



CYBER JIHAD – USE OF THE VIRTUAL WORLD

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“You have no need for new legislation; simply put into effect that which has already been legislated for you. This will save you a good deal of time and effort ... Everything, praise be to God is ready-made for use.” – Ayatollah Ruholla Khomeini (Kramer, 1980)

Introduction

Usama Bin Laden once indicated that 90 percent of the war against the non-believers is in information. Prior to, and more importantly *since* that edict, there has been an explosion of information flowing across the virtual airwaves as jihadists flock to the Internet to spread their messages of martyrdom, recruitment, instruction and education, awareness and community building without borders. This brief touches upon their use of social networking communities, cloud computing, how their messaging goes viral, the changing face of Extremist Islamists and their continued use of our infrastructure against us.

Jihadist online communities

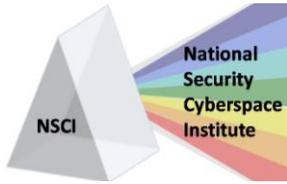
Jihadist online communities have operated for years, usually under the guise of legitimately-acquired software that provides ease of setup and use. The main software in use is vBulletin. This software runs



Figure 1 Standard Video Introduction

between \$195 and \$235 per license and supports unlimited users providing online forums, e-mail and many other features.

Many news agencies call the jihadist sites Al-Qa’eda sites, but in fact almost all of them are Extremist Islamist (EI) sites that may have Al-Qa’eda participants. It used to be rather difficult to enroll in these sites, but the restrictions have eased over the years and have led to English and German language sites in their efforts to expand their reach. Many aspiring jihadis and martyrs get their indoctrination and “book learning” on these sites, becoming inspired by the feats of the shaheed captured in images and video while anything Western is reviled. One of the standard video introductions – making martyrdom appear as a peaceful and positive experience – is depicted above in Figure 1.



What are the types of Jihad?

Over the last few decades, jihadis have perfected a series of effective Jihads against the non-Muslim world. There are many Jihads the Extremist Islamists (EI) use and they all support their ultimate goal of an Islamic world ruled by Shari a law. Some of them are:

Criminal Jihad جهاد الجنائية	Institutional Jihad مؤسسية الجهاد
Cultural Jihad جهاد الثقافية	Intellectual Jihad جهاد الفكري
Demographic Jihad السكان جهاد	Media Jihad وسائل الإعلام جهاد
Economic Jihad جهاد الاقتصادي	Military Jihad جهاد العسكري
Education Jihad جهاد التعليم	Political Jihad جهاد السياسي
Financial Jihad جهاد المالية	Religious Jihad جهاد الديني
Immigration Jihad جهاد والهجرة	Thuggery Jihad البلطجة جهاد

There are also other types of jihad that relate to the self that may in fact apply to EIs, but are general to Islam as a whole. What is universal with all these types of jihad is that they exist in one form or another via various Internet protocols creating the basis for Cyber Jihad. It is important to understand that the EIs continue to use our infrastructure against us as they have over the years during physical attacks and currently using social network software and sites to drive awareness and training, while building recruitment through online communities and various forms of propaganda.

What happened in Madrid?

March 11, 2004, 7:39 a.m.: the first of 10 bombs explode on four trains carrying commuters from Madrid to the city center. The blasts rip huge holes in the trains. Ambulances race to the scene and local hospitals are quickly flooded with victims. Passengers and passersby help rescue the injured, while hundreds respond to an urgent appeal for blood donors. Nearly 200 people were killed and approximately 1,400 were injured in the Madrid terror attacks. Eventually, the election in Spain would result in a complete regime change as voters removed the right-leaning prime minister and his policies as aligned to George W. Bush.



Figure 2 Madrid Bombing 2004

The Madrid bombing is an interesting case in the execution, planning and overall skill displayed by the assailants. The assailants were not tied to Al-Qaeda but they did align themselves philosophically with Bin Laden's beliefs. This group of terrorists acquired Mitsubishi Trium T110 Mobile phones as their tools for triggering the explosives and learned how to perform such tasks by downloading instructional manuals from EI vBulletin sites. They also acquired hashish and used it to trade for explosives from a former miner.



Keeping Cyberspace Professionals Informed



Figure 3 Madrid Bombing

Another interesting twist is their acquisition of law enforcement evidence photos they marked with their logo and bundled with the CBS News report that included the security camera footage of the blasts (Figures 2 and 3). The sequencing of the blasts as they funneled the victims towards the upper platforms was perfectly timed. It could be argued that they hacked the security camera system to trigger the phone detonators as crowds huddled closely together.

The group largely self-funded their operation through the sale of drugs. After the bombing, 125,800 tablets of ecstasy were found and Spanish authorities eventually recovered \$2 million in other drugs and cash.

Cloud Storage Sites

In conjunction with their use of social networking sites, EIs use many different cloud storage sites at once to upload their propaganda. Links from various EI sites, mostly running vBulletin, lead the jihadi to Word documents, Adobe Acrobat documents and videos of various types (Real Media, Windows Media, etc.) and quality are posted on sites such as rapidshare, 2share, megauploads and others. These are legitimate sites that charge a fee for service to upload documents of up to two gigabytes. The uploads usually include video compressed specifically for mobile devices. These videos go viral sometimes within minutes after posting, making their way to Facebook, YouTube and other social networking sites.

News Spokesmen

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan under the Taliban release news flashes as they occur from Afghanistan and the tribal areas along the border with Pakistan. The two best known spokesmen for the Taliban list their satellite and cell numbers based upon their areas of coverage (Figure 4). These numbers have been in operation for more than a year and are still active. The news flashes are shaded with their view of what actually happens and include a dose of exaggeration. What is unique about these news flashes is the speed with which they reach the Internet and then, go viral. Their ability to get the message out – first via the vBulletin-based communities – ensures their viewpoint is heard first and, sometimes, it's the only viewpoint heard at all.

<p>معلومات: الناطق الرسمي لإمارة أفغانستان الإسلامية - طالبان (قاري محمد يوسف أحمدني) للمناطق الجنوب الغربية والشمال الغربية في البلاد هاتف : 008821621346341 خوئي : 0093707163424 - 0093700886853 (نبيح الله مجاهد) للمناطق الجنوب الشرقية والشمال الشرقية في البلاد هاتف : 008821621360585 خوئي : 0093707010740 - 0093799169794 والله أكبر والعزة لله ورسوله وللمؤمنين اللجنة الإعلامية لإمارة أفغانستان الإسلامية - طالبان المصدر / صفحة (صوت الجهاد) في 20/9/2009 موقع رسمي لإمارة أفغانستان الإسلامية - طالبان</p>	<p>Official spokesman of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan - Taliban Qari Muhammad Yusuf (Ahmadi) For the Southern and Northern regions of the country - Tel: 008821621346341 Mobile: 0093700886853-0093707163424 Zabihullah (Mujahid) To regions of the South East and the North East in the country - Tel: 008821621360585 Mobile: 0093799169794-0093707010740</p>
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Figure 4 Taliban Spokesman Contact Information



Expansion of their message

Over the past several months, EIs have focused on releasing more videos and MP3s packaged as video that are either in Arabic with English subtitles or in English as spoken by former U.S. citizens (as well as their expansion of “other than Arabic language” media). The point is to demonstrate that their movement is global and any believer can join the cause regardless of race, creed or color.

Omar Hammami of Daphne, Ala. – better known as Abu Mansoor Al-Amriki – represents the Mujahideen Students or Shabaab in Somalia. Reported to be a former special forces soldier who saw action in Bosnia, Omar voices Al-Qa’eda rhetoric in American English with his own brand of mispronunciations and grammatical errors.

Adam Yehiye Gadahn – aka Azzam the American – has his roots in Southern California. Al-Qa’eda has resorted to using an American-born, former Jew, former Christian, converted Muslim (at age 17) to communicate their messages of Jihad (www.fbi.gov/wanted/terrorists/gadahn_a.htm). Gadahn, a “reformed” heavy metal rocker, has perfected his Arabic over the years and is rumored to be the technical expert behind As-Sahab Media (The Cloud Media) and the translator for many previous videos and MP3s from Zawahiri and Bin Laden.

Who owns it?

The ease of use of the vBulletin-based communities makes it a natural choice for jihadi communities. The software holds together well and provides an array of functions that make it the tool of choice for jihadi awareness, training and communication. Their use of this tool far outweighs the Web 2.0 usage within corporate America. In fact, their use of Web 2.0 technology is the stuff dreams are made of for corporate CISOs who wish their awareness messages could follow such a viral path. If security awareness and training would elicit the same level of participation and interest, we would have very few security issues in our corporate IT environments.

I decided I had to find out who owns vBulletin. vBulletin started as Jelsoft in 1999, located 90 kilometers west of London. Jelsoft was purchased by a U.S. company in June 2007 that went IPO in July of the same year. Internet Brands located in El Segundo, Calif., may be best known for such online sites as bargainist.com, wikitravel.com, carsdirect.com and autos.com. Each of these sites have won some sort of Web award over the years. It is my estimation that vBulletin would be voted the Best Jihadi Social Networking Tool by As-Sahab Media if given the chance.

Institution Name
Capital World Investors
AWM Investment Company, Inc.
RS Investments
Vanguard Group, Inc.
Barclays Global Investors, N.A.
Fidelity Management & Research
Soros Fund Management, L.L.C.
Dimensional Fund Advisors, LP
State Street Global Advisors (US)
Lee Munder Investments, Ltd.
TIAA-CREF
Sterling Johnston Capital Management, L.P.
Northern Trust Investments, N.A.
Millennium Management, L.L.C.
D. E. Shaw & Co., L.P.

Figure 3 Institutional Investors



With little effort, it is easy to find out who really owns vBulletin. The Internet Brands Web site lists the corporate officers and board members – some of whom are well known throughout America. What is most interesting is that the true ownership lies with each and every one of us who invests in mutual funds and stocks. Come to find out, I own some of vBulletin through various funds such as TIAA-CREF and other institutional investors (Figure 5). As a true example of their ability to take our infrastructure and use it against us, the EIs demonstrate again that what we can develop, they can use and use to its fullest potential, whether for good or nefarious purposes. It is apropos that we would have investments in this tool.

Summary

The EIs use of the Internet and various technologies as methods to rapidly communicate their propaganda is a modern model for information dissemination and community expansion. Social networking sites and Web 2.0 technologies provide the platforms for training, awareness and education that goes viral as quickly as data can be uploaded. The past several months demonstrate their ability to continually mature their methods while attempting to demonstrate that their appeal is worldwide. Since the days of Irhabi007¹, the EIs have flocked to vBulletin. Its use has become second nature to members due to its monopolistic lock for online community building. Its use is also representative of the continued facilitation by Western infrastructure as the tool of choice to spread their perverted religious views.

About the Author

Jeff Bardin, ITSolutions, has held Top Secret clearances while breaking codes and ciphers and performing Arabic language translations serving in the U.S. Air Force and at the National Security Agency. He also served as an Armored Scout Platoon Leader and Army officer. He has worked in leadership positions for Fortune 100 organizations. Bardin also has international experience in the greater Mediterranean region and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He received the 2007 RSA Conference award for Excellence in the Field of Security Practices. The Bardin-led security team also won the 2007 SC Magazine Award for Best Security Team. Bardin has served as the CSO/CISO for Fortune 1000 firms and is the principal for ITSolutions, specializing in information assurance and cyber intelligence with a Middle East focus. Bardin holds holds CISSP, CISM, CHS and NSA IAM certifications.

¹ Younis Tsouli, (aka Irhabi007 – Terrorist 007) a 22-year-old arrested in Westminster, outside of London, in 2005 for using cyberspace to share intelligence information, create online communities and post videos and other information.