The Internet at the Service of Jihad Organizations

Table of Contents

General

Al-Qaeda and other Jihadi organizations have identified the enormous potential of the internet as a public relations and propaganda tool, and a conduit for transferring operational information. The intensive use of the internet by these organizations received widespread attention in the report prepared by the United States Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs on May 8, 2008.[1] These organizations have shown impressive knowledge of the new technology, sites and software, which could aid them in their propaganda struggle. They, therefore, put considerable effort into bringing detailed explanations of the benefits to be obtained from these technological tools, to the attention of the surfers in Jihadi forums. The following review illustrates the extensive knowledge gained regarding the potential of the new technological tools, as well as the endeavor to publicize them to as many surfers as possible, identifying with the Jihadi ideology.

YouTube

The YouTube internet site was founded in February 2005. It enables users to download and watch video clips freely.

The potential of this site in loading Jihadi content has long been known to Jihadi internet surfers. The following correspondence clearly point to the awareness of this link and the desire to harness this site to the Jihadi propaganda machine.

At the end of November 2008, the Al-Faloja Jihadi forum featured a message posted by a surfer named Omar Abd Al-Hakim[2] headed: "Why we should invade

---

[1]Report Heading : Violent Islamist Extremism, The Internet, and the Homegrown Terrorist Threat: http://hsgac.senate.gov/public/_files/IslamistReport.pdf
[2] The writer claims to be from Syria.

YouTube and how?" He states this "in order to assist the administrators of the Jihadi forums Al-Hesbah, Al-Ekhlaas, Al-Boraq and Al-Firdaws".[3]

In his opinion, the Jihadi propaganda machine, which is aided by various forums and internet sites, is continuously attacked by the "Crusaders". He therefore points to the potential of YouTube, as a link which has a widespread distribution worldwide, and is a platform for exporting Jihadi visual content. He states that YouTube "is the largest of the known online global sites, which show video clips and is watched by millions of people." He adds that YouTube has proved itself to be an advertising alternative to TV with its high percentage of viewers, and even the U.S. President elect Obama used YouTube in his election campaign. He therefore proposes using the site as a platform for distributing Jihadi video films, which will focus on the Crusader enemy's casualties, material which is not publicized, due to deliberate White House policy. He says that showing these films will harm the enemy's morale and cause them embarrassment, as most of the surfers are westerners.

The surfer then presents a short review of the site's history. He particularly stresses its considerable success, but also states the main limitation, which is the impossibility of placing a video clip longer than ten minutes on the site. The source of this limitation, he says, is the legal debates initiated by large companies due to the violation of the rights of video clip creators. However, site users manage to overcome this problem by dividing their video clips into several parts.

The surfer then gives the readers a detailed explanation of how to make use of YouTube to distribute Jihadi video clips. As mentioned above, it is impossible to upload video clips which are longer than ten minutes. He therefore suggests a

---

[3] All these forums, with the exception of Al-Boraq, have crashed and are no longer active

number of editing programs such as: Movie Maker and PocketDivxEncoder, which are intended to help break up the video clips into several files of ten minutes each. He adds that a title should be added at the beginning and end of the clip, stating the name and address of the Jihadi site from which the clip has been taken.

At the end, the surfer asks his readers to "invade" YouTube, i.e. to become a member of the site and upload Jihadi video clips. He also requests surfers to publicize programs on the forum, which can help to distribute the Jihadi video clips. He calls the present debate "Invasion of Aid 1", a name resulting from the desire to aid Jihadi forums mentioned at the beginning of this publication.[4]

At the end of the surfer's presentation on how to use YouTube, he gives technical explanations regarding the uploading and downloading of video clips from YouTube, how to use the relevant programs etc.[5] One of the surfers proposes placing the links of the Jihadi clips uploaded onto YouTube, on the following blog: http://youtube.maktoobblog.com. He also suggests adding search words to the video clips. Another surfer mentions the blog http://isinews.blogspot.com which focuses on the Jihadi arena in Iraq.[6]

In an additional message, in continuation of the previous communications, the attention of the surfers is drawn to the media feedback, which the previous publications relating to the YouTube received in several newspapers worldwide.[7]
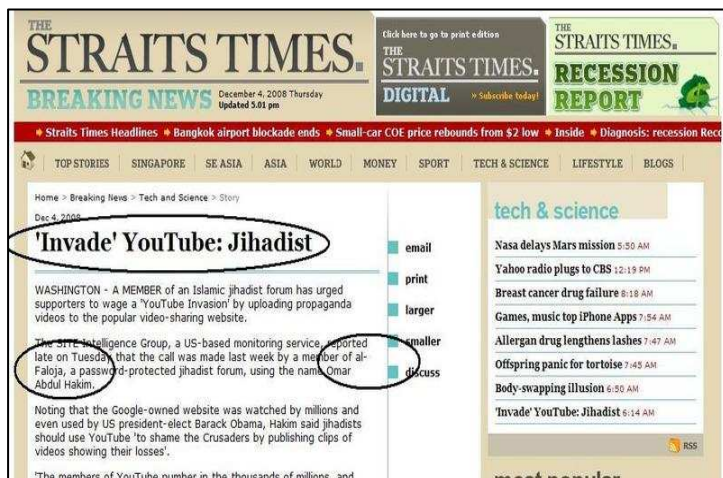
---

[4] http://faloja1.net/vb/showthread.php?t=35913
[5] See for example: http://faloja1.net/vb/showthread.php?t=35913&page=2
[6] http://faloja1.net/vb/showthread.php?t=35913&page=4
[7] http://faloja1.net/vb/showthread.php?t=35913&page=4

In this respect, another surfer states that the TV station Al-Arabiya even televised a report on the subject, which can be seen on the http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxzzVCiawWU link.

The surfer, Omar Abd Al-Hakim, discussed an additional publication relating to YouTube, but this time he requested removing video clips from the YouTube site, which harm the good name of Islam. He suggests registering on the site and stating in the appropriate place, that this is a video clip with content which could be insulting and harmful. The more surfers who state that the clip is insulting, the higher the chances of it bring removed from the site.[8]

---

[8] http://faloja1.net/vb/showthread.php?t=35913&page=4

On December 13th 2008, a surfer in the "Shabakat Al-Mujahideen Al-Electroniya" Forum, referred to YouTube. He said that there was a trend to block accounts on the site, which was causing the loss of a large amount of Jihadi propaganda. He claimed that there was group named "YouTube_smackdown", which concentrated on the site jawa report and marked the Jihadi video clips on YouTube as invalid. He therefore recommended the alternative site to YouTube named http://www.tubemogul.com which enables uploading jihadi video clips onto 14 various video connected sites. In addition, he recommended that surfers open many accounts on YouTube and advertise the clips in as many languages as possible.[9]

Mega Video

On 8 December, 2008 a surfer in the Al-Faloja Jihadi forum published a message regarding a new multi-file video site called Megavideo. He claimed that the site was a competitor of YouTube and the quality of the picture was considered to be higher.

The surfers' responses to this information were extremely positive[10] and one of them even stated that he had used the site's services. In an additional message, dated 19 December 2008, the same surfer requests the other surfers to "invade Megavideo" and post 3,000 Jihadi video clips on the site for ten days. In order for this to succeed, he asked 30 surfers to post ten clips every day for ten days.

He said that "one of the most important goals of this invasion was to spread Jihadi videos in as wide a volume as possible which will make it very difficult for the enemy to track them, so that if any person wishes to find on the internet

---

[9] http://www.majahden.com/vb/showthread.php?t=16065
[10] http://al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=37751

anything tied to Jihad or Islam, he will receive these videos as the first results of his search".

An additional reason is the desire to create a sort of "insurance" for the Jihadi video pool, which is being attacked by the west's electronic war.[11]

Facebook

"Facebook" is an internet site which operates as a social network.

The site was founded in February 2004, and is used freely. It enables the surfer to join a "social group" and to interact with other members of the group. The users can create their own "list of friends" and send each other messages. Facebook also succeeded in making Jihadi forum members aware of the site particularly as a propaganda weapon.

On 10 December 2008, a surfer posted a message on the Islamic forum Al-Muslim, which includes a tentative guideline for attacking the "Facebook" site.

He describes the site's characteristics and stresses its enormous potential. He states that the site is a platform for millions of people, and as evidence of this, he states that the bread strike which broke out in Egypt on 6 April, 2008, started following "a simple message which was published between the members of Facebook".[12]

He explains that his aim in writing about the "invasion of Facebook", emanated from the "lack of Jihad supporters and Jihadi propaganda on this site". In his opinion, the reason for using the site was first and foremost to reach the American people. Thereafter, in order to "reach the wide popular Muslim base."

---

[11] http://al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=38894
[12] The reference is to the violent protest which broke out in Egypt following the call in Facebook to protest the rise in the cost of living and to demand a rise in salaries. see:
http://www.metimes.com/International/2008/04/29/egyptians_use_facebook_to_deter_censorship/2094

The surfer adds that the identities in Facebook are exposed and open to all, but he explains that notwithstanding, the identity of the Jihadi propaganda activists should not be exposed and they should therefore use new email addresses owing to the security risk. The surfer requests:

"Using Facebook as a new propaganda resistance tool to embarrass the Crusaders, owing to the propaganda campaign being conducted against the Jihadi propaganda, its forums and websites. We will publish video clips, pictures, topics for debate and publications, which will show their losses, which have been camouflaged all the time by the White House. We will publish them and distribute them to their websites, by all means, we will publish them on their largest and most accepted websites. In this way, we will reach American public opinion, as well as the popular Islamic base, which is not exposed to reality and receives distorted and imprecise messages, through the media of the collaborators."[13]

The surfer adds that a group was formed on Facebook for this purpose, named "the Knights of the Support Invasion" (Fursan Ghazwat Al-Nusra).[14]
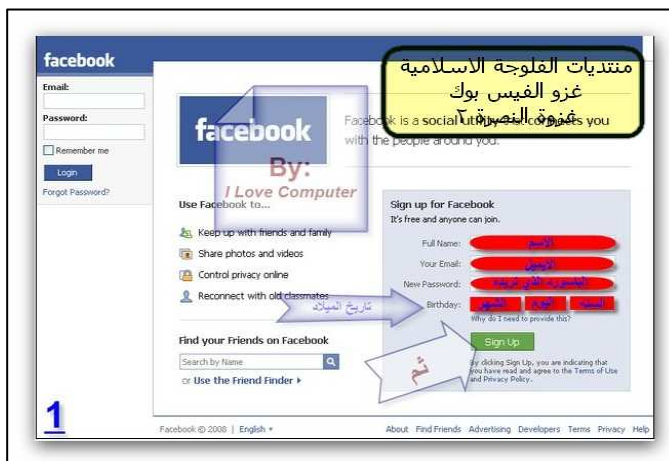

"The Support Invasion 2 worshippers of the cross, today we invade your website, and tomorrow your lands and homes"

---

[13] http://www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=321342.
[14]This advertisement was published in other Jihadi forums
http://www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=321342

Explanations on how to register on Facebook

On 12 December 2008, a surfer in the Al-Faloja forum raised several points for debate, which are intended to serve as a foundation for attacking the social network "Facebook".[15]

1. "I call upon the brothers who are participating in the invasion of Facebook, to choose a group on the site as a starting point for the attack. If we agree on one group and we operate from within the group, we will scare them even more. In addition, we must place someone in charge of all the members of

---

[15] http://al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=38227

the invasion, to appoint a kind of leader. This is the first step which should be taken".

2. The supervisor of the group must divide its members into "companies. The task of each company is to invade certain groups. In this manner, we will execute our desired attack on the site as quickly as possible".

3. "We need someone to design banners for us, which we will distribute on every Jihadi forum".

4. "We need couriers who will update all the Jihadi forums of the news and results of the invasion".

5. "We need a number of brothers, who are fluent in English and French, to translate a number of announcements and publications which will be published on the site, so that the attack will also be made known to foreigners. The latter will be supervised by a special team".

6. "We must publicize this issue in all the forums in order to bring together as many people as possible for this attack".

Another surfer disagrees about the first point raised and thinks that they should act within the framework of a number of groups, "as the users of Facebook have different opinions and a user may prefer to join one group without joining another. Facebook is similar to YouTube, the more groups and languages there are, the better. But the most important thing is that the group initiators join one group, so that they can consult each other and share the tasks between them in order to form other groups".

The surfer states that "after the largest possible number of members join, they can send messages to group members relating to mujahideen publications. He also stresses that "The aim is not to draw members away from Jihadi forums to

Facebook, but to draw Facebook members to Jihadi forums. Therefore, they must think of a proper title for the group and its content".[16]

On December 13, 2008 one of the surfers in the Al-Faloja forum claimed that the number of registered members in the "Knights of the Invasion Support" group in Facebook has increased and the time has come to invade Facebook. He therefore asked the members of the above group to write their names in the present forum, so that a distribution of tasks can be made, which will help determine what each member's role would be in this invasion.

According to the correspondence between the surfers, it was agreed that the number of members to take part in the invasion of Facebook, would initially be 40, and that those who wished to join afterwards would be able to do so later.[17] One of the surfers cautions the members of the group regarding a Facebook member called Osama Nasrallah, whom he suspects of being an intelligence agent operating on the internet.[18]

On 13 December 2008, one of the surfers posted a message on the Al-Faloja forum with the heading: "The Al-Qaeda organization and its supporters are in the final stages before commencing the attack". According to the message, Al-Qaeda supporters on the internet, have finished all the required preparations to attack the Facebook social network, by dividing into groups, which will violently spread all over the site.[19]

[16] http://al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=38227
  also see: http://al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=38152&page=3
[17] http://al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=38355
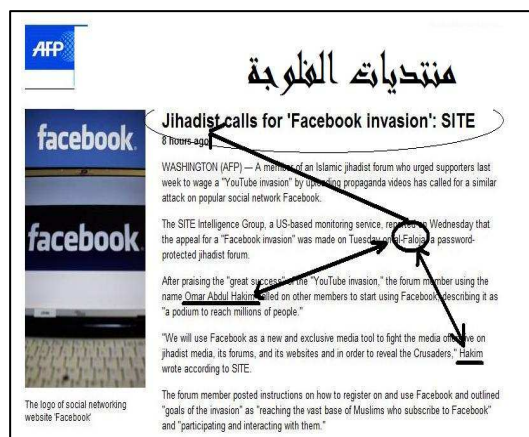[18] http://www.al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?s=b17a2f21f0dc9076bfa522a9056a51b3&t=38355&page=2
[19] http://www.al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?s=1f3a2bb04aa05129d82f7edb5438dea9&t=38437

In another message posted by the same surfer, he quotes an article published by the "Al-Sharq Al-Awsat" newspaper,[20] relating to the use of Facebook by Al-Qaeda supporters.[21] Hereunder is a picture added in this connection:

**A profile of several Facebook members
called Ayman Al-Zawahiri**

On 15 December 2008 another surfer on the Al-Faloja forum pointed to an additional report posted by the Site Research Institute.[22]

The report published on the SITE

---

[20] The article was published on 26 July 2008:
http://www.asharqalawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&issueno=10833&article=480234&feature
[21] http://www.al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?s=1f3a2bb04aa05129d82f7edb5438dea9&t=38437
[22] http://al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=38152 .
An organization which tracks terror activity on the internet. Its site is http://www.siteintelgroup.org/

On 23rd December 2008, a surfer in the "Shabakat Al-Mujahideen Al-Electroniya" forum pointed to the media resonance, which the debate regarding the planned "invasion" against Facebook had aroused. He stated that more than 52 newspapers worldwide, including a number of TV channels, had referred to it.[23] For example:

A report by the Fox American Network

The Spanish Mondo newspaper

---

[23] http://www.majahden.com/vb/showthread.php?t=16371.

The Swedish SVD newspaper

The Italian ESTERI newspaper

Another surfer in the Al-Faloja forum warned the group "Aid 2 Invasion" to avoid continuing with the present communications owing to the personal security danger due to the site being open to all. He therefore recommends using Messenger or emails to exchange messages more securely between the members. He also proposes using the software which camouflages the Proxy address. Another surfer states that until now, 106 members have joined the planned attack on Facebook, and 19 of them are prepared to attack immediately.[24]

[24] http://al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=38963

On 24 December 2008, a message was posted on the Al-Faloja forum by Abu Al-Baraa Al-Shami, who appears to be a senior supervisor of the "invasion of Facebook". He states that all the preparations have been made for the planned attack and that the "invasion" group is determined to execute its plan and will not be deterred by the enemy's attempts to ruin it.[25]

Jihadi Resistance Use of Instant Messenger System on the Internet

On 18 December 2008, a debate was started on the Al-Faloja forum, by a surfer named Al-Maghrib Al-Islami, who is the representative of a group on the internet called "The Jihad Battalion's Invasion of the Internet", regarding the advantages to be had by using the Messenger site. The Messenger has a widespread circulation worldwide and: "99.99% of internet users use the site". He stated that the considerable popularity which the site enjoys must be exploited to "form our own Jihadi Messenger program to penetrate homes worldwide".[26] In order to do this, the surfer clarifies a number of points involved in setting up this program:

1. Raising awareness of the importance of the propaganda system. Every Muslim must take an active part in the Jihad propaganda machine and work to advance it. Bin Laden himself stated that the heart of the Jihad system is the propaganda war. Therefore, the surfers are requested to respond to the present message or send a personal message to a number of surfers mentioned in the message, who will coordinate the requests to participate in the propaganda framework.[27]

---

[25] http://al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=39007
[26] http://al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?s=1f3a2bb04aa05129d82f7edb5438dea9&t=38474
[27] Names of those responsible for the coordination of the Jihadi propaganda machine :
al-Maghrib al-Islami, Ibn Nashfin al-Maghribi, al-Malkawi Layth al-Tawhid

2. We wish to inform the brothers who registered for "Katibat Ansar al-Mujahideen" in the Al-Hesbah forum, that the battalion has been absorbed by "Jihadi internet invasion battalion". They must therefore make contact with one of the four surfers mentioned above and identify themselves by the names which they used in the Al-Hesbah forum.

3. All the brothers who registered in the past in our battalions, but with whom we have not yet made contact, for one reason or another, are requested to send us the identifying details which are already known to us, via one of the four contact people mentioned.[28]

The logo of the "Jihadi Internet Invasion Battalions"

At the same time that the advantages of this program are presented, there are surfers who warn of the dangers inherent in using it. On 26 November 2008, a surfer on the Forum "Shabakat Al-Mujahideen Al-Electroniya" posted a warning that there were spies on the internet disguised as Jihadi members who were trying to catch Jihadi collaborators. He mentions a personal case of one of these collaborators who fell victim to this deception. He claims that an unknown internet user, who was an online spy, succeeded in deceiving one of the online Jihadi collaborators, by presenting himself as a fighter of a certain Jihadi offshoot, and to convince him to include him as a member of Messenger, Yahoo or Hotmail. When the spy was added to the collaborator's list of friends on Messenger, he succeeded in intercepting his I.P. number, to identify his location

---

[28]http://al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?s=1f3a2bb04aa05129d82f7edb5438dea9&t=38474

and seize him. The surfer states that 520 Jihadi online collaborators were seized due to online spies, who are now incarcerated on the charge of spreading Al-Qaeda ideology. He urges surfers to be alert to this danger and to avoid adding surfers who are unknown on Messenger.[29]

M.P.4 / M.P.5

In the messages which were posted on the Jihadi forum "Bayt Al-Maqdis" at the end of November 2008, one of the surfers criticizes the joint attack of the west and its Muslim allies, intended to harm the Jihadi propaganda machine and the distribution of Jihadi members' propaganda material and the closure of network channels such as the forums. He, therefore, suggests the technological device called MP4 or MP5 as an additional possible alternative in the Jihadi propaganda system. He claims that the use of these technological devices, will enable downloading of Jihadi technologies including Jihadi activities, songs of praise and sites dealing with the anti-Islamic war conducted by a number of countries such as Indonesia.

The MP4 device

[29] http://majahden.com/vb/showthread.php?t=15300

The surfer also mentions mobile telephones which are able to show video clips:

**Example of a mobile phone
supporting video clips**

The surfer claims that by using these technological tools, it will be possible to distribute Jihadi video clips also to mobiles belonging to the Muslim public "and by doing so the western, eastern and secular media, will suffer a considerable propaganda blow".[30]

The surfer implores other surfers to join this propaganda campaign and distribute Jihadi content from every place in the world. For this purpose, the surfers are requested to circulate songs on Jihad topics in MP3 format and relevant other video clips in a format which is suitable for Media Player.[31]

Summary and Insights

The internet and advanced media technology constitute, without a doubt, an important tool and support for the Jihadi propaganda machine and the struggle for awareness. The debate itself on ways and means to utilize these technologies in service of the propaganda system, enlightens us to the considerable thirst for new technological tools, which can assist in reaching new target populations, in widening the Jihadi ideological distribution and strengthening existing ties between members.

[30] http://www.al-amanh.net/vb/showthread.php?t=2418
[31] wmv type files .http://www.al-amanh.net/vb/showthread.php?t=241

The YouTube site and the Facebook social network are perceived by the Jihadi elements, as of now, as an additional platform to export propaganda material and as a response to the electronic war conducted by the west against them, which is expressed in crashing their sites and Jihadi forums and online pursuit of Jihad activists. Moreover, they believe that by using these two interfaces, it is possible to reach western populations, particularly the U.S. and open a propaganda campaign against them. This aspiration shows the Jihadi elements' desire to undermine the reliability of the western regimes in the eyes of their citizens and to psychologically pressure western populations.

Alongside the Jihadi elements' considerable capabilities and their quick aptitude to learn how to use the various technologies, their awareness of the dangers inherent in the internet can also be seen, i.e. the online tracking by western countries, which succeeded in crashing a significant number of Jihadi ideology sites. So far, it would appear that online Jihadi elements have succeeded in an organizational capability of harnessing existing media technology to the Jihadi propaganda machine, and at the same time, to take cautionary steps on the net.