iReport

ONLINE TERROR + HATE: THE FIRST DECADE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- In 2008, the Internet is the prime means of communication and marketing in the world. With over one billion three hundred million users, it offers the largest pool of potential targets for all those involved in marketplace of ideas.
- The Internet's unprecedented global reach and scope combined with the difficulty in monitoring and tracing communications make the Internet a prime tool for extremists and terrorists.
- The Simon Wiesenthal Center has been monitoring these developments for nearly two decades through our Digital Terrorism and Hate Project. Our findings reveal that as the Internet has grown, the escalation of extremist sites has kept pace in number and in technological sophistication.
- In April 1995, the first extremist website went online: Today, the Wiesenthal Center's Digital Terror and Hate 2.0 identifies some 8,000 problematic hate and terrorist websites and other internet postings. This represents a 30% increase over last year.
- Every aspect of the Internet is being used by extremists of every ilk to repackage old hatred, demean the 'Enemy', to raise funds, and since 9/11, recruit and train Jihadist terrorists. Of special concern is the use of the Internet used by the Iranian regime to justify terrorism and spread its influence throughout South America.
- Internet-based hate has inspired some of the most violent hate crimes in America. In this election year, the Internet continues to be used to demean and threaten African Americans, Jews, immigrants, gays and virtually every religious denomination.
- Extremists are leveraging 2.0 technologies to dynamically target young people through digital games, Second Life scenarios, blogs, and even Youtube and Facebook style videos depicting racist violence and terrorism.
- The Wiesenthal Center's iReport presents a 10-point action plan to help the family and online community to become more pro-active in identifying and curbing Internet Hate and Terror.
- We are launching iReport@wiesenthal.com to encourage Internet users to send our researchers links to hate and terrorist postings.
- The Simon Wiesenthal Center urges governments, Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), educational institutions and other concerned groups to launch multilingual sites to counter Al Qaeda,s and other extremist groups, ongoing, Electronic Jihad.

Communicate and challenge your kids: just because it's posted doesn't make it true or real. Don't entrust this exercise to the school. Get directly involved. *Talk* with your children about hate groups and other extremist organizations. Make it clear there's no place in your home for such. Ask them to share what they have seen on blogs, in games or websites that they think crosses the line; then develop online rules.

1. **Hate is never cool. That means it's *never* OK to download racist music or play online hate games —no matter who the target.**

2. **Help teach your child to learn to verify online postings. Go to websites that claim to teach people about various religions—but instead demonize its followers; show a page that claims to present *new* perspectives on slavery but actually seeks to whitewash a historic evil. Discuss a site that claims to teach about Martin Luther King Jr.'s achievements but actually seeks to tarnish his legacy.**

3. **Provide tools—on and offline that will help your child develop critical thinking. Make sure your child's school is also addressing these issues.**

WHAT TO DO ABOUT A HATE SITE:

4. **First, make sure your child understands the difference between legitimate criticism or analysis and hate that seeks to rewrite history.**

5. **If you agree that "the line was crossed", make the effort to contact the ISP. Urge them to abide by the *Terms of Service* and remove the posting and take action against the online bigotry. Involve your child in this process. Teach them words have consequences; so should actions. Push the ISP to respond beyond a generic email response.**

6. **If the web posting constitutes a quantifiable threat contact your local hate crimes unit and**

7. **Email iReport@wiesenthal.com with the link to the problematic posting.**

WHAT ABOUT DIGITAL TERROR?

Even before 9/11 Internet—accessed postings encouraged and taught young people how to build bombs and terrorize targeted enemies.

8. **Zero Tolerance for any websites promoting illegal acts. Any web postings teaching how to act as a terrorist should be immediately reported. Not sure who should be notified? Forward link to ireport@wiesenthal.com.**

9. **Since 9/11, the Internet has emerged as a critical component of terrorists and their enablers for recruitment, command, control and propaganda. Among its 39 Principles, Al Qaeda lists 'Electronic Jihad'. Young people are key targets of this effort, on blogs, in newsgroups and with the new 2.0 technologies. They need to let you know immediately when they come across any postings, videos, etc from Islamist extremists or neo-Nazi killers.**

10. **Go on the offensive. The Internet community, NGOs and governments need to invest in best practices, including multilingual leveraging of Internet technologies, in order to thwart the terrorists and racists campaigns to win over young recruits to their culture of hate and death.**

In a recent popular book, the historian of early Christianity Bart D. Ehrman describes the invention of the printing press as having perhaps the "most revolutionary impact on the modern world"; and then he immediately goes on to speculate that "the advent of the personal computer… may eventually surpass it in significance".[1] In many ways the Internet has already begun to reflect this significance, as it would be hard to imagine modern life without it. Yet among the positives provided by the new technology, there have also arisen a series of negatives, such as electronic identity theft or the use of cyberspace by sexual predators. Another negative aspect, and one that sometimes gets less attention, is the use of the Internet to espouse digital bigotry.

Today, with over 1.3 billion users, more people are online than ever before, and the numbers are continuously growing.[2] And, according to a Pew Report of 2006, 93 % of youth are online in one fashion or another. [3] While in general, the Internet has proven to be an unprecedented tool for communications and marketing, the growth of the Internet's usage has also been mirrored by a surge in its use by extremists of all types. The combination of inexpensive, instantaneous global access that is generally unmonitored and difficult to block has drawn extremists of every ilk and extended their reach far beyond their wildest dreams. This would account for the explosion of extremist sites. In April 1995 there was one site that was classified as a hate site; today researchers at the Simon Wiesenthal Center report about 8,000 such sites.

Impacting the Young

These sites target diverse populations, and emanate from a variety of sources from organized groups to anonymous individuals. Everyone is a potential target; no one is immune whether categorized by racial, religious, ethnic, sexual or gender identity, or by political or other types of beliefs. However, it is clear that antisemitism (in its various manifestations) and racism represent by far the greatest percentages of hate online. This hate, targeting real and imagined enemies, is expressed in a variety of ways ranging from the blatant and crude to sophisticated, pseudo-scholarly formats.

From the outset, the use of the Internet by bigots was meant not only to launch online attacks but also to recruit mainstream support respect and sympathy. More often than not, leveraging the fact that the Internet was, virtually from the beginning a young person's medium, they focused on teens and preteens.[4]

In one study such websites were described as using "persuasive storytelling" (i.e. "the use of narrative to persuade or convince"). Researchers noted "that 25% (of U.S. teens) have seen sites with information about hate groups, 14% have seen sites that teach individuals how to build bombs, and 12% have seen sites that discuss how or where to buy guns" Their findings lead them to suggest that "Although teens may be better able than younger children to distinguish between legitimate and unfounded content, some adolescents appear to take Internet content at face value, suggesting the potential for an immediate message effect."[5] The fact that one quarter of U.S. teens admitted to exposure to hate sites would lead to the belief that the number is actually higher. The study concludes that "… while it is difficult to measure the exact cause and effect, there have been too many tragic incidents, from Columbine to the Red Lake Indian Reservation to Montreal that show a link to hate and violence on the Internet." [6]

Online Strategies

A brief analysis of the methods and goals of these sites is very instructive. They have been described as using "civilized messages, humor… simple and persuasive appeals, claims of self-preservation and product advertisements', and take the forms of "educational narratives, stealth images and dialogue …metaphor, survival discourse and marketing rhetoric". As the researchers put it "The structure of the Internet and its tools are honed to whet the interests of the young, and entice the unwary to join an interest group, without revealing any racist information."[7] In this manner they can easily bypass some of the initial suspicions, and appear to be presenting a legitimate perspective. The extremists can tailor their message to the intended audience, and to appear to speak directly to their targets. Often their messages targeting youngsters use crude and explicit language. and at other times the approach is more sophisticated, sometimes even appearing without any overt racist

1 Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why,* Harper San Francisco, San Francisco, 2007, pp. 75-76
2 http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm
3 http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Teen_Parents_data_memo_Oct2007.pdf
4 Elissa Lee and Laura Leets, *Persuasive Storytelling by Hate Groups Online: Examining Its Effects on Adolescents, American Behavioral Scientist* 2002; 45; 927, p.928.
5 Ibid. p.929.
6 For example, Jeff Weise, the shooter in Minnesota, posted on a Web site operated by the Libertarian National Socialist Green Party http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,151214,00.html.
7 Karen M. Douglas, Craig Mcgarty, Ana-Maria Bliuc and Girish Lala, *Understanding Cyberhate: Social Competition and Social Creativity in Online White Supremacist Groups*, in *Social Science Computer Review* 2005, .23; 68, p. 3, online at http://ssc.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/23/1/68.

symbols or language. In any case, since there often is a perception, especially among relatively unsophisticated users that whatever appears in print (or in this case online) has to be true (or else it wouldn't be allowed there), website narratives are accepted at face value.

A key reason for the popularity and credibility of the Internet can be described as the desire "to find… information" and to receive it in an "easily digestible form".[8] Researchers have found that while more subtle messages have a short term impact, more explicit messages seem to have a longer lasting effect. "Adolescents found high narrative, implicit messages more persuasive initially… (and) persuasion resulting from low-narrative, explicit messages remained more stable".[9] The bottom line is, whether short term or long term, coded or explicit, young people—a key and growing online constituency—will continue to be prime targets of the proliferating digital haters.

Historic Roots of CyberHate

From the outset of the era of cyberspace, there were extremists who championed the potential of the new technology. George Dietz, a West Virginia neo-Nazi was already using the original BBS systems in 1983. Dietz's postings served a as model for later websites. They consisted of his own articles, as well as a library of writings by those affiliated with the movement, thus broadening both the range and variety of his site.[10] Dietz was followed in 1984 by the influential Louis Beam, who was responsible for getting the Aryan Liberty Net (based on the **Aryan Nations** ideology) online. A key figure of the racist movement during that period, Beam emerged from the Texas KKK, was an 'Ambassador at Large" for the Aryan Nations, and was also one of the founders of the Militia movement that sprung up in advance of the new Millennium. Thus his early promotion of online activism brought an equally early recognition of the importance of the new medium for the extremist movement as a whole. And, indeed, Beam was shortly followed by Tom Metzger, a veteran California anti-immigrant neo-Nazi activist, and others who understood quite early in the digital revolution that Internet could not only facilitate communications and marketing, but might also serve to link and empower members and sympathizers of the movement. This new phenomenon began to attract the attention of the media, with *The New York Times* already reporting in a 1984 story how some of the money stolen by **The Order**, the violent neo-Nazi revolutionary spin off from the Aryan Nations, was used "to purchase a state-of-the-art computer system to give The Order access to the Internet".[11]

As the digital applications increased, the number of users mushroomed. **IRC**s, (Internet Relay Chats) fostered direct communication, while **Newsgroups**, grouped by topic, allowed larger numbers of online visitors to feed off each other. Meanwhile, in a precursor to the post-9/11 digital terrorism, postings expanded from basic propaganda to instructions on bomb making, chemical weapons and other instructions for violence. Holocaust denier propagandists, always trying to put a scholarly spin on their antisemitism, began to flock to the safety of websites that allowed no room for honest discourse.

Throughout the late 1980's and the 1990's the militia movement was the most visible extremist manifestation in the US. The movement really came together in a 1992 meeting of leaders from various groups (including Beam) that was held in Estes Park, Colorado. The new movement tapped into the insecurities and anti-government sentiment fueled by events at Waco and Ruby Ridge, fear of what was labeled the internationalist **New World Order** and the looming new Millennium. Despite rejection of much of modern life and the feared (in reality non-existent) cataclysmic technology crash that was expected on January 1, 2000, they actually embraced the new technology, using their vociferous presence online to spread their anti-government propaganda and survivalist manuals for the looming millennial catastrophe. Their anti-government rhetoric shared with other groups like **Christian Identity** (an antisemitic and racist pseudo- Christianity) a major change in US domestic extremism. Older groups, such as the **KKK,** often portrayed themselves as the defenders of the authentic history, and true vision of our Founding Fathers. Their oaths were patriotic, as they swore "loyalty to the government of the United States"[12]. The newer extremists demanded a radical break. Beginning with **The Order**, they espoused a discourse of rebellion. Robert Mathews, the founder of The Order published a "Declaration of Independence", breaking any bonds with the US government, and a "Declaration of War" that said "We from this day forward declare that we will no longer consider the regime in Washington to be a lawful representative of all Aryans… We hereby declare ourselves to be a free and sovereign people."[13]
Their enemies list was expanded from Jews, minorities and gays to include federal and state government figures. This represented a sea

8 Indhu Rajagopal, Nis Bojin, Digital Representation: Racism on the World Wide Web, http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue7_10/rajagopal/

9 Lee and Leets, Persuasive Storytelling by Hate Groups Online, p.948.

10 M. Weitzman, Testimony U.S. House Of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security "Using The Web As A Weapon: The Internet as a Tool For Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism", http://www.wiesenthal.com/site/pp.asp?c=fwLYKnN8LzH&b=3577145, C. Berlet, When Hate Went Online, http://www.publiceye.org/hate/online_85/racist_bbs.html.

11 Berlet, *When Hate Went Online,* Wayne King, *Robert Jay Mathews, founder of the white-supremacist group The Order, is killed during an FBI siege on Whidbey Island,* **http://www.historylink.org/essays/output.cfm?file_id=7921**

12 Taken from a 1925 Klan oath at http://www.historylink.org/essays/output.cfm?file_id=7921

13 For the "Declaration of Independence" see Mattias Gardell, *Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism*, pg. 113. For the "Declaration of War" see R. Eaton and M. Weitzman, *The New Lexicon of Hate*, pg. 38

change in the discourse of domestic extremists, who now had a justification to resort to violent "resistance" to any governmental authority, or any perceived institutional or personal enemy. This shift would soon have tragic consequences for America, with, for example, postal workers murdered because they wore the uniform of federal employees.

HATE GAMES

The growing sophistication and radicalization of the extremists also began to manifest in the technological domain. From the mid 1980's crude versions of Nazi computer games began appearing. These games, with titles like **Aryan Test, Clean Germany, Anti-Turk test and KZ** (German for Concentration Camp) **Manager** appeared in both US and European websites. Designed to mock victims of genocide and racism and clearly aimed at younger users, hate games serve the triple purposes of dehumanizing the enemy, while entertaining and recruiting youngsters. An Internet culture was emerging that normalized violence, advanced it as a form of problem solving, and mocked victims who were invariably members of minorities. Tragically, these games continue to proliferate online, with even the older games continuing to attract visitors. For example, a more advanced version of KZ Manager can be found online today. This game uses allusions to the Nazi gassing of Jews, and applies that to a contemporary minority target in Germany—the Turkish minority. The deploying of such games enormously expanded the potential reach of bigots on both sides of the Atlantic.

Who's Who of American Racists Supercharge Online Hate

The Internet revolution was paralleled by the increased violent radicalization and online activity of the radical right wing. William Pierce's *Turner Diaries*, originally published in 1978, became easily accessible online. The hate novel describes a genocidal race war that ends with the murder of all Jews and people of color in the US, and was a major influence on Timothy McVeigh. McVeigh's bombing of the Alfred Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, in April of 1995, closely followed a fictional bombing of FBI Headquarters in Washington DC in Pierce's book.

The Oklahoma City bombing marked a new phase in the extremist's war against the US government. It also marked the start of the digital age of extremism, with Don Black's **Stormfront** website generally considered as the first extremist site online. A veteran of the KKK, where he was a colleague of David Duke, Black served three years in Federal prison for being part of an armed attempt to take over the island of Dominica. Black used his time in jail to hone computer skills, and in 1995 began Stormfront. The site quickly became the most important and largest white nationalist site online. Using the Celtic cross as its logo, **Stormfront.org** has a large library, an active forum, an Internet radio program and is currently available in ten languages. As of May 2008, Stormfront's Forum claimed over 131,000 members. Today, Black operates out of Palm Beach, Florida. Married to David Duke's ex-wife, he runs his own computer business.[14]

Black was quickly followed by other veterans of the white nationalist and neo-Nazi movements. Tom Metzger, a Californian who left the KKK because it was too moderate, had already been an innovator in media, pioneering the use of cable television to get his message across. Metzger formed **White Aryan Resistance** (WAR) in 1983, and his son John, helped forge racist skinheads into a movement in the US. Metzger and his son suffered a setback when they lost a 12.5 million dollar wrongful death judgment in a case involving an Ethiopian immigrant who was murdered in Portland by a skinhead who had been in close contact with them. Currently living in Indiana, Metzger continues to spread his propaganda.[15]

Dr. William Pierce, the founder of the **National Alliance**, also sought to leverage the recruiting and fundraising power of the Internet. Pierce, a PhD in physics, taught at Oregon State University before becoming a full time activist and organizer among hate groups. His group, the **National Alliance**, was based in a compound in Hillsboro, West Virginia until the time of his death in 2002. From there Pierce ran a tightly controlled organization that stressed neat and sober appearances. Eventually he became an elder statesman of the movement, with links to German and Muslim Holocaust deniers and antisemites. In, 1999, in a radical break with his prior disdain for skinheads, Pierce bought the largest skinhead music distributor, **Resistance Records**, for $250,000. This money-making machine and magnet for impressionable young music lovers gave Pierce instant access to organize youthful skinheads into a true movement. Next, he hired an ex- Special Forces officer to recruit in the military. Then his military expert, Steven Barry published a article called "Planning a Skinhead Infantry" in **Resistance**'s magazine (and on its website) urging skinheads to join the armed forces for training that would be useful in the future.[16] After Pierce's death, his legacy continued as of his writings can be found online in fifteen different languages.
Variations of **Christian Identity** and other extremist religions sprang flourished online, and relied on the Internet as a cornerstone for communication and recruitment. These included the **Phineas Priesthood**, a shadowy religion based on the Biblical story of Phineas (Num: 25) who took the law into his own hands and killed someone who the Bible said mocked and violated G-d's laws. Followers of this religion

14 http://www.usatoday.com/life/2001-07-16-kid-hate-sites.htm
15 http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=675
16 On Pierce, see his obituary in the New York Times, http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9504E5DC1238F937A15754C0A9649C8B63. See http://www.splcenter.org/intel/news/item.jsp?sid=21 for the article on "Planning a Skinhead Infantry.

have been linked to violent crimes, such as Buford Furrow, who murdered a Filipino postal worker and shot up a Jewish community center and held youngsters hostage in 1999.[17]

While there is no direct evidence linking Furrow to online extremism, the Internet was certainly being used to encourage overt violence. A young racist, Alex Curtis, used his website to distribute an article calling for a "Lone Wolf" strategy which asserted 'true believers' could best achieve their goals by staying under the radar screen, invisible to the authorities and researchers. The most notorious example of a "lone wolf" was Timothy McVeigh, who was unknown until his arrest after the Oklahoma City bombing. Curtis also posted a "point system", targeting judges civil rights leaders, and others. Curtis was convicted of hate crimes charges in 2000.

Another religion of hate was **Christian Identity**, whose followers believed they are inheritors of God's Biblical promises, while Jews are the spawn of the union of Satan and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Their religious vision sees a cosmic battle between White Aryans and Jews and "mud people" (people of color), providing a theological justification for not only racism, but a violent race war. This belief system had strong connections to violent extremist groups, such as the **Aryan Nations** and some militia groups.[18]

Still another group that built its influence and constituency online was the **World Church of the Creator** or the Creativity Movement. Led by Matt Hale, a young law school graduate and son of a policeman, the group pioneered online recruitment of youngsters and women. A special children's page used primary colors, balloon letters, coloring pages and other methods to reach young people, methods that would be quickly adopted by others. Hale's followers included Benjamin Smith, who murdered two and wounded nine (targeting African Americans, Asians and Jews) in a 1999 shooting spree in suburban Chicago. Hale himself was convicted of solicitation of murder and obstruction of justice, and in 2005 was sentenced to 40 years in prison.[19]

Following the death of Pierce (and Richard Butler, the longtime Aryan Nations leader) and the arrest of Hale, David Duke, the veteran neo-Nazi, moved quickly to fill the leadership vacuum in the movement. Upon his release from prison in 2003, Duke called together the remaining leaders to sign the **New Orleans Protocol** seeking to unify international racists and antisemites. Receiving a PhD from a Ukrainian university (known for its antisemitism) in 2005, Duke is now active in Russia and the Arab world (spending time in Syria, Iran and the Gulf States) validating a conspiratorial Anti-American and antisemitic worldview. Duke's websites currently include ecological and antiwar themes and even suggestions that he was the source of some of Iranian President Ahmadinejad's Holocaust denial actions. For David Duke, the Internet is a godsend, as can be seen in the advice he gave to his followers:" Develop computer and other technical skills. The computer and Internet revolution give us untold possibilities to awaken our people all over the world and to build our Movement.[20]

Another veteran of the hate movement is Gerhard Lauck. Born Gary Lauck in Chicago, he used the postal system to become the leading illegal supplier of Nazi propaganda to Germany. Lauck was arrested in Denmark and extradited to Germany to serve a 4½ year prison sentence. Upon his release he returned to Nebraska where he uses cyberspace to spread the gospel of hate. Using a front organization called the **NSDAP/AO** (which originally was the name of the Foreign Branch of the Nazi Party in Germany) Lauck has attempted to register domain names close to official German sites (known as cybersquatting) to promote Nazism.

Common Themes in the Virtual Neighborhood of Hate

While many groups try to stress their differences and uniqueness, there are some hate themes that consistently appear online. One of the most pervasive canards is an alleged Jewish conspiracy aimed at dominating the world. This theme is embodied in the classic conspiratorial text, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* which appeared over 100 years ago. The book was a source for every prominent Jew- hater, including, Adolf Hitler. Today, it is accessed online by extremists and antisemites, ranging from neo-Nazis to Islamic extremists to conspiracy theorists, via scores of websites and languages.[21]
While antisemitism is a prevalent theme among online extremists, no group is immune from attack and at the same time, no group is immune from having online extremists in their midst. Catholics, Muslims, Hindus, homosexuals, women, immigrants are some of the most targeted

17 New Lexicon of Hate, pp. 15-16

18 For a short overview, see The New Lexicon, pp. 14-17. A full length treatment of Identity is Michael Barkun's *Religion and the racist right: the origins of the Christian Identity movement*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

19 New Lexicon, p. 5

20 Mark Weitzman, Transmigration of Antisemitism: Old Myths; New Realities in Not Your Fathers Antisemitism, ed. Michael Berenbaum, Paragon, 2008., David Duke, From the Abyss: An Analysis of European Mankind's Existential Crisis and a Plan for Our Salvation, http://www.davidduke.com/index.php?s=the+coming+white+revolution&submit=go

21 The classic text about the Protocols is Norman Cohn's A Warrant for Genocide (1967). Dismantling the Big Lie: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion by Steven L. Jacobs and Mark Weitzman is a look at the current usage of the Protocols as well as a detailed refutation of the text.

groups.[22] Such sites are based on a combination of age-old theological extremism and stereotyping, and frequently rely on historical distortions. Others manipulate history to rewrite or deny it; including Holocaust deniers, those seeking to deny or minimize mass murder in Armenia or Nanjing, or those attempting to justify slavery and the repression of minorities.[23]

If the hate is old, what is new about its repackaging online As the journalist Ian Buruma wrote "One interesting aspect of the Internet is that it lacks a superego that filters the monsters emerging from the lower depths."[24] Simply put, there are no controls, fact- checkers, editorial functions or even internal inhibitions to control the flow of false information.

Finally, there is one key component of the Internet that inexorably draws extremists: The Internet's ability to eliminate borders and local laws and traditions. Buruma put it succinctly "Geographical borders no longer count" adding "New technology can be used to good or bad purpose".[25]

The bigots have succeeded in creating their virtual neighborhood of hate.

It is our responsibility to respond to their challenge.

22 For a closer look at one type, see Weitzman, The Inverted Image,: Antisemitism and Anti-Catholicism on the Internet, www.bc.edu/research/cjl/meta-elements/texts/cjrelations/resources/articles/**weitzman**.htm.

23 Specific examples of each type can be found on *Digital Terrorism and Hate 2.0*, an electronic report available at www.wiesenthal.com.

24 Ian Buruma, China in Cyberspace, New York Review of Books, November 4, 1999

25 Ibid.

Until the events of Sept. 11, 2001, most observers viewed the Internet as essentially a new, unprecedented marketing tool with great economic and social potential. While it is true that some terror-related material found its way online, few expressed concerns over the appearance of websites promoting hate groups, let alone its potential use by terrorist groups. But September 11th changed the digital world forever. Researchers found that the "Planning and preparation for the 9/11 attacks were indeed, facilitated by the Internet. Operatives engaged in the attack used it to communicate. Flight schools were researched through it, as were targets."[1] And, since the attacks, Islamist and other terrorist groups use of the Internet has surged. This situation was recently summarized by one commentator who wrote that "the proliferation of jihadist entities is strongly fuelled by the internet, the evolution of which was difficult to predict in 2001."[2]

In many ways, terrorists and their supporters turned to the Internet for the same reasons that brought domestic extremists online. It includes the ease of use, the unprecedented reach of the technology, the difficulty to monitor, censor, or control online communications, as well as its vast potential to empower the disenfranchised and the ability to belittle real and imagined enemies.

Al Qaeda's Electronic Jihad

The most notorious terrorist group is Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda, responsible for the 9/11 attacks and a continuing source of inspiration for "true believers". Al Qaeda was among the first groups to tap into Internet technology to help identify supporters and create new cadre of jihadists. It further revealed just how profoundly it grasped the Internet's ability to forge a sense of community while taking the war of ideas to the enemy. So central was the Internet to Al-Qaeda that among its list of 39 Principles of Jihad, number 34 is "Performing electronic Jihad:

Al-*Salem attributes paramount importance to the Internet as a component for Jihad. He calls believers to join the Jihad by participating in Internet forums to defend the Islam and Mujahideen, to preach Jihad and to encourage Muslims to learn more about this sacred duty. The Internet provides an opportunity to reach vast, target audiences and respond swiftly to false allegations. Computer experts are asked to use their skills and experience in destroying American, Jewish and secular websites as well as morally corrupt web sites."* But Al Qaeda is not the only group that sees the internet as a battlefield. Other sites such as Cyberwars, which describes how to disable sites that are viewed as "hostile to Islam", have now also joined the electronic battle.

Amongst the various components of electronic jihad are sites that specialize in raising money from donors around the world that can be then be funneled to various extremist groups. Following the 9/11 attacks the US government froze the assets of some charities that were suspected of funneling funds to terrorist organizations.

Other sites offer religious justifications for jihad, including those posting *Fatwas* (religious rulings) permitting women to be suicide bombers, thus seeking to overturn Islamic traditions that originally banned such actions, or sites that recruit "martyrs" for suicide jihadist terror. The aura of religious authority that sanctions such acts often finds its most receptive audience online. The attraction of this religiously-validated culture of death has been especially powerful amongst some young Western Muslims, often alienated both from the majority culture in which they live and the traditional culture of their parents' native lands. This leads to a process of radicalization in which "the Internet provides access to a radical form of Islam that gives seekers the virtual environment that they are searching for. This is seen as a purer and uncompromised version of the religion, and thus strengthens its appeal by creating a strong demarcation between the moderate version and its more extreme manifestation."[3]

As with other forms of extremist Internet use, utilizing the latest technology that appeals to younger users is also part of the radical jihadist strategic agenda. Terrorist groups like Hamas turned to the Internet as a way of reaching out directly and targeting this young and impressionable audience. Not only do they see it as providing for recruits for the future, but it also serves as a source for current terrorists. In their recruitment drives, these sites resort to games and other attractions to get their message across, along with the words of religious leaders and other authority figures. The numbers of sites that justify jihad have proven to be a powerful stimulus, with *fatwas* encouraging new recruits and reinforcing the commitment of those already in the movement.

And the online presence goes beyond websites. Media portals open up into discussion groups, blogs, videos and podcasts. Some offer a public face for the various arms of the movement; others are aimed at potential recruits, or current members or even tacit supporters.

1 *Networked Radicalization: A Counter Strategy*, A Special Report by the George Washington University Homeland Security Policy Institute, and The University of Virginia Critical Incident Analysis Group, p. 1.
2 Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihadi Studies*, Times Literary Supplement, April 4, 2008, p. 15.
3 *Testimony Of Mark Weitzman Before The U.S. House Of Representatives Committee On Homeland Security*, November 6, 2007

Whatever technology is deployed the messages and goals do not vary; they offer reassurance and justification by creating a closed environment where an online radical, non-traditional Islamic *ummah* (Muslim community) is created. This is strengthened by constant digital reinforcement so that the effects of these extremist ideas are magnified. The result is a web of extremist ideas that link the international network of jihadis.[4]

Leveraging "Humiliation"

All of the ideological underpinnings of the jihadist movement online are geared to the idea that a state of war exists between the jihadists and their opponents. The Islamists stay motivated largely through the constant repetition of grievances which supposedly portray the disrespect of the West for Muhammad or Islam. Examples include sites that referenced the Danish cartoon controversy or more recently the controversy over the Dutch film "Fitna", or that focus on alleged Muslim "humiliation" at Western hands in Israel, Lebanon, Iraq, Pakistan, Bosnia and other places. The constant repetition of these themes serve as an emotional spur that leads to calls to avenge the disrespect shown by the enemy.

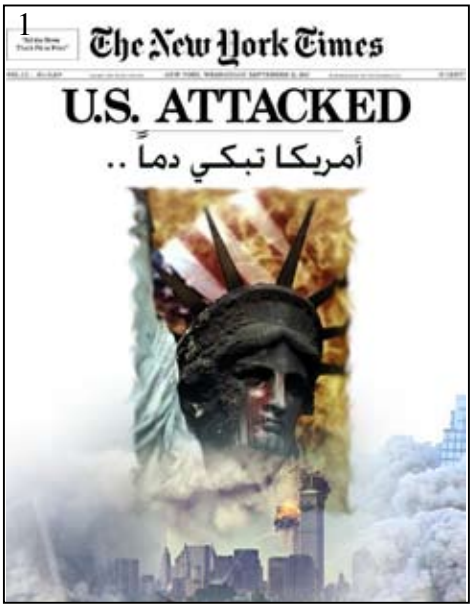
These calls for revenge go far beyond the theoretical and directly into the practice of terrorism. For example, the Internet has also emerged as what we describe as a "university of terrorism". This term refers to the proliferation of sites that literally guide one in the methods and techniques of terrorism. Thus some sites teach guerilla warfare tactics and strategy. This can include videos showing tactics used by snipers or suicide bombers or how to target specific sites including churches, synagogues, train stations, government offices or marketplaces. Equally chilling are the increasing numbers of sites that give detailed information on the practical aspects of terrorism, including, one called Jihad Encyclopedia, that are literally manuals for terrorism, On these sites the interested user can learn how to make bombs, plot kidnappings, use chemical warfare agents, or adapt cell phones and GPS' for terrorist purposes. Some of these sites target a specific conflict, such as Iraq or Israel and the Palestinian Authority, while others are transnational in scope, inciting and targeting victims in countries around the world, including the US. And too often such virtual terror schools include graphic examples, such as beheadings of captured victims that are aimed at demoralizing their opponents and encouraging their followers.

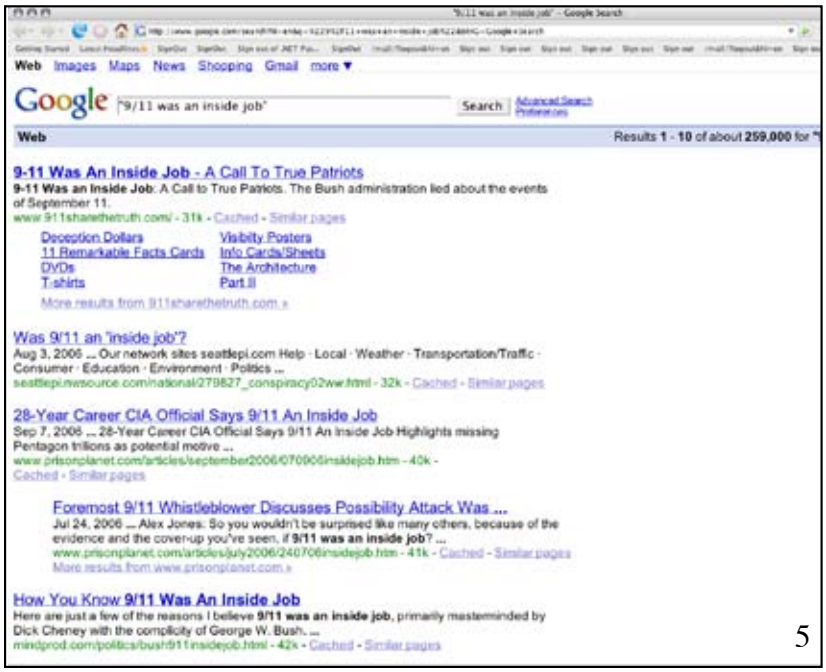
Finally while it is true that most of the terrorist sites online today are jihadist in nature, they are not alone. There are other groups that espouse or justify terrorism, including some radical animal or earth rights groups as well as groups or individuals who espouse violence against abortion providers. And, while the numbers of those involved in those campaigns are miniscule compared to the jihadist movement, their presence online confirms that any extremist cause can easily create a presence on the Internet that can lead to acts of real violence. New York City Police Commissioner Ray Kelly's recent description of the Internet as the "new Afghanistan," because "it is the de facto training ground" for terrorism should be a wake up call for us all.[5]

4 *Networked Radicalization: A Counter Strategy*, pp. 5-6

5 Internet is "the new Afghanistan": NY police commissioner, http://www.reuters.com/article/internetNews/idUSN1524872020070815?feedType=RSS&feedName=internetNews&rpc=22&sp=true

9/11





1. The Statue of Liberty crying blood over the 9/11 attack. From the pro-terrorist **Global Islamic Media Front blog**. • 2. Anti-immigration poster distributed by the white supremacist **World Church of the Creator** • 3. Anti-Israel poster produced by the West Virginia-based **National Alliance** • 4. Jihad Against the World appeared on line shortly after the 9/11 attacks. • 5. Conspiracy theories abound on the Internet. Thousands of websites, blogs and videos have appeared insisting 9/11 was not an Al Qaeda plot. • 6. A recent 9/11 conspiracy site.

GAMES

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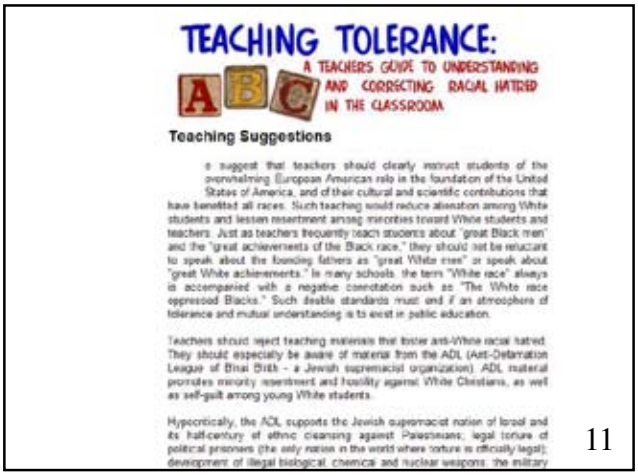
1. **Zog's Nightmare** is a single-player shooting game adapted from the popular game Doom. The neo-Nazi player confronts an army of hostile "Nigs" with multiple weapons.
2. **Border Patrol** is a shooting game that targets illegal immigrants as they cross the border from Mexico.
3. **KZ Manager**, one of the earliest Nazi computer games, has been upgraded for windows. The object of the game is to buy and kill Turkish immigrants and maximize profit from the remains. • 4. In **Kaboom**-The Suicide Bombing Game, players detonate the bomber to maximize the murdering and maiming of innocent civilians.
5. Created shortly after the 7/7 London bombings, **Mind the Bombs** has the player attempting to destroy the bombs before they go off ultimately the bombs overwhelm the player. • 6. **New York Defender** is a game in which the player unsuccessfully attempts to save the World Trade Center from approaching planes.

HATE

1. **Toledomudville.com** is a racist and anti-semitic site based in Toledo, OH. • 2. **Prussian Blue** is a white supremacist singing duo composed of twins from Kalispell, MT. 3. **God Hates Fags** is a homophobic site created by the Westboro Baptist Church, a renegade group not affiliated with mainstream Baptists. • 4. **Hungarian Warrior** is a European white supremacist site. • 5. A phony news article with racist overtones was posted at **cnnheadlienews.com.** • 6. An anti-immigrant illustration from a European-based neo-Nazi site. • 7. **The French Connection** is a conspiracy site that blames 'zionists' for leading the US into the Iraq war.

HATE



8. **Support Border Controls** is an anti-immigrant and antisemitic group based in Southern California. • 9. **The Islamic Thinkers Society** is an antisemitic, homophobic Muslim group based in Queens, NY. 66 Questions on the Holocaust is distributed by the Institute for Historical Review, the most active Holocaust denial organization in the world. • 10. **Protocolz.com** is an anti-semitic site based in Kuwait. • 11. **Teaching Tolerance** is the creation of arch- racist David Duke.Hate • 12. **Al Adanaa** is a children's site portraying Jews as bloodthirsty killers and urging children to join in Jihad. Al Adanaa is an Egyptian site produced by the Muslim Brotherhood. • 13. **National Socialism for Jews** is an anonymous site created to discredit Jews and Zionists, those who support Israel. The site appears to have been created by the owner of similar sites that include churcharson.com and fuckgod.com. • 14. **Blood and Honour** is an international Skinhead movement inspired by the music of Skrewdriver, the original racist Skinhead band.

INTERNET 2.0

1. **Second Life** is a virtual universe 'populated' by millions 'online residents' each week. • 2. Arch Al Qaeda terrorist leader Ayman al-Zawahiri uses the Internet to respond questions posed in online forums. • 3. **Dark Cincinnati** is an anonymous blog that highlights the crimes of African-Americans. • 4. **Black Monitor** is one of many anonymous blogs promoting hatred against African-Americans, including this attack on Senator Obama. • 5. This **Youtube** site is one of a number that feature the burning or defiling of the Koran. • 6. **Nationalsocialismo88** is a Nazi discussion group based in Latin America.

INTERNET 2.0

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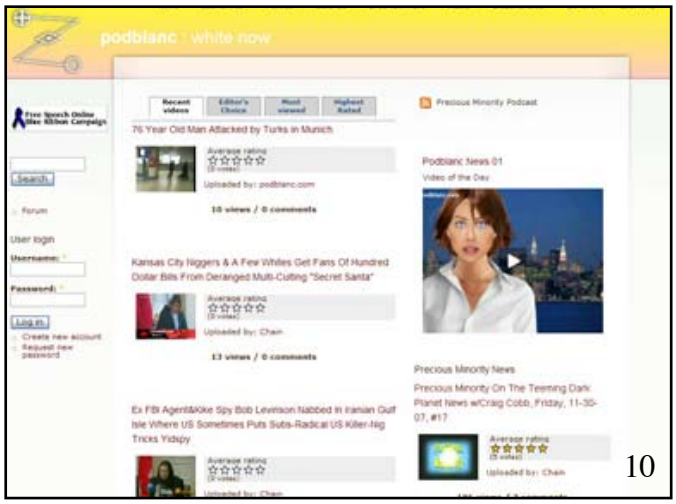

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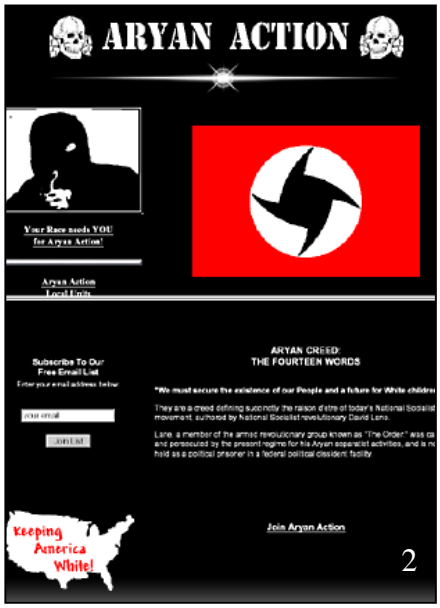
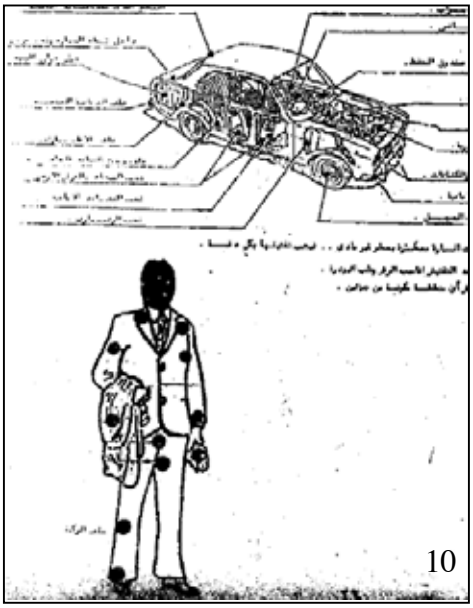
7. **Hizb ut-Tahrir** is an international organization promoting the establishment of a world-wide Islamic caliphate. The group has been banned in some European countries. • 8. Within days of the deadly terrorist attack on a Jerusalem Yeshiva in March 2008, a Facebook group praised the terrorist as a "Martyr" and a "Hero." • 9. **Eurospace** is a white supremacist networking site created along the lines of MySpace and Facebook. • 10. **Podblanc-White Now** is a YouTube-like white supremacist site. • 11. **Al-Firdaws** is a forum promoting the insurgency in Iraq. • 12. **Al-Saf** is one of the many discussion groups that distribute jihadist videos and help recruit potential terrorists.

TERROR



1. The **Nationalist Observer** was the creation of Alex Curtis, a neo-Nazi convicted of Federal Hate Crimes in San Diego, California. Curtis encouraged the "lone wolf" approach to terrorist hate activity. • 2. **Aryan Action** was an American group that promoted support for Al Qaeda and the Taliban to counter the alleged Jewish controlled Zionist Occupation Government. • 3. Shortly after 9/11, the **World Church of the Creator** created this resource page featuring terrorist's manuals and links to international terrorist groups. • 4. **The Nuremburg Files** is an extremist anti-abortion group that posts names of abortion providers and clinics. It crosses off the names of legal practitioners who have been murdered or otherwise forced to stop their activities. • 5. **The Center for Islamic Study and Research** is the official name for Al Qaeda. • 6. **Jihad Unspun** is a Canadian pro-terrorist website by distributing information about Osama bin Ladin, and other terrorist leaders. • 7. This image of an attack on the US Capitol building highlighted the UK-based **Supporters of Sharia** website. • 8. This image of a destroyed White House appeared on a terrorist support site. • 9. Islamic extremists created a 7-part instructional video on using hand-held GPS.

TERROR



10. **The Encyclopedia of Jihad** is a one-stop guide for weaponry and their deployment. • 11. **Long Range Shooting Simulation** is a legitimate interactive game co-opted by **Arrahmah**, an Indonesian terrorist- support site.• 12. **Conspiracy Against the New World Order** is a Latin American blog that promotes Hezbollah and Iran's President Ahmadinejaad while portraying President Bush as a Nazi. • 13. This image of an Iraqi insurgent prepared for a suicide bombing was used by convicted terrorist Younis Tsouli when he hacked into the Arkansas Department of Highways website and used it to distribute terrorist videos. Games • 14. **The Islamic Resistance Support Association** site promotes the Shiite group Hezbollah and justifies terrorist actions against Israel. • 15. **Reem Raiyshi** was a Palestinian mother of two, who was pressured by terrorist group to become a suicide bomber. She blew herself up at a checkpoint in 2004, killing four Israelis. • 16. In 2007, Hamas Television created a video about suicide bomber, **Reem Raiyshi**. The video ends with her oldest child vowing to "follow in her footsteps." • 17. **Arrahmah** is an Indonesian terrorist support site featuring news, a blog, software downloads and a discussion forum.

IRAQ

1. **SMS 2 US** is an Iraqi insurgent site that allows users to insert personalized messages in terrorist videos. • 2. **The Importance of Jihad Today** is an **Orkut** networking site created to support an Iraqi insurgent group. **Orkut** is owned by Microsoft. • 3. **Al-Boraq Media Forum** is an English-language discussion group supporting the Islamic Army in Iraq. • 4. **"Juba"** represents a sniper brigade in Baghdad created by the Islamic Army in Iraq with the intention of intimidating and killing US troops. • 5. **The Jihad Fields** are Waiting is an Iraqi insurgent site that asserts that the most feared weapon in Iraq is the cell-phone detonator. • 6. In 2007, a new insurgent group, **Hamas** in Iraq surfaced and claimed attacks on Coalition troops.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center • Museum of Tolerance

The Simon Wiesenthal Center is an international human rights organization that promotes tolerance and combats racism and antisemitism around the world. Its educational arm, the Museum of Tolerance, a recipient of the 2004 Tolerance Award given at the United Nations, is a world-class human rights laboratory and learning center dedicated to challenging visitors to confront important contemporary issues.

Since opening in 1993, the Museum has been visited by close to five million people including the late King Hussein of Jordan, Presidents Ronald Reagan, George Bush and George W. Bush, Israeli Prime Ministers Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, Benjamin Netanyahu and Ehud Olmert, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and Czech President Vaclav Havel. Of the 350,000 who visit the Museum each year, more than 110,000 are students.

160,000 front line professionals, including law enforcement personnel and educators, from throughout the nation have participated in the Museum's acclaimed Tools for Tolerance® programs. Because of its phenomenal success, the Center's New York Tolerance Center opened in Manhattan in 2004.

Construction on the new Center for Human Dignity – Museum of Tolerance Jerusalem project, designed by renowned architect Frank O. Gehry, will begin shortly and is expected to open in 2011.

The Center's film division, Moriah Films, produces documentaries on human rights and the Jewish experience. It has thus far produced nine films, two of which have been the recipients of the Academy Award® for best documentary feature. Its latest film, *I Have Never Forgotten You: The Life and Legacy of Simon Wiesenthal* is narrated by Academy Award®-winning actress Nicole Kidman and is a riveting journey into the life and legacy of Simon Wiesenthal. The film premiered in Jerusalem, and was an official selection at the Berlin and Tribeca Film Festivals. Moriah Films is now in production on its 10th film.

Headquartered in Los Angeles, the Center, with a constituency of over 400,000 families, maintains offices in New York, Toronto, Miami, Boston, Jerusalem, Paris and Buenos Aires and is accredited as an NGO at international agencies including the United Nations, UNESCO, and the OSCE.

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