad"?

Commonly taken to mean "holy war" by non-Muslims, the term "jihad" literally means "striving" or "determined effort" and has many practical meanings. For some Muslims, "jihad" represents an "inner" striving, the "determined effort" of the believer to overcome his or her bodily desires and other unholy temptations. This is also known as the "greater jihad." A second interpretation of "jihad," the "lesser jihad," involves Muslim nations striving to forcefully expand "Dar al-

the destruction or forced conversion of non-Muslims, and throughout the history of Islam, few Muslim nations have treated this "lesser jihad" as a spiritual imperative. A third interpretation of "jihad," popularized by the radical 13th Century Muslim scholar Ibn Taymiya, holds that all true Muslims, as individuals, must constantly engage in, or at least actively support, a violent battle against non-Muslims. This third, extreme view of "jihad" is the interpretation that developed into the beliefs held by contemporary Islamists.

Al-Qaeda: "The September 11 Blessed Operation"

The recent operations were meant to support the Jihad in Palestine against the Jewish enemy. We said at the time that the operation against the Cole was the first serious attack in support of the Palestinian uprising, and it would be followed by sister operations. Then came the September 11th blessed operation to support this promise. The attack was against the World Trade Center, the largest financial center supporting the Jews. The Pentagon was the main source of the Jewish military machine on one hand, and its main supporter, on the other.

-- message from Al-Qaeda on the Al Neda Web site, April 26, 2002

Al-Qaeda is the leading multi-national Islamist terrorist network. It was founded and is still led by Osama bin Laden, a multimillionaire Saudi who became an active Islamist in 1979, when he went to Afghanistan to fight the Soviet Union. Though Al-Qaeda financially and operationally supports Islamist terror groups around the globe, its core remains bin Laden and the Arabs who fought alongside him during the '80s.

In 1996, bin Laden declared war on the United States, and two years later, he vowed to attack Americans and their allies, wherever they are. Al-Qaeda bombed U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 and attacked the U.S.S. Cole in Yemen in 2000 before carrying out the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

Planning and Coordination

Al-Qaeda operatives relied heavily on the Internet for help in planning and coordinating the September 11 attacks. Thousands of encrypted messages that had been posted in a password-protected area of a Web site were found by federal officials on the computer of arrested Al-Qaeda operative Abu Zubaydah, who reportedly masterminded the September 11 attacks. The first messages found on Zubaydah's computer were dated May 2001 and the last were sent on September 9, 2001, two days before the attacks. The frequency of the messages was highest in August 2001, the month immediately preceding the attacks.

Both online and off, Al-Qaeda members operate clandestinely and are difficult to deter. To preserve their anonymity, they use the Internet in public places and send messages via e-mail accounts that were likely registered using fabricated information. In addition, these radicals use the Internet to research their targets and weapons of choice. Most significantly, they use computer programs to stop anyone but their compatriots from reading or finding the messages they transmit online.

Some of the September 11 hijackers accessed the Internet in public libraries. It is often simple to use the Internet in such facilities without being traced or identified; at many public libraries, nearly anyone can walk up to a terminal and access the Internet without presenting identification. Another place Al-Qaeda members have accessed the Internet is in "hawalas," storefront money exchanges that have been used to funnel money to bin Laden and Al-Qaeda. The United States government raided and shut down dozens of these "hawalas" in November 2001.

Certain September 11 hijackers communicated using free, Web-based e-mail accounts provided by a popular Internet company. Such accounts can easily be opened with fake registration information, and they can be accessed from any

computer connected to the Internet.

Al-Qaeda operatives have used the Internet to search for, and find, logistical information to use in planning attacks. Some of the September 11 hijackers used the Internet to research the chemical dispersal capabilities of crop dusters, and their ringleader, Mohammed Atta, made his plane reservations online. Information about manufacturing a nuclear bomb and files describing American utilities, downloaded from the Internet, were found in Al-Qaeda safe houses by U.S. officials in Afghanistan.

A key tool of Al-Qaeda operatives has been encryption programs, which scramble messages so they cannot be read. Only the intended recipients of an encrypted message will be able to read it, using a special electronic decoding "key" received from the sender of the message. Easy-to-use encryption programs are readily available, free of charge, on the Internet.

Encryption became so important to Al-Qaeda after the United States began to intercept bin Laden's satellite telephone calls that the topic was added to the curriculum of the group's terrorist training schools in Afghanistan and Sudan. Convicted for his role in the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings, bin Laden aide Wadih El Hage sent encrypted e-mail messages to his Al-Qaeda associates. "Uncrackable" encryption allows Al-Qaeda members "to communicate about their criminal intentions without fear of outside intrusion," former FBI Director Louis Freeh told a Senate panel. "They're thwarting the efforts of law enforcement to detect, prevent and investigate illegal activities," he warned. CIA Director George Tenet is similarly concerned about Al-Qaeda "using computerized files, E-mail, and encryption to support their operations."

Al-Qaeda reportedly uses the Internet to disseminate steganographic messages, secret statements embedded in apparently harmless information that is posted publicly online. Al-Qaeda operatives have been accused of hiding attack plans in apparently commonplace image files available on

pornographic bulletin boards, in sports chat rooms, and on popular Web sites. Generally, it is possible to detect a steganographic message in an online photo by analyzing the file in which the image is stored. Dozens of government analysts have been searching for, finding, and working to decode these messages since September 11.

Some intelligence agents assert that Al-Qaeda operatives post logistical information about upcoming attacks on the Web in plain sight, without hiding the information in photos. These analysts assert that Al-Qaeda operatives, but not others, are privy to the meaning of certain signals, such as phrases and symbols, that appear on sites sympathetic to the group. Officials have noticed that traffic at these sites "surges" before attempted attacks. This type of rudimentary steganography resembles the kind used by British radio announcers during the Second World War, who stealthily alerted the French resistance of upcoming attacks by using seemingly nonsensical, pre-arranged phrases in their broadcasts.

Government sources indicate that Al-Qaeda operatives may also use the Internet to talk openly about their plans, using neither encryption nor steganography. One Web site closely watched by the authorities features a chat room allegedly used by Al-Qaeda members to recruit new followers and discuss upcoming attacks. "We have no hatred towards anyone, not even the Americans or Jews," asserts one message posted to the site. "We just love to send them to hell, where they belong in the eternal flames of fire. God is great!"

Finally, Al-Qaeda operatives have investigated using the Internet itself as a weapon. Some Al-Qaeda computers seized by U.S. forces in Afghanistan contained information about ways to gain control of the computers that run electrical, water, transportation, and communications systems. Many of these computers are accessible over the Internet, and security is lax. With access to such computers, Al-Qaeda operatives could potentially shut off the electricity of a city, shut down the phone lines in a given neighborhood, cause a dam to release the water it is holding, or cause two trains to crash into each

other. Many government experts assume that Al-Qaeda operatives will actually launch a cyber-attack of this sort in conjunction with a more conventional attack. For example, terrorists could blow up a building and then disable the phone system in the surrounding area in order to prevent law enforcement, medical, and emergency officials from responding to the attack.

Propaganda

The online propaganda strategy of Al-Qaeda, like its approach to online planning and coordination, takes advantage of the anonymity and flexibility of the Internet. Unlike other Islamist terrorist groups, Al-Qaeda relies on semi-official sites instead of official sites to spread its message. These sites have been the first to publish statements apparently composed by Al-Qaeda officials and allies, including bin Laden and Taliban leader Mullah Omar.

The people who maintain such sites could be Al-Qaeda members, supporters of Al-Qaeda who are in direct contact with its members or simply like-minded Islamists. Like the Al-Qaeda members who communicate with each other via e-mail, they are difficult to identify. Using fictitious information, it is practically as easy to register a Web site as it is to create an e-mail account.

All of the semi-official Al-Qaeda sites except for that of Azzam Publications, a British Islamist bookseller, contain only Arabic-language materials, but these sites are hosted not only in the Arab world. In fact, many are registered or hosted in Europe (Italy, Sweden, England, Poland), Asia (Malaysia), or the United States. In addition to statements from bin Laden and Al-Qaeda, these sites feature, among other items, articles that condemn America, biographies of Islamists killed in battle, and biased accounts of the current war in Afghanistan.

An article on the Al-Maqdese site, titled "An Urgent Call to the Diabolical Americans," asks Muslims to "curse" President Bush and Americans with "immediate perdition." "I personally prayed

to God for it," the author boasts, "because the Muslims and I know that you are from among the most impure, unbeliever and abject peoples in the world. You are standing behind every heresy and crime, and behind every shame, impudence and trouble. You are the commander of the religious and moral weakening." "The Muslims know that America only wants to fight Islam and to liquidate everyone who acts according to the Islamic Shariah, because America knows that the biggest danger to it and for the Jews is Islam and its believers," states Mullah Omar at the Al-Emarh Web site, which promotes the Taliban. America, he claims, "wants to rule the world and to eat the wealth and properties of the weak people."

The Azzam Publications site features more than four dozen celebratory biographies of "Foreign Mujahideen Killed in Jihad." Most of these accounts were written by personal associates of the deceased militants, and many of the stories are accompanied by photos, audio clips, or video footage. These laudatory reports, most of which concern extremists killed in Afghanistan, Chechnya, or Bosnia, clearly intend to inspire prospective recruits to take up arms.

Al-Qaeda and its supporters provide interested parties around the globe with their view of the conflict in Afghanistan via sites such as jehad.net. That site, which describes itself as "a news network" covering "the latest events" and all of the issues related to "the Crusade war" in Afghanistan, complains about alleged American atrocities against Afghan civilians while cheering allegedly successful attacks by Al-Qaeda and the Taliban on American forces. Sites supporting Al-Qaeda have consistently claimed death tolls for American troops hundreds of times larger than those reported in the Western press, giving readers the impression that Al-Qaeda and its allies are holding their own, if not prevailing, in their war against the United States. The Al-Emarh site contends that the American media, in its propaganda "battle" against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, spreads "fake" facts and selectively shares information when reporting on the conflict in Afghanistan.

In addition to spreading their message online, some of the

semi-official Al-Qaeda sites sell hard-copy propaganda, including books, videotapes, and audio tapes. The Azzam Publications site markets one book edited by the convicted mastermind of the 1993 World Trade Center attack, Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, and another written by bin Laden's mentor, Abdullah Azzam. The Al-Maqdese site sells a volume called "Strengthening the Legitimacy of the Ruin in America," which uses Islamic juridical arguments to justify the September 11 attacks.

Supporters of bin Laden and Al-Qaeda openly acknowledge the power of the Internet as a propaganda tool. "Due to the advances of modern technology," notes the Azzam Publications site, "it is easy to spread news, information, articles and other information over the Internet. We strongly urge Muslim Internet professionals to spread and disseminate news and information about the Jihad through e-mail lists, discussion groups, and their own Websites. If you fail to do this, and our site closes down before you have done this, we may hold you to account before Allah on the Day of Judgment."

Efforts to prevent Al-Qaeda from using the Internet as a propaganda vehicle are unlikely to succeed. If a semi-official Al-Qaeda site is taken offline by the Internet Service Provider hosting it, then that site, or a copy of it, is likely to appear on the server of another service provider. "We expect our web-site to be opened and closed continuously," admits the Azzam Publications site. "Therefore, we urgently recommend any Muslims that are interested in our material to copy all the articles from our site and disseminate them through their own web-sites, discussion boards and e-mail lists. This is something that any Muslim can participate in, easily, including sisters. This way, even if our sites are closed down, the material will live on with the Grace of Allah."

Fundraising

According to the United States government, Al-Qaeda has received funds collected by seemingly legitimate charities. The government has so far frozen the assets of three charities that

use the Internet to raise money – the Benevolence International Foundation, the Global Relief Foundation, and the Al-Haramain Foundation – because of evidence that those charities have funneled money to Al-Qaeda.

The Benevolence International Foundation (BIF), based in Illinois, describes itself on its Web site as “a humanitarian organization dedicated to helping those afflicted by wars.” According to the site, “BIF first provides short-term relief such as emergency food distribution, and then moves on to long term projects providing education and self-sufficiency to the children, widowed, refugees, injured and staff of vital governmental institutions.” The site provides a bank account number where donations can be wired, information about donating by credit card, and a form that can be used to initiate monthly donations via automatic withdrawal from the donor’s bank account. In addition, the BIF site, which features photos of starving Muslims receiving food, offers information about corporate matching-gift programs and instructions on how to donate stocks.

BIF, which has reportedly had Al-Qaeda members on its staff, was founded by Saudi Sheik Adil Abdul Galil Batargy, a bin Laden associate, in the 1980s. Its current leader, Enaam M. Arnaout, who has been charged with perjury for claiming his group has no ties to terrorism, “had a relationship with bin Laden that dated to the late 1980s,” according to the FBI. BIF, which has raised millions of dollars a year, transferred money on behalf of bin Laden in the '90s, and as recently as April 2000, it sent more than \$600,000 to Chechnyan extremists trained by Al-Qaeda. The charity arranged a trip to Bosnia for Mamdouh Salim, who traveled to Sudan in 1994 to obtain radioactive material for Al-Qaeda. Mohamed Bayazid, another man suspected of trying to acquire radioactive material for Al-Qaeda, listed the BIF address as his home address on his driver's license. BIF has also been linked to Islamists involved with the 1993 World Trade Center bombing.

Another Illinois-based charity, the Global Relief Foundation (GRF), claims on its Web site to have been “organized

exclusively for charitable, religious, educational and scientific purposes including to establish, promote, contribute and carry out relief and charitable activities, projects, organizations, institutions and funds." In its mission statement, GRF claims to work in four areas: "Emergency Relief," "Medical Aid," "Advancement of Education," and "Development of Social Welfare." According to its site, GRF "values" include "Compassion" and "Fostering of Good Works," and the site states that "GRF will act with goodwill towards all people." Like BIF, GRF site has collected donations online via credit card, wire transfer, automated bank account deductions, stock transfers, and corporate matching grants.

In the '90s, Nabil Sayadi, Director of GRF in Europe, repeatedly communicated with Wadih El-Hage, the Al-Qaeda operative convicted for his role in the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in East Africa. Spanish authorities described the two men as "tight" collaborators who were in "habitual contact." Mohammed Galeb Kalaje Zouaydi, who was arrested by Spanish authorities because he is believed to be an Al-Qaeda financier, transferred hundreds of thousands of dollars to GRF via Sayadi. Rabih Haddad, who co-founded GRF in 1992, is currently being held on immigration charges, and Federal prosecutors have stated that Haddad, while traveling outside of the United States, met with terror groups linked to Al-Qaeda.

Based in Saudi Arabia but active in more than 50 countries, the Al-Haramain Foundation asserts on its Web site that it aims to "establish the correct beliefs" in "the hearts of the Muslims" and to "provide aid to the Muslims who suffer from catastrophes, disasters and calamities." The site lists 13 bank accounts to which donors can send funds. Al-Haramain states that donations are used to feed the hungry, give homes to orphans, and supply clothing for poor families, but it also admits that it uses its money for other, ideological purposes, such as building religious centers and sponsoring clerics.

Unlike the sites of BIF and GRF, the Al-Haramain site makes evident the militancy of the group sponsoring it. According to its site, Al-Haramain works to confront "ideological and

atheistic invasion.” “We may never get to the battlefields and be slain for the sake of Allah, even though we ardently desire that,” laments a 1999 article on the group’s Web site. Another article on the site, published after September 11, notes that “Islam forbids harming innocent people in any way” and contends that “Muslims should only use force when they are compelled to, and as a last resort.” At the same time, the article claims that it is legitimate to fight the “kaafirs” (unbelievers) because they “prevent the spread of Islam.”

On March 11, 2002, the United States and Saudi Arabia froze the assets of the Somalia and Bosnia-Herzegovina branches of the Al-Haramain Foundation. The Somali branch had links to Al-Qaeda and its Somali allies, al-Ittihad al-Islami. The Bosnian office of Al-Haramain was linked to al-Gamaat al-Islamiyya, a group of Egyptian Islamists allied with Al-Qaeda.

Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad: Terror from the Territories

Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) are the two leading Islamist terrorist groups operating in the Palestinian territories. The beliefs and structure of these groups differ in certain ways, but in many respects, they are similar. Both have strong ties to Iran and Hezbollah, favor the violent obliteration of Israel, and engage in terrorism. Both groups have staged attacks that killed not only Israeli civilians, but also American citizens.

Hamas, which is much larger and more active than Palestinian Islamic Jihad, is the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, which was for decades the leading Islamist group throughout the Middle East. Initially, following the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Palestinians saw as their first task the firm establishment of orthodox Islam in territory already populated by Muslims, followed only later by a violent jihad against non-Muslim states such as Israel. However, once the first Intifada began, the Palestinians changed their philosophy and began launching violent attacks against Israeli targets. In 1987, they took the name “Hamas,” which means “courage” or

“bravery.” The group is also sometimes known as the “Islamic Resistance Movement.” Led by Sheik Ahmad Yassin, Hamas has killed many hundreds of Israeli civilians in hundreds of attacks, including suicide bombings, shootings, and stabbings.

Founded in Egypt in 1979, PIJ rejected the gradualist approach of the Muslim Brotherhood from day one. PIJ has always considered the destruction of Israel through violence not only an immediate goal, but also the essential first step in the campaign to unite all Muslims and establish Islamic law worldwide. Unlike Hamas and other Muslim Brotherhood affiliates, PIJ does not have an aboveground, political arm that provides social services to its Muslim constituents. PIJ began operating in the Gaza strip in 1981 under the leadership of Fathi Shqaqi. Shqaqi was killed in 1995, allegedly by Israeli agents. Shqaqi was succeeded by Dr. Ramadan Abdallah Shalah, who currently resides in Syria. In 1990, Shalah taught Middle East courses at South Florida University in Tampa, where he also served as a director of WISE, the World and Islamic Studies Enterprise, a think tank that was connected to Islamic Jihad.

Planning and Coordination

Hamas

Hamas has long used the Internet for the planning and coordination of its operations. The group was designed to be decentralized and secretive, so it has nearly always encoded its internal communications. “We use whatever tools we can – E-mail, the Internet – to facilitate jihad against the occupiers and their supporters,” claims Hamas founder and leader Sheik Yassin. “We have the best minds working with us.” Israeli intelligence believes that Hamas uses the Internet to transmit maps, photographs, directions, and codes related to specific attacks, plus nuts-and-bolts guidance on how to best detonate a bomb.

A specific example of Hamas supporters using the Internet to share tactical guidance can be found in a recent conversation

about killing American citizens that took place in a Hamas chat room. One participant wrote that an aspiring assailant, who asked for advice about murdering Americans visiting Israel, should "run them over on the road" or "burn them in their cars using a Molotov cocktail." A second correspondent urged him to "spread an effective and quick poison that works on contact with places like door handles and telephones, or put poison in the food or on cups and plates." A third participant counseled him to dump "cyanide in the water" because it would kill the Americans "within 10 seconds."

PIJ

While facts regarding the use of the Internet by PIJ in planning and coordinating attacks are not currently available, there is evidence that the group is using the Web to provide practical advice to its terrorist operatives. The "Organizational Issues" section of the PIJ Quds Way site features a description of the inquiry methods used in Israeli jails and ways to resist them. Another PIJ site, Jihad Online, details the experiences of a suicide bomber who failed to carry out his mission because he was caught by Israeli forces. Presumably, such information is posted online for the benefit of terrorists who are planning upcoming attacks.

Propaganda

Hamas

The Palestine Info site, the primary Web site representing Hamas, is available in English, Arabic, Urdu, Russian and Malawi. It is registered in Beirut but currently hosted on computers in North Carolina. A second Hamas site, representing the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades (the armed wing of Hamas), is hosted on computers in Houston, Texas.

The English-language version of the Palestine Info site features a history of the group, profiles of its leaders, a "glory record" of its terrorist attacks, daily news reports from the Hamas perspective, political essays, and official Hamas statements –

including those that take credit for suicide bombings and other assaults. The Arabic version of the site contains similar material, but it also features a long, anti-Semitic diatribe that is unavailable on the English-language version.

The Palestine Info site is filled with violent rhetoric. In one article, Hamas political bureau chief Khalid Masha'al claims that the group has to "offer more" suicide bombers because "negotiations and compromise lead to the loss of rights." One of the dozens of statements on the site that claims responsibility for a suicide attack describes how the culprit, a 23 year-old, was "able to penetrate all Zionist security and blast his pure body amidst a gathering of invading usurpers of our land and country." Another statement, which alleges that Palestinian visitors to a prison were treated poorly by Israeli guards, specifies the guards by name, declares them "wanted dead for Hamas," and asks the Qassam Brigades to "carry out this order at any opportune time."

The Qassam Brigades site, which is written almost entirely in Arabic, is even more devoted to the promotion of terrorism. Claiming religious justification for its suicide attacks, the group calls them "death in the way of God." It claims its members are the true descendents of the original Muslims and are rightfully using themselves as weapons to defend the prestige of the Muslim community. Also on the site, video clips of statements from suicide bombers, photos and biographies of these terrorists, and songs about jihad all celebrate "martyrdom."

The Qassam site even attempts to recruit suicide bombers. According to the site, if you want to be a "martyr," you must "take the Quran as a way of life," be "committed to Allah," have the "innermost feeling" to "commit martyrdom," and be willing to "leave your wife, your parents and your child." If a prospective recruit has questions, he or she can chat, online, with a current member of the group, post the question on a bulletin board, or ask for a fatwa (legal ruling) from a Hamas cleric. "I want to die in the way of God," wrote one visitor to the site. "How can I come to Palestine and commit a suicide act?"

A third site spreading Hamas propaganda is that of the Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP), an American organization based in Illinois and Texas. According to the INS, Musa Abu Marzuq, the political director of Hamas, donated \$490,000 to IAP and served as the chairman of the IAP advisory committee. An Arabic newspaper published by IAP, *Al-Zaitunah*, is regularly delivered with Hamas communiqués enclosed. IAP also printed and distributed copies of the violent, anti-Semitic Hamas charter stamped with the local address of IAP. In 1989, at an event sponsored by IAP, speakers praised Hamas while standing behind a Hamas banner. One masked speaker described the "oceans of blood" Hamas would spill in Israel.

The IAP Web site links to the Hamas Palestine Info Web site, and most, if not all, of the items on the site that are attributed to "IAP News" are taken, word-for-word, directly from the Palestine Info site. The IAP site also features a photo gallery of "Zionist Massacres," more than a dozen articles that claim Zionism is racism, and a donation form that can be printed and mailed to IAP with a check or credit card number. Firm evidence of IAP transferring funds directly to Hamas has not surfaced. However, IAP has repeatedly called on its supporters to donate to the Holy Land Foundation, a charity that was recently shuttered by the United States government for supporting Hamas (see the "Fundraising" portion of this section for more information about the Holy Land Foundation and its activities). In 1996, an informant told the FBI that IAP has itself donated about \$3 million a year to the Holy Land Foundation.

A fourth propaganda voice supporting Hamas is the Virginia-based United Association for Studies and Research (UASR). This think tank, founded by Musa Abu Marzuq, produces a scholarly journal and holds conferences that attempt to justify terrorism. Ignoring the purposeful targeting of civilians by Hamas, UASR Director Ahmad Yousef, who co-authored a celebratory book about Hamas founder and leader Ahmed Yassin, has claimed that the "Zionist-inspired crusade" against terrorism uses "the injuries or deaths of some civilians in the crossfire" as an "excuse" to incriminate Hamas. Hamas terrorist

Muhammad Salah, when questioned by the Israeli authorities, characterized UASR as "the political command of Hamas in the United States" and called Yousef the "leader" of Hamas in the U.S. The UASR Web site, though it contains little content, offers contact information for the group, sells its books and journal, and provides summaries of much of its written work. One particularly troubling article on the UASR site praises the work of Holocaust denier Roger Garaudy, whose book is sold there.

Finally, Hamas supporters run an Internet hosting service. Though this service, InfoCom Corporation, does not itself spread propaganda, it has hosted the Web sites of IAP, the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development (HLF), and other Muslim propaganda outlets, such as the television station Al-Jazeera. On September 5, 2001, law enforcement agents raided InfoCom, which is located in the same suburban Dallas office complex as HLF. The U.S. government froze \$70,000 of InfoCom's assets because Musa Abu Marzuq's wife invested \$250,000 in InfoCom. Marzuq's wife, Nadia Elashi Marzuq, is the second cousin of brothers Ghassan Elashi, co-founder and board chairman of HLF and Vice President of marketing at InfoCom; Basman Elashi, the local chapter president of IAP and operations manager at InfoCom; and Bayan Elashi, CEO of InfoCom. The government also suspended InfoCom's export privileges on the basis of suspicions that InfoCom violated U.S. law by shipping computers to Libya and Iran, two states that sponsor terrorism. Despite these actions, InfoCom continues to operate. In fact, its Web site mentions neither the government raid nor the export license suspension.

PIJ

PIJ maintains two Web sites: Jihad Online, which is entirely in Arabic, and Quds Way, which contains a small English-language section. The Jihad Online site is hosted on computers in California, and the Quds Way site is hosted on computers in Georgia.

In addition to articles celebrating current PIJ leader Shalah and PIJ founder Shqaqi, the Quds Way site features photos and

biographies of "martyrs" who died in suicide bombings targeting Israel. The site also contains anti-Semitic and anti-American diatribes. One article describes United States history since 1822 as a tale of "invasion and control." According to another article, Jews have recognized "all of the sensitive points in the U.S.A.," allowing them to – "through their known slyness" – "control and penetrate" American society. A third article denies the truth about the Holocaust, alleging that "the Holocaust tale" is the result of "a suspected cooperation between Zionism and Nazis." In this article, PIJ defends European Holocaust deniers such as David Irving and Roger Garaudy and asserts that Zionists "invented" the "Wailing Wall" of the Holocaust in order to burden "the world's conscious" [sic] for "more than half a century." At the same time, PIJ also claims that Zionists actually wanted the Holocaust to occur so that Jews would be encouraged to migrate to Israel.

The Jihad Online site reprints articles from the PIJ periodical *Al-Mujahid*, interviews with PIJ leaders in the Arab press, and declarations made by the military arm of PIJ – the Al-Quds Brigade – claiming responsibility for suicide bombings. In its "About Us" section, the site contains the following quotation:

The last hour would not come unless the Muslims will fight against the Jews and the Muslims would kill them, until the Jews would hide themselves behind a stone or a tree, and the stone or tree would say, "Muslim, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him."

Fundraising

Hamas

In a message on its Qassam Brigades site, Hamas promises "secure handling" of donations "to the mujahideen" and asks each donor to use a "fake name" when sending an E-mail message specifying his or her donation amount. The message encourages readers to "donate with what you can to assist the cause of Jihad and resistance until the occupation is eliminated and every span of the Muslim Palestine is liberated." Listing

prices of bullets, guns, rocket launchers and dynamite, the group complains that "thousands and thousands of mujahid youth in Palestine long for carrying any kind of weapons to defend the Ummah's dignity" but "no one is giving a hand."

Money benefiting Hamas has also been collected via the Web site of a Texas-based charity named the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development (HLF). According to President Bush, the money raised by the Holy Land Foundation was used by Hamas to recruit new suicide bombers, fund the families of suicide bombers and support schools that teach children "to grow up into suicide bombers." "Is it not out of honesty and sincerity that we all be brothers to the martyr's widow?" HLF asked its supporters. "Should we not stand by her and compensate her children for what they lost by their father's martyrdom?"

The HLF Web site, which is no longer online, gave little indication that the charity funded terrorism. The "Mission Statement" on the site explained that the purpose of HLF was to stop human suffering "through humanitarian programs that impact the lives" of "disadvantaged, disinherited, and displaced peoples suffering from man-made and natural disasters." To further its image as a legitimate charity, HLF bragged about helping victims of floods in Iowa and tornadoes in Texas.

The U.S. government seized the assets of HLF in December, 2001 because of its ties to Hamas. According to IRS records, more than 10% of HLF funds in 1992 came from Musa Abu Marzuq, the political director of Hamas. Marzuq is married to the second cousin of Ghassan Elashi, co-founder and board chairman of HLF. According to the FBI, Marzuq designated HLF in 1994 as the primary fundraising tool for Hamas in the United States. He sent two Hamas envoys from the Middle East to Mississippi to discuss fundraising, and he personally convened a meeting on that topic in Dallas. Marzuq was expelled from the U.S. in 1997.

PIJ

The PIJ site Jihad Online urges visitors to donate funds to a charity named Jam'iyat al-Ihsan al-Khayriyya via three account numbers at banks in the Palestinian territories. According to a Palestinian Authority official testifying in an American courtroom, this charity is a front for PIJ.

Hezbollah: "Psychological Warfare Against the Zionist Enemy"

Hezbollah, also known as the "Party of God," is the leading Islamist terrorist group in Lebanon. Founded in 1982 by Islamist clerics under the influence of Iran, Hezbollah, which is supported financially by Iran and Syria, enjoys an annual budget of approximately 50 to 100 million dollars. The group has engaged in both political and military activities, winning seats in the Lebanese parliament while launching thousands of attacks on Israeli and U.S. civilian and military targets. In the 1980s, Hezbollah kidnapped American citizens, and in 1983, the group brutally murdered more than 200 U.S. servicemen by bombing their barracks in Beirut. Hezbollah is alleged to have killed more than 100 people in bombings of the Israeli Embassy (1992) and a Jewish community center (1994) in Argentina. One recent high-profile Hezbollah action was the kidnapping of three Israel Defense Forces soldiers on the Israel-Lebanon border in October, 2000; the fate of those soldiers remains unknown.

Planning and Coordination

Though no currently available evidence demonstrates that Hezbollah operatives are planning attacks online, the group may very well be doing that, and it is most certainly using encryption. Hezbollah spokesman Ahmed Jabril calls encryption "brilliant." According to Jabril, "it's possible to send a verse from the Koran, an appeal for charity and even a call for jihad and know it will not be seen by anyone hostile to our faith, like the Americans."

Propaganda

Hezbollah has established a large network of linked Web sites, some with versions in English and others available only in Arabic.

The official English-language Hezbollah "Central Press Office" site is impressively designed, though it is updated less frequently than many other Islamist sites. It features public statements from the group, transcripts of speeches given by its leader Hassan Nasrallah, songs celebrating jihad, and a propaganda film. The introductory article on the site is full of contradictions. It claims that Hezbollah is "far away" from "any fanaticism," wants to "establish peace and justice to all humanity whatever their race or religion," and "stretches its arm of friendship to all on the basis of mutual self-respect." At the same time, it notes that Hezbollah uses "its own special types of resistance against the Zionist enemy" – namely, "suicide attacks" – which "dealt great losses to the enemy on all thinkable levels such as militarily and mentally" and raised morale "across the whole Islamic nation." The Arabic version of the site contains more content than the English version, and unlike the English version, it repeatedly refers to Israelis as "Nazis."

The "Islamic Resistance Support Association" site complements the "Central Press Office" site. Throughout this site, the term Israel appears in quotation marks, reflecting the belief of Hezbollah that Israel does not, in fact, actually exist. The site documents the activities of the group with videos of its rallies and military operations, daily reports describing its attacks on Israeli targets, and an encyclopedia of its "martyrs" – suicide bombers and others killed in the fight against Israel – complete with photos of them and information about their families. In order to justify its violent activities, Hezbollah posts "legal" documents on the site that validate "armed resistance." One Arabic article on the site calls the verses of the Torah, Judaism's holy book, "a fundament in the building of the hate of the others." The site even borrows propaganda from Western anti-Semites, reprinting the writing of French

Holocaust denier Roger Garaudy and deceased American neo-Nazi William Pierce.

Another Hezbollah site offers content from Al-Manar, the satellite and cable television station owned and operated by the group. Established in 1991, Al-Manar describes itself as "the first Arab establishment to stage an effective psychological warfare against the Zionist enemy." Thousands of Palestinians watch Al-Manar, which has an annual budget of approximately \$10 million. The Al-Manar Web site presents video broadcasts of, and text based on, the station's English-language news broadcasts. One of the text documents found there was the original source of the lie that 4,000 Jews purposefully chose to not come to work at the World Trade Center on September 11 because they knew of the attack in advance. The Al-Manar site also features Islamist music videos, broadcasts of speeches by Hezbollah leader Nasrallah, and selected episodes of 15 of the station's regular programs.

Similar to the Al-Manar site is the Al-Nour site, which represents the Hezbollah radio station. Active since 1988, the stated objectives of Al-Nour include "exposing major issues that threaten" Lebanon, such as "the plans of Zionist imperialism," and "steering" Lebanon towards "the support of the resistance in order to liberate our land." Streaming and downloadable broadcasts of five Arabic daily radio news programs are posted on the site.

The site for the Hezbollah magazine Baqiyyat-u-llah, which is completely in Arabic, promotes the notorious anti-Semitic forgery the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, as does the site for the Al-Quds Cultural and Social Association, which is also tied to Hezbollah. According to the Al-Quds site, "the Jews see" the *Protocols* "as a basis for their behavior and as a place to keep their plans," and the *Protocols* expose "the reality of the Jewish soul, which does not carry anything except corruption." That site recommends that its readers read the *Protocols* "to know the Jews' racial and destructive way of thinking."

Evidently, some of the Hezbollah propaganda found online has

had an effect on the group's supporters. Mohamad Youssef Hammoud built a Hezbollah support group in the United States in the late 1990s, in part by sharing with recruits information downloaded from a Hezbollah Web site. In July 2000, members of Hammoud's cell were arrested for buying cigarettes in North Carolina (where they are barely taxed) and illegally reselling them, at a profit, in Michigan (where they are taxed more heavily). Hammoud funneled a good portion of his profits to Hezbollah and allegedly helped that organization obtain night-vision devices, surveying equipment, global positioning systems, computers and video and digital equipment.

Fundraising

On its Al-Manar Web site, Hezbollah urges visitors to donate funds "for the sustenance of the Intifadah." The site specifies three particular bank accounts in Lebanon to which donors can send money. The Arabic version of the "Islamic Resistance Support Association" site also features a donation page, though it is currently inaccessible.

Hezbollah also operates three Web sites for charities that help support its military operations: Al-Shahid and Al-Emdad, which fund the families of Hezbollah soldiers killed in battle, and Al-Jarha, which funds wounded Hezbollah soldiers. Hezbollah recruits are probably more willing to engage in terrorist attacks knowing that they will be cared for if they are injured and that their families will be taken care of if they are killed. Though some of the wounded and killed were guerrillas who targeted Israeli military personnel, others were surely terrorists who targeted civilians.

The Al-Jarha site urges donors to send \$25 a month, reminding them that it takes \$12,000 a year to care for an injured Hezbollah operative and his family. An article posted to the "Islamic Resistance Support Association" site describes the \$8 million in aid Al-Jarha gave to Hezbollah soldiers and their families in 2001 in the form of apartments, school tuition, and even chauffeurs and maids.

The Al-Shahid site is entirely in English. For a minimum of \$360 per year, a donor can “sponsor” an orphan of a “martyr.” For that money, the donor receives four letters from the orphan each year and the right to personally visit the orphan. According to the site, 28 percent of Lebanese children are orphans, and that percentage “is liable to increase as the country is subjected to the daily Israeli assaults.” The site also offers donors the opportunity to fund the widow of a “martyr,” at a cost of \$300 U.S. dollars or more each year. Finally, the donor has an option to support the education of the orphan of a “martyr” for \$300 or more U.S. dollars per year.

The Al-Jarha Arabic site contains information about a bank account to which donations can be sent, but neither the English version nor the French version of the site contains this information. Both the Al-Jarha site and the Al-Shahid site contain E-mail addresses that visitors can use to contact representatives of the charities. Most likely, such representatives can facilitate donations to these charities.

The Al-Emdad site, available only in Arabic, represents “The Islamic Charitable Society for Aid.” It urges readers to send donations to support orphans to a specific bank account in Lebanon. The homepage of the site states, “the Charitable Society fulfills its social duty as the armed resistance fulfills the defense duty.”

Pakistani Militants: Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Taiba & Jaish-e-Muhammad

Islamists have rallied to the cause of bringing under Islamic rule the territories of Jammu and Kashmir, over which India and Pakistan have fought three full-scale wars in the past century. In the past decade alone, thousands of people have been killed or injured in the ongoing conflict. India holds about two-thirds of the land, and Pakistan controls about one-third. The immediate goal of some Islamists operating in these territories is the annexation of Jammu and Kashmir by Pakistan, but others would like the territories to become a separate Islamic nation.

The oldest of the three leading Islamist terror groups in Jammu and Kashmir, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HUM) was formerly known as Harkat-ul-Ansar and is allied with Osama bin Laden. HUM has carried out attacks not only in Kashmir, but also in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and other areas. HUM operatives have kidnapped British and Indian citizens, and the group at one time executed random civilians its members pulled off a public bus. The State Department added HUM to its list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations in 1997.

A splinter group of HUM, Jaish-e-Muhammad (JEM), reportedly won the allegiance of most HUM members when it was formed in 2000. JEM leader Maulana Muhammad Masood Azhar has met with Osama bin Laden and JEM has received substantial funding from Al-Qaeda. Another leading extremist associated with JEM is Sheikh Omar Saeed, who has been convicted for the murder of American journalist Daniel Pearl. In October 2001, JEM claimed responsibility for a suicide attack on the Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly building that killed 31 people, and JEM apparently helped carry out the December 2000 suicide attack on the Indian parliament.

Allegedly joining JEM in attacking the Indian parliament was the most brutal of the Pakistani Islamist terror groups, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LET). LET functions as the military arm of the well-funded Islamist organization formerly known as Markaz Dawa Al Irshad, which now calls itself Jama'at ud Da'awa. LET has brutally murdered large numbers of Hindu and Sikh civilians in Jammu and Kashmir. For example, the group killed 35 Sikhs and Hindus in Chattisinghpura on one day in March 2000. LET has also engaged in joint terror attacks with HUM. One example is their massacre of 25 members of a wedding party in June 1998.

Planning and Coordination

As of yet, no specific facts have surfaced about Pakistani Islamists using the Internet to plan and coordinate terrorist attacks. However, considering the activities of similar groups in other locales, it is likely that these extremists have used – or

will use – the Internet in that way.

Propaganda

Though it provides little content, the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HUM) Web site makes a number of incendiary statements. On its site, HUM claims to have been “one of the front liners” in the Islamist war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. According to the site, “HUM's Mujahids shed their blood on every corner of Afghanistan during Jihad and also rendered valuable contribution against international conspiracies and to neutralize propaganda against Afghanistan, especially the Jew's Geneva conference.” Later, HUM “strongly seconded and supported” the ascension of the Taliban and its establishment “of real Islamic Laws.” The rise of the Taliban, HUM claims, “was not to the liking of the western satanic groups, of which the Zionists are on the top, as it did not at all serve their interest.” The HUM site asserts that “Jihad spread like a flash in every corner of Kashmir” when HUM arrived there in 1990. According to HUM, the Indians battling them in Kashmir, frustrated by the “bravery and pride” of their suicide attacks, asked “the Jewish Lobby controlled countries” – i.e. the United States and others – to apply sanctions on HUM , “but HUM stood like a rock against all odds and will remain so, if Allah wills it, in the future.”

The Jaish-e-Muhammad (JEM) English language site, now offline, featured essays by JEM leader Muhammad Masood Azhar and others affiliated with the group. “The Jews with their ammunition of conspiracies are urging and inciting America for an invasion against Afghanistan and Pakistan,” Azhar exclaims. According to Azhar, who has been imprisoned for his violent activities, “the shameful torture of torture cells makes death delicious,” as it was for the suicide bombers who attacked the United States on September 11. Another writer featured on the site, Muhammad Sohail Noorani, urges Pakistanis to “resist” the U.S. war in Afghanistan, which he calls an “unjust attack against our brothers in Islam.” Defending the Taliban, Noorani claims that those Afghan Islamists are being targeted by the U.S. only because they “denied accepting the ‘New World

Order' and have implemented Shariah in their homeland." A third author, Imtiaz Ahmed Anjum, exclaims that "every act of a Hindu is colored by cowardice and effeminacy," and he asserts that "whenever Hindus gained power, they brutally persecuted worshippers of other religions in general and Muslims in particular." Anjum castigates Jews and Hindus as "extremely rebellious and wayward towards Allah," and he claims that "Allah punishes infidels painfully at the hands of" those who engage in jihad, the mujahideen.

Available in Urdu and English, by far the most extensive and extreme of the sites representing Pakistani Islamist terror groups is that of Jama'at ud Da'awa, the parent organization of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LET). According to the site, "until Islam as a Way of Life dominates the whole of the world and until Allah's Law is enforced everywhere in the world, it is binding and incumbent upon the Muslims to fight on against the disbelievers." For LET, this does not just apply to some Muslims, but all Muslims. "All the Muslims who have capacity enough but do not take part in Jihad are, in fact, living a sinful life," the group states. The Sufi sect of Muslims – which believes in jihad as "inner striving," not war against non-Muslims – is rejected by LET as a "conspiracy hatched by our enemies." Relying on the century-old, notorious anti-Semitic forgery known as *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, LET claims that there is a Jewish conspiracy afoot, led by the "Elders of Zion," to "gain materialistic possessions" and control "the governments of big powers including America, Britain, Russia and France." According to LET, the nefarious Elders of Zion "masterminded" the September 11 terrorist attacks in order to draw public attention away from the criticism of Israel voiced at the United Nations Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa. LET also suggests that Yasser Arafat "be sensible and adopt the honourable path of Jihad instead of so-called dialogues." With regard to India, the group claims, on its site, that war will not harm it as much as a "decision to surrender," and it urges its supporters to "make full preparations for war to terrorize the enemy."

Fundraising

"Allah gives you the opportunity to take part in the struggle for Muslim rights – Jihad," proclaims the HUM English-language Web site. "Even if you cannot take part physically in the Jihad, you CAN help us by the means of financial aid." The site provides readers with the numbers of two bank accounts in Karachi, Pakistan to which they can send donations, and it offers an e-mail address they can write to if they need assistance.

Though it is not doing so presently, LET at one time raised funds through the Jama'at ud Da'awa site. A message on the site specified the name of a bank in Lahore, Pakistan, its telephone number and the number of the specific account in which money to support LET could be deposited.

Conclusion: Combating the Online Jihad

When considering how to combat Islamist terrorist activities on the Internet, people often think first of legal remedies. Generally, the different activities described in this report – planning and coordination, propaganda, and fundraising – are legally permissible to different degrees.

Spreading propaganda, no matter how hateful it is, is generally legal under U.S. law. Like the United States, some other nations, such as the United Kingdom, have laws protecting free speech. Still other countries, such as some in the Middle East, may not guarantee freedom of speech, but they do support, or at least tolerate, Islamist speech.

Much more likely to be considered illegal is the planning and coordination of a terrorist attack using the Internet. Islamists discussing launching an attack may avoid prosecution if they take no actual actions in furtherance of carrying out that attack. However, anyone involved in using the Internet to plan or coordinate an attack that does take place is likely to be successfully prosecuted under the laws of the United States or

another nation, even if that person did not physically take part in carrying out the attack.

Even more clearly illegal is fundraising by terrorist groups on the Internet, which violates the laws of the United States and those of many other nations. U.S. laws such as the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (1996) and the USA Patriot Act (2001) prohibit providing material support to groups identified as terrorist by the State Department. All seven of the groups covered by this report are found on the State Department list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations.

Legal considerations aside, it is nearly impossible, from a technological standpoint, to prevent Islamist terrorists from using the Internet. If they are restricted from one avenue of online communication, they will simply use another. The Internet is like a highway with a nearly unlimited number of "on" ramps, and no matter where extremists connect to it, they can reach the vast audience of Internet users across the globe. Similarly, it may be difficult to catch extremists planning or coordinating an attack if they are using encryption, steganography, or some other method of hiding their online activities. Even online fundraising efforts by Islamist terrorists may be surprisingly hard to stop: according to one report, the account name and number that donors who E-mail the Hamas Qassam Brigades are instructed to send their money to changes every two to three days.

Though the fact that Islamist terrorists are harnessing the power of the Internet is undoubtedly troubling, their use of the Internet does sometimes help those combating them learn about their beliefs, plans and activities. The fight against terrorism is likely to be aided by the discovery of relevant information transmitted by Islamist terrorist groups online, information that may be used to prevent future terrorist attacks.

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