TESTIMONY

The Use of the Internet By Islamic Extremists

BRUCE HOFFMAN

RAND
CORPORATION

Dr. Bruce Hoffman[1]
The RAND Corporation

The Use of the Internet by Islamic Extremists[2]

Before the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence
United States House of Representatives

May 4, 2006

A few hours after the first American air strikes against Afghanistan began on 7 October 2001, a pre-recorded videotape was broadcast around the world. A tall, skinny man with a long, scraggily beard, wearing a camouflage fatigue jacket and the headdress of a desert tribesman, with an AK-47 assault rifle at his side, stood before a rocky backdrop. In measured, yet defiant, language, Usama bin Laden again declared war on the United States. Bin Laden's dramatic television appearance provided stunning confirmation of just how sophisticated terrorist communications in the 21st Century have become. In contrast to the jerky, often amateurish videos or even older Super-8 film recordings typical of even the more communications savvy terrorists of the past, bin Laden's pre-recorded statement was remarkable for both its excellent quality and masterful timing. Professionally produced, shot, and edited; the clip was masterfully packaged and queued to go on air as soon as the anticipated U.S. air strikes commenced that fateful Sunday.[3]

For bin Laden and his followers the weapons of terrorism are no longer simply the guns and bombs that they always have been, but now include the mini-cam and videotape, editing suite and attendant production facilities; professionally produced and mass-marketed CD-Roms and DVDs; and, most critically, the lap-top and desk-top computers, CD burners and e-mail accounts, and Internet and worldwide web access that have defined the information revolution today. Indeed, in recent years, the art of terrorist communication has evolved to a point where the terrorists themselves can now control the entire production process: determining the content, context and medium over which their message is projected; and towards precisely the audience (or multiple audiences) they seek to reach. The implications of this development are enormous: challenging the monopoly over mass communication of the terrorist message long exercised by

---

[1] The opinions and conclusions expressed in this testimony are the author's alone and should not be interpreted as representing those of RAND or any of the sponsors of its research. This product is part of the RAND Corporation testimony series. RAND testimonies record testimony presented by RAND associates to federal, state, or local legislative committees; government-appointed commissions and panels; and private review and oversight bodies. The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization providing objective analysis and effective solutions that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world. RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors.
[2] This testimony in part incorporates material to be published in the revised and expanded edition of the author's book, _Inside Terrorism_, 2nd edition (NY; Columbia University Press, July 2006).
[3] Mohammed El-Nawawy and Adel Iskandar, _Al-Jazeera: The Story of the Network That Is Rattling Governments and Redefining Modern Journalism_ (Cambridge, MA: Westview, 2003), pp. 143, & 146-147.

commercial and state-owned broadcasting outlets. A new information revolution has occurred to empower these movements with the ability to shape and disseminate their own message in their own way: enabling them to bypass completely traditional, established media outlets. As Tina Brown, the doyenne of post-modern media, has pointed out: the "conjunction of 21st-century Internet speed and 12th-century fanaticism has turned our world into a tinderbox."[4]

Violence as Communication

One of the enduring axioms of terrorism is that it is designed to generate publicity and attract attention to the terrorists and their cause. Terrorism is widely seen as a violent act that is conceived specifically to attract attention and then, through the publicity it generates, to communicate a message.[5] The terrorist must parlay this illumination (e.g., publicity) into a more effective vehicle of elucidation (propaganda). The centrality of propaganda[6] to this communications process and its importance to the terrorist is self-evident.[7] As a 1991 RAND study on this subject observed,

> Propaganda grants authority to its makers. In the first place, simply by demonstrating its ability to disseminate information that the government has banned, a guerrilla group proves that it is a viable force. Second, once a group has the people's ears and eyes it can manipulate their minds, causing them to act as they not might otherwise; or if it does not work as effectively as this, its messages at least command the attention of those who read, hear or see them. In words and pictures, those whose plans are hidden from public view can portray themselves any way they please. Furthermore, if appearing to play a particular role can win support, propaganda will help these guerrillas to become in fact the powerful forces that they claim to be.[8]

Through propaganda, terrorists seek to communicate a particular message to a particular target audience. The exact purpose of these communications can vary, depending upon the message

---

[4] Tina Brown, "Death by Error," *Washington Post*, 19 May 2005.
[5] Alex P. Schmid and Janny de Graaf, *Violence As Communication: Insurgent Terrorism and the Western News Media* (London & Beverly Hills, Sage, 1982), p. 9.
[6] For the purposes of this study, the definition of propaganda used is that of the Institute for Propaganda Analysis cited in Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes* (Trans. Konrad Kellen and Jean Lerner) (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), pp. xi-xii: "Propaganda is the expression of opinion or actions carried out deliberately by individuals or groups with a view to influencing the opinions or actions of other individuals or groups for predetermined ends and through psychological manipulations."
[7] As Ellul notes, "Propaganda is made, first of all, because of a will to action, for the purpose of effectively arming policy and giving irresistible power to its decisions." *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, p. x.
[8] Christina Meyer*, Underground Voices: Insurgent Propaganda in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Peru* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1991, N-3299-USDP),p. 2.

and the target audience(s) to whom they are directed. It can be didactic——designed to inform, educate, solicit support (whether material, financial or spiritual) and ultimately rally the masses behind the insurgents or terrorists. It can be a vehicle for recruitment——meant to win new converts to the cause or replenish the ranks of depleted fighters. But it can also be deliberately coercive——conceived to promote or ensure compliance through threat or blandishment. Further, its intents can transcend mere tactical coercion and seek to intimidate strategically: that is, to undermine popular confidence in government and leadership and thereby attempt to paralyze with fear one's opponents by trumpeting the terrorists' ability to strike at will and the government and security's forces inability to provide effective defense or protection. Finally, it can serve an entirely internal function——what has been termed "auto propaganda"——when it is directed towards members of the terrorist group in order to strengthen morale, dampen dissent or to justify and legitimize or explain particularly controversial decisions or operations.[9]

In sum, propaganda is directed towards a committed audience to strengthen resolve or towards an uncommitted audience to win sympathy and support. It can be variously focused on the terrorists' or insurgents' actual or would-be constituents, the public at large, the enemy government and its bureaucratic minions and security forces or even inwardly at the underground fighters themselves as a means to promote and enhance internal cohesion and morale.

Terrorist and Insurgent Use of the Internet

Few technological innovations have had the impact of the internet and worldwide web. Beyond any doubt, in a comparatively short span of time, it has revolutionized communications, enabling the rapid (often in real-time), pervasive and, most important, inexpensive exchange of information worldwide. In terms of political activism, for the preceding reasons, it has been something of a godsend. It provides an effective way for groups to promote what some observers call a "global dialectic"——where awakening, awareness, activism and radicalism can be stimulated at a local level and then mobilized into a wider process of dissent and protest.[10] "Groups of any size, from two to millions," Professor Dorothy E. Denning of Georgetown University points out, "can reach each other and use the Net to promote an agenda. Their members and followers can come from any geographical region on the Net, and they can attempt to influence foreign policy anywhere in the world."[11]

---

[9] See Bonnie Cordes, "When Terrorists Do the Talking: Reflections on Terrorist Literature," in David C. Rapoport (ed.), "Special Issue: Inside Terrorist Organizations," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 10, no. 4 (December 1987), p. 164.
[10] "Militant Islamic Political Activism on the worldwide web," seminar by two analysts with the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, presented at The RAND Corporation Washington Office, 19 December 2000.
[11] Denning, "'Activism, Hacktivism, and Cyberterrorism: The Internet as a Tool for Influencing Foreign Policy,' accessed at http://www.nautilus.org/info-policy/workshop/papers/denning.html, 16 April 2002, p. 3.

In addition to ubiquity and timeliness, the Internet has other advantages: it can circumvent government censorship; messages can be sent anonymously and also quickly and almost effortlessly; and, as such it is an especially cost effective means of mass communication.[12] It also enables terrorists to undertake what Denning has termed, "perception management":[13] in other words, portraying themselves and their actions in precisely the light and context they wish——unencumbered from the filter, screening and spin of established media.[14] And also, what has been referred to as "information laundering": that is, taking an interesting or provocative video clip and/or sound bite, and by featuring it and focusing on it and creating an "Internet buzz," and hope to move it into the mainstream press.[15] Finally, the Internet carries with it new and significantly enhanced fund raising capabilities for otherwise illegal or underground entities. Financial contributions, in essence, are now "just a click away," with many sites providing banking details for cash transfers.[16] As such, it has proven an especially beneficial communications medium for terrorists——as a key means of both external (propaganda) and internal (command and control and information) purposes.

Today, almost without exception, all major (and many minor) terrorist and insurgent groups have web sites.[17] As a researcher at the U.S. government's Foreign Broadcast and Information Service (FBIS)——now renamed, the Open Source Center (OSC)——observed some six years ago, "These days, if you're not on the web, you don't exist."[18] Indeed, according to perhaps the preeminent expert in the field of terrorist communication and the Internet, Professor Gabriel Weimann, "The story of the presence of terrorist groups in cyberspace has barely begun to be told." He notes that in 1998, fewer than half of the 30 groups that the U.S. State Department designates as 'Foreign Terrorist Organizations' (FTOs) had websites. But that by the end of 1999, nearly all of them did.[19]

---

[12] Denning, "Activism, Hacktivism, and Cyberterrorism," p. 4.
[13] Dorothy Denning, "Information Warfare and Cyber-terrorism," Women in International Security (WIIS) seminar, Washington, D.C., 15 December 1999.
[14] As two observers have noted with respect to the perception management conducted by terrorists on the web: "it is not surprising that networked terrorists have already begun to leverage IT for perception management and propaganda to influence public opinion, recruit new members, and generate funding. Getting a message out and receiving extensive news media exposure are important components of terrorist strategy, which ultimately seeks to undermine the will of an opponent. In addition to such traditional media as television or print, the Internet now offers terrorist groups an alternative way to reach out to the public, often with much more direct control over the message.'" Michele Zanini and Sean J.A. Edwards, "The Networking of Terror in the Information Age," in John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt (eds.), *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime and Militancy* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001, MR-1382-OSD), p. 43.
[15] "Militant Islamic Political Activism on the worldwide web," 19 December 2000.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Zanini and Edwards, "The Networking of Terror in the Information Age," p. 43.
[18] "Militant Islamic Political Activism on the worldwide web," 19 December 2000.
[19] Gabriel Weimann, *Terror on the Internet: The New Arena, the New Challenges* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2006), p. 15.

Arab and Islamic groups are regarded by knowledgeable observers to have the largest presence on the web.[20] According to one,

> That Internet usage by Islamists is growing is obvious. What is also obvious is that they will use it to promote their views, advance the strategies of the 'global Islamic movement' and organize their activities, which experience has shown are sometimes inimical to western security, and in a wider sense might also seek to subvert the security of the state.[21]

Radical Islamic terrorist organizations in particular are seen as being on the "cutting edge of organizational networking": having demonstrated an ability to harness information technology for offensive operations as well as the more typical propaganda, fund-raising and recruiting purposes of other groups.[22] Despite the multiplicity and diversity of terrorist websites, they share a number of key characteristics in common. These sites are often notable for their colorful, well-designed and visually arresting graphic content. In this respect, they seem designed particularly to appeal to a computer savvy, media-saturated, video game addicted generation. As one U.S. government observer of the terrorism Internet phenomenon has noted in the context of the radical Islamic web sites, "Never in history has there been an opportunity where propaganda is so effective."[23]

Al-Qa'ida, Radical Jihadis and the Internet

Al-Qa'ida in fact is unique among all terrorist groups in this respect: from the start its leadership seems to have intuitively grasped the enormous communicative potential of the Internet and sought to harness this power both to further the movement's strategic aims and facilitate its tactical operations. The priority that al-Qa'ida accorded to external communications is evidenced by its pre-9/11 organizational structure. One of the original, four al-Qa'ida operational committees was specifically tasked with media and publicity (the others were responsible for military operations; finance and business; and fatwa and Islamic study).[24] Egyptian computer experts who had fought alongside bin Laden in Afghanistan against the Red Army during the 1980s were reportedly specifically recruited to create the extensive network of websites, e-mail capabilities,

---

[20] "Militant Islamic Political Activism on the worldwide web," 19 December 2000; and, Michael Whine, "Islamist Organizations on the Internet,: *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 11, no. 1 (Spring 1999), pp. 125-126; and Zanini and Edwards, "The Networking of Terror in the Information Age," p. 29.

[21] Michael Whine, "Islamist Organizations on the Internet," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 11, no. 1 (Spring 1999), p. 131.

[22] Zanini and Edwards, "The Networking of Terror in the Information Age," p. 29.

[23] "Militant Islamic Political Activism on the worldwide web," 19 December 2000.

[24] Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qa'ida: Global Network of Terror* (London: Hurst, 2002), p. 57. Its director was known by the nom de guerre, Abu Reuter——an obvious reference to the famous global news wire service.

and electronic bulletin boards[25] that continue to function today despite al-Qa'ida's expulsion from Afghanistan, the destruction of its operational base in that country, and the ongoing prosecution of the U.S.-led global war on terrorism.

The Internet has long facilitated three critical functions for al-Qa'ida:

1. Propaganda for recruitment and fund-raising and to shape public opinion in the Muslim world;
2. Terrorist training and instruction; and
3. Operational planning for attacks through both e-mail communication and the access it provides to an array of useful open source information.

Each has assumed even great importance in the post-9/11 era and the loss of Afghanistan as a physical sanctuary. For al-Qa'ida, the Internet therefore has become something of a virtual sanctuary: providing an effective, expeditious and anonymous means through which the movement can continue to communicate with its fighters, followers, sympathizers and supporters world-wide. For example, before 9/11, al-Qa'ida had only one website: www.alneda.com. Today, the movement is present on more than 50 different sites.[26] "The more Web sites, the better it is for us," a jihadi statement posted on azzam.com in 2002 proclaimed. "We must make the Internet our tool."[27]

Initially, www.alneda.com alone fulfilled this requirement.[28] The site, which was published in the Arabic language only (as indeed are all the hardcore jihadi sites), emphasized three core messages that remain the basic staple of al-Qa'ida and other jihadi websites today:

• First, that the West is implacably hostile to Islam;
• Second, that only way to address this threat and the only language that the West understands is violence; and,
• Third, that jihad, therefore, is the only option.[29]

In support of these arguments, the theory of jihad was elaborated upon in great theological and legalistic detail. The obligation of all Muslims both to protect and spread Islam by the sword was

---

[25] Zanini and Edwards, "The Networking of Terror in the Information Age," p. 37.
[26] Weimann, *Terror on the Internet,* p. 65.
[27] "Information Security News: Militants wire Web with links to jihad," InfoSec News, 11 July 2002 quoted in Weimann, *Terror on the Internet*, p. 28.
[28] See www.alneda.com accessed at http:www.swithun.demon.co.uk/markaz/homepage02jul22.htm on 12 August 2002.
[29] Paul Eedle, "Terrorism.com," *The Guardian* (London), 17 July 2002.

a particular focus of on-line treatises. In addition, summaries of news affecting the Islamic struggle against the West, al-Qa'ida's own accounts of ongoing fighting and skirmishing with American and allied forces both in Afghanistan and Pakistan, along with suggested readings——including books by authors approved by al-Qa'ida theoreticians——could be found on the site.[30]

Lengthy justifications for the 9/11 attacks were also posted. Video clips and other messages extolling the operation were featured; accompanied by Islamic juridical arguments sanctioning the killing of innocents. Like other terrorist sites, poems glorified the sacrifices of al-Qa'ida martyrs and waxed eloquent on the unrelenting defensive struggle being fought against Islam's enemies. During the period immediately following the 9/11 attacks, when al-Qa'ida suffered a series of stunning reverses, culminating in the loss of Afghanistan as a base, alneda.com also performed an invaluable morale-boosting purpose by trying to lift the spirits of al-Qa'ida fighters and shore up support among its sympathizers. According to British journalist, Paul Eedle, a February 2002 Internet posting in February 2002 contained the names and home phone numbers of 84 al-Qa'ida fighters being held by Pakistani authorities "presumably with the aim that sympathizers would contact their families and let them know that they were alive."[31]

The alneda.com site was also used to call Muslims' attention to the alleged control, suppression and censorship of information about the jihadi struggle by the West and established media outlets. "The U.S. enemy, unable to gain the upper hand over the mujahideen on the battlefield," one June 2002 statement explained, "has since Sept. 11 been trying to gag the world media. The more the United States tries to stifle freedom of expression, the more determined we will become to break the silence. America will lose the media war, too."[32] While another, titled, "America nears the abyss," compared the damage wrought to the U.S. economy by the 9/11 attacks to the struggle prosecuted by the mujahideen in Afghanistan during the 1980s that, it maintained, had set in motion the chain of events that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union and demise of communism. The same fate, it predicted, would befall the U.S.: citing the weakening American dollar, the parlous state of the U.S. stock market, and the erosion of confidence both at home and abroad in the American economy.[33] Indeed, as previously noted, bin Laden has long argued that the U.S. is poised on the verge of financial ruin and total collapse much as the USSR once was——with the force of Islam ensuring America's demise much as it achieved that of the Soviet over a decade ago. Indeed, when bin Laden addressed his fighters as they fled Afghanistan in December 2001, he struck the same defiant note. "America is in retreat by the grace of God

---

[30] Presentation made by the British journalist Paul Eedle, "The Language of Jihad" at the Third Annual Conference of the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence, St Andrews University, Scotland, 8 June 2002.
[31] Paul Eedle, "Terrorism.com," *The Guardian* (London), 17 July 2002.
[32] Quoted in Jack Kelley, "Militants wire Web with links to jihad," *USA Today,* 10 July 2002.
[33] Eedle, "Terrorism.com," 17 July 2002.

Almighty and economic attrition is continuing up to today," he declared. "But it needs further blows. The young men need to seek out the nodes of the American economy and strike the enemy's nodes."[34]

The alneda.com site continued to function sporadically throughout 2002: repeatedly moving from one Internet service provider to another to circumventing U.S. and other governments' efforts to shut it down completely. In its death throes that summer, it shifted during one eight week period from a provider in Malaysia to one in Texas and then to one in Michigan before disappearing completely.[35] Since then, a variety of on-line magazines have maintained al-Qa'ida's presence on the net. The first appeared shortly after 9/11 and featured a series of articles titled, "In the Shadow of the Lances." Initially written by the movement's putative spokesman, Sulaiman Abu Ghaith, issues one through five were mostly theological or ideological treatises. Typical were discussions reiterating how "America does not understand dialogue. Nor peaceful coexistence. Nor appeals, nor condemnation, nor criticism. America," Abu Ghaith argued, "will only be stopped by blood."[36]

In February 2003, however, as the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq loomed imminent, authorship of the series abruptly changed from Abu Ghaith, the theoretician and philosopher to Saif al-Adel, the warrior. Al-Adel, one of the movement's most senior operational commanders and a former Egyptian Army Special Forces officer who joined al-Qa'ida as a result of the 1998 merger with Ayman Zawahiri's Egyptian Islamic Jihad, implored jihadis to descend upon Iraq——not to support Saddam Hussein but to defend Muslims against this latest instance of U.S. and Western aggression. He also dispensed detailed, practical advice on guerrilla operations and urban warfare tactics with which to engage——and ultimately defeat——the invading American and British forces in Iraq.[37]

The virtues of guerrilla warfare were again lavishly extolled in a posting that appeared on alneda.com on 9 April 2003. Clearly written sometime after American forces had entered Baghdad, it cited prominent historical cases where numerically smaller and less powerful forces using guerrilla tactics had successfully challenged larger, better-equipped adversaries. Under the caption, "Guerrilla Warfare Is the most Powerful Weapon Muslims have, and It is The Best

---

[34] Translation by, and personal communication with, Eedle, 31 July 2002.
[35] Kelley, "Militants wire Web with links to jihad," 10 July 2002. Discussion and communications between the author and British journalist, Paul Eedle, July and August 2002.
[36] Quoted in Eedle, "Terrorism.com," 17 July 2002.
[37] See "Al-Qa'ida Organization Addresses a Message to Iraqi, Islamic Peoples (Internet) www.alfjr.com in Arabic," 5 March 2003. [Posting by "Ayn al-Haqiqah," entitled "The al-Qa'ida Organization Writes a Letter to the Iraqi People" in the "Issues of the Islamic Nation" section of the chatroom of www.alfjr.com, on 5 March 2003.] See also Ben Venzke and Aimee Ibrahim, *al-Qaeda's Advice for Mujahideen in Iraq: Lessons Learned in Afghanistan, v 1.0* (Alexandria, VA: IntelCenter, 14 April 2003), passim.

Method to Continue the Conflict with the Crusader Enemy," the statement foreshadowed the current insurgency in Iraq, presciently explaining how,

> With guerilla warfare, the Americans were defeated in Vietnam and the Soviets
> were defeated in Afghanistan. This is the method that expelled the direct Crusader
> colonialism from most of the Muslim lands, with Algeria the most well known. We
> still see how this method stopped Jewish immigration to Palestine, and caused
> reverse immigration of Jews from Palestine. The successful attempts of dealing
> defeat to invaders using guerilla warfare were many, and we will not expound on
> them. However, these attempts have proven that the most effective method for the
> materially weak against the strong is guerrilla warfare.[38]

This mixture of ideology and propaganda alongside practical guidance on guerrilla warfare and related terrorist operations has come to typify al-Qa'ida's current Internet profile.[39] With respect to the former, a new Internet magazine named Sawt al-Jihad ("Voice of Jihad") appeared in February 2004. Published by al-Qa'ida's Saudi organization, its message was less ones of attacking U.S. and other Western targets than the importance of mobilizing Muslim public opinion and support of jihad.[40] Nonetheless, according to Reuven Paz, an editorial titled, "Belief first: They are the heretics, the blood of each of them is the blood of a dog," implicitly justified the slaughter of Americans. "My fighting brother," its author, Sheikh Naser al-Najdi wrote,

> Kill the heretic; kill whoever his blood is the blood of a dog; kill those that Almighty
> Allah has ordered you to kill….
>
> Bush son of Bush…a dog son of a dog…his blood is that of a dog….
>
> Shut your mouth and speak with your other mouth——the mouth of the defender
> against his attacker.[41]

---

[38] MEMRI Special Dispatch—Jihad and Terrorism Studies, 11 April 2003, no. 493 quoting
http://www.cubezero.nt/vhsvideo/imagis/?subject=2&rec=1043.
[39] Reuven Paz, "Who Wants to Email Al-Qaeda?" *Occasional Paper, PRISM* (Project for the Study of
Islamist Movements), vol. 1, no. 8 (October 2003) *Occasional Paper, PRISM* (Project for the Study of
Islamist Movements), vol. 2, no. 2 (July 2004) accessed at http:www.e-
prism.org/images/PRISM_vol_2_no_2.doc.
[40] Weimann, *Terror on the Internet*, p. 41.
[41] Quoted in Reuven Paz, Sawt al-Jihad: New Indoctrination of Qa'idat al-Jihad," *Occasional Paper, PRISM*
(Project for the Study of Islamist Movements), vol. 1, no. 8 (October 2003) accessed at http:www.e-
prism.org/images/PRISM_no_9.doc.

In Islam, dogs are considered to be among the most impure creatures and true believers are forbidden to even touch one. Thus, the equating of President Bush with a dog is meant to be especially damning.

With respect to practical guidance, another new on-line publication, also published by the al-Qa'ida organization in Saudi Arabia, the *Mu'askar al-Battar* ("Camp of the Sword") seeks to provide operational information. Its first issue, published in January 2004, explained how "in order to join the great training camps you don't have to travel to other lands. Alone, in your home or with a group of your brothers, you too can begin to execute the training program. You can all join the Al-Battar Training Camp."[42] The power of this particular communications vehicle appears to have been demonstrated by the influence that the March 2004 edition had on subsequent patterns of terrorist activities in Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Reportedly written by Abdul Azziz al-Moqrin,[43] the reputed commander of al-Qa'ida's operations on the Arabian Peninsula until he was killed by Saudi security forces in May 2005, it singled out economic targets, especially those connected with the region's oil industry, as priorities for attack. "The purpose of these targets," Moqrin wrote,

> is to destabilize the situation and not allow the economic recovery such as hitting oil wells and pipelines that will scare foreign companies from working there and stealing Muslim treasures. Another purpose is to have foreign investment withdrawn from local markets. Some of the benefits of those operations are the effect it has on the economic powers like the one that had happened recently in Madrid where the whole European economy was affected.[44]

In the weeks that followed, al-Moqrin's strategy seemed to bear fruit. The U.S. State Department, for instance, advised American citizens to leave Saudi Arabia. After the murder in April 2004 of five expatriate workers at a petrochemical complex in the Saudi industrial city of Yanbu, foreign companies there were reported to have evacuated employees from the country.[45] These fears acquired new urgency with attack in May on a housing complex in Khobar, where 22 foreigners were killed, and the execution by beheading in June of an American defense contractor, Paul M, Johnson, Jr.[46]

---

[42] Quoted in Weimann, *Terror on the Internet*, p. 105.
[43] Moqrin was reportedly killed by Saudi security forces in Riyadh on 18 June 2004.
[44] IntelCenter, *al-Qaeda Targeting Guidance—v.1.0*, Thursday, 1 April 2004 (Alexandria, VA: IntelCenter/Tempest Publishing, 2004), pp. 6-9.
[45] See Neal MacFarquhar, "As Terrorists Strike Arab Targets, Escalation Fears Arise," *New York Times*, 30 April 2004; idem., "Firm Pulls 100 From Saudi Arabia After 5 Deaths," 2 May 2004; idem., "After Attack, Company's Staff Plans to Leave Saudi Arabia, 3 May 2004; and, Kim Ghattas and Roula Khalaf, "Shooting spree in Saudi city spreads jitters among western companies," *Financial Times* (London), 3 May 2004.
[46] Craig Whitlock, "Islamic Radicals Behead American In Saudi Arabia," *Washington Post*, 19 June 2004.

This same targeting guidance also explains the spate of kidnappings and tragically similar executions of foreign contractors, diplomats, and aid workers in Iraq that commenced within a week of its release. The first victim was Mohammed Rifat, a Canadian, who was seized on April 8th and is still missing. During the following three months, more than 60 others were kidnapped. Although the majority were eventually released, five hostages were brutally murdered——most often by beheading with the act itself filmed and posted on jihadi websites.[47] Among the dead was a young Jewish-American businessman, Nicholas Berg. Al-Moqrin had deemed a special priority, "[a]ssassinating Jewish businessmen and teach lessons to those who cooperate with them [sic]." Indeed, al-Moqrin provided additional 'practical examples' of how his targeting guidance should be implemented. The preferred hierarchy of targets were:

- "American and Israeli Jews first, the British Jews and then French Jews and so on
- Christians: Their importance is as follows: Americans, British, Spanish, Australians, Canadians, Italians."

Within these categories there were further distinctions:

- "Businessmen, bankers, and economists, because money is very important in this age;
- Diplomats, politicians, scholars, analysts, and diplomatic missions';
- Scientists, associates and experts'; 'Military commander and soldier'; and,
- Tourists and entertainment missions and anybody that was warned by mujahideen not to go to step in the lands of Moslems."[48]

Finally, along with propaganda and training, al-Qa'ida has also made extensive use of the Internet for intelligence-gathering purposes and targeting. The so-called "Manchester Manual," the compendium of terrorist tradecraft assembled by al-Qa'ida sometime during the 1990s advises explicitly that "openly and without resorting to illegal means, it is possible to gather at least 80% of information about the enemy."[49] Indeed, *The 9/11 Commission Report* cites four specific instances in which KSM and the 19 hijackers accessed information from the Internet to

---

[47] See Sean Young, "Online Co. Shuts Down Site With Beheading," Yahoo! News, 14 May 14, 2004 accessed at http://www.crime-research.org/news/14.05.2004/270; John F. Burns, "Video Appears to Show Insurgents Kill a Downed Pilot," *New York Times*, 23 April 2005; and Jonathan Finer and Anthony Faiola, "Insurgents Say They Have Killed Japanese," *Washington Post*, 29 May 2005.

[48] IntelCenter, *al-Qaeda Targeting Guidance—v.1.0*, pp. 6-9.

[49] *Declaration of Jihad Against the Country's Tyrants——Military Series* (no date). Also known as the "Manchester Manual," this document was obtained by British police during a raid in March 2000 of an al-Qa'ida safe-house in Manchester. It was found on a computer left behind by Abu Anas al-Libi, a key al-Qa'ida operative wanted in connection with the 1998 East Africa embassy bombings, who fled Britain and is believed to be at large still. A version of the manual can be accessed at http://www.usdoj.gov/ag/manualpart1_3pdf.

plan or facilitate the 9/11 attacks.[50] An al-Qa'ida computer found by American military forces in Afghanistan contained architectural models of a dam in the U.S. and software with which to simulate various catastrophic failures as well as programming instructions for the digital switches that operate American power, water, transport and communications grids.[51] And, more recently, three British al-Qa'ida operatives were indicted by a U.S. federal court in March 2005 on charges of having carried out detailed reconnaissance of financial targets in lower Manhattan, Newark, New Jersey, and Washington, D.C. In addition to video taping the Citigroup Center and the New York Stock Exchange in New York City, the Prudential Financial building in Newark, and the headquarters of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Washington, D.C., the men were alleged to have amassed more than 500 photographs of the sites——many of which had been simply been downloaded from the Internet.[52] More recently, a British government report on the genesis and execution of the 7 July 2005 suicide bomb attacks that targeted three London subway trains and a bus concluded that this was a "modest, simple affair by four seemingly normal men using the Internet"—from which they were able to obtain all the information to carry out the attack that they required.[53]

Indeed, the changing face of terrorism in the 21st Century is further exemplified by the items recovered by Saudi security forces in a raid during on an al-Qa'ida safe house in Riyadh in late spring 2004. In addition to the traditional terrorist arsenal of AK-47 assault rifles, explosives, rocket-propelled grenades, hand grenades, and thousands of rounds of ammunition that the authorities the police expected find, they also discovered an array of electronic consumer goods including: video cameras, laptop computers, CD burners, and the requisite high-speed Internet connection. According to CNN investigative journalist Henry Schuster, the videos,

> had been part of an al-Qa'ida media blitz on the Web that also included two online magazines full of editorials and news digests, along with advice on how to handle a kidnapping or field-strip an AK-47 assault rifle. The videos mixed old appearances by bin Laden with slick graphics and suicide bombers' on-camera last wills and testaments. They premiered on the Internet, one after the other, and were aimed at recruiting Saudi youth.[54]

---

[50] Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. *The 9/11 Commission Report: Authorized Edition* (New York & London, W.W. Norton & Company, 2004), pp. 157, 164 & 495.

[51] Barton Gellman, 'Cyber-Attacks By Al-Qaeda Feared: Terrorists at Threshold of Using Internet as Tool of Bloodshed, Experts Say.' *Washington Post,* 27 June 2002.

[52] Dan Eggen, "Indictment Cites Plans to Target Financial Hubs: 3 Britons' Extradition to Be Sought," *Washington Post*, 13 April 2005.

[53] Unidentified British government official quoted in Sarah Lyall, "London Bombers Tied to Internet, Not Al Qaeda, Newspaper Says," *New York Times*, 11 April 2006.

[54] Henry Shuster, "Studios of Terror: Al Qaeda's Media Strategy," *CNN International.Com, Tracking Terror*, 16 February 2005, accessed at http://207.25.71.245/2005/WORLD/meast/02/15/schuster.column/index.html

Iraq, the Insurgency and the Internet

The widespread availability of these sophisticated, but inexpensive communications technologies, as this testimony argues, has effectively shattered the monopoly over readily-accessible information formerly wielded by conventional commercial and state-owned television and radio broadcasting outlets and the print media. The extent of this transformation is evidenced by the fact that today terrorist websites are as regularly consulted as they are cited (and publicized) by the mainstream press.[55] For some audiences, moreover, the sites maintained by terrorist movements and their sympathizers alarmingly present an increasingly compelling and indeed accepted alternative point of view. This was of course al-Qa'ida's purpose in creating its first website, www.alneda.com, and maintaining a variety of successor sites since: to provide an alternative source for news and information that the movement itself could exert total control over.

Identical arguments——claiming distortion and censorship by Western and other mainstream media——have also been voiced by sites either created by the Iraqi insurgent groups themselves or entities sympathetic to them.[56] "Western Propaganda Media try to shut down albasrah.net! [sic]," the banner on one such site, www.albasrah.net, asserts. "Once again," it argued, "the propaganda media have begun to spew stupid accusations against al-Basrah, the true aim of which is to smother the voice of Iraqi people and smother one of the few sources of information on the unprecedented massacres that are taking place inside occupied Iraq in the name of 'international law'."[57]

The insurgency in Iraq has arguably emerged as the cynosure of contemporary, cutting-edge terrorist communications. According to analysts at the Alexandria, Virginia-based IntelCenter, more than a dozen terrorist groups, for instance, have produced their own videos.[58] At least half, however, are either indigenous Iraqi insurgent organizations or foreign jihadis fighting there. Since late 2003, a growing number of so-called "mujahideen films," have been marketed for sale

---

[55] See, for instance, "Islamic Group Says It Set Off Dagestan Blast," *New York Times*, 3 July 2005; Andy Mosher, "Abducted Egyptian Envoy Killed in Iraq," *Washington Post*, 8 July 2005; and, John F. Burns, "Rebels Kill Egyptian Diplomat, Adding Pressure on Others in Iraq," *New York Times*, 8 July 2005.
[56] See, for instance, the "Iraq" tab at www.kavkazcenter.com and the "Iraqi Resistance Report" tab at www.jihadunspun.com as well as such sites as www.islammemo.cc/taqrer/one_news.asp?Idnew=292; www.la7odood.com; www.balagh.com/thaqafa/0604ggpz.htm; and www.albasrah.net: all accessed on 6 July 2005..
[57] www.albasrah.net accessed on 6 July 2005.
[58] They include: al-Qa'ida; Ansar al-Isalm; Ansar al-Sunnah; Islamic Army in Iraq; Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC); Sout al-Jihad in Iraq; Organization of Jihad's Base in the Country of the Two Rivers (QJBR); the al-Haramain Brigades; the Taliban; and, groups in Chechnya, Bosnia, Kashmir, and Indonesia. See IntelCenter, *Evolution of Jihadi Video*, p. 5.

(mostly in DVD format) at souks and bazaars in Iraq and posted either in part or in whole on the Internet. The films variously:

- depict scenes of insurgents using roadside bombs to ambush U.S. military forces on patrol in Humvees or firing hand-held surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) at U.S. military aircraft flying overhead;
- impart practical, tactical advice to insurgents (for example: advising insurgents "to vacate the area no later than 10 minutes after launching an attack, before US forces zero in on their position") and instruction in the use of weaponry and the planning and execution of attacks;
- transmit the last words of kidnapped Iraqis and foreigners about to be executed[59] and, in many instances, display gory footage of the executions themselves[60];
- appeal for financial contributions;[61] and,
- perhaps most importantly solicit recruits from the Middle East, South and Central Asia, North Africa, and Europe and even North America to come to Iraq to become "lions from the martyr's brigade."[62]

These "mujahideen films," however, are but one manifestation of a much broader and highly sophisticated communications strategy. The more prominent insurgent organizations fighting in Iraq, for instance, have themselves established dedicated information offices which in essence function as "online press agencies": issuing communiqués, developing and posting new content for their websites (often several times a day) and generally updating and regularly replenishing news and other features. "The Iraqi armed opposition appear to make a priority of communication," two particularly knowledgeable observers of the insurgency in that country have written,

> in ways that go far beyond the unique intention of terrorizing the adversary. Combatant group produce an astonishingly large and varied range of texts and images, which it would be wrong to reduce to their most brutal types. Besides the threatening tracts there is an impressive body of strategic analysis, cold-blooded, lucid and detailed. Similarly, the most monstrous video sequences eclipse a wealth of films, sometimes of professional quality, extending from "lectures" in classical

[59] Awadh al-Taee and Steve Negus, "Now showing (despite official warnings): 'Mujahideen movie'", *Financial Times* (London), 16 February 2005.
[60] See, for example, Jonathan Finer and Anthony Faiola, "Insurgents Say They Have Killed Japanese: Video May Show Body of Hostage," *Washington Post*, 29 May 2005; and, Burns, "Rebels Kill Egyptian Diplomat, Adding Pressure on Others in Iraq."
[61] David E. Kaplan, "National Security Watch: Eurolefties fund Iraq insurgency," *U.S. News & World Report*, 23 June 2005 accessed at http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/050623/23euroleft.htm.
[62] Quoted in Susan B. Glasser, "'Martyrs' In Iraq Mostly Saudis: Web Sites Track Suicide Bombings," *Washington Post*, 15 May 2005.

Arabic on the manufacture of explosives to "advertising" material put out by new groups making their first public appearance.

The insurgents' intent is to explain and legitimize their use of violence (employing theological arguments and treatises, for example, to differentiate between "illicit terrorism" and "licit terrorism" and thereby justify their attacks); drive a wedge between the Iraqi people and the so-called "collaboration" authorities (e.g., the Iraqi interim government); undermine popular confidence in the ability of the Iraqi government and Iraqi security forces and the U.S. and Coalition militaries to maintain order throughout the country; and, lastly, to facilitate communications between and among various groups in order to forge new alliances and cooperative arrangements however tactical or short-lived.[63]

Indeed, the IntelCenter analysts who both collect and study the aforementioned "mujahideen films" and also monitor the Internet for Iraqi insurgent communications, believe that we on the cusp of an emergent and potentially even more extensive phenomenon. "As video editing software, video compression, computer power, camera technology and Internet bandwidth continue to improve," they argue,

> the speed, sophistication and quantity of jihadi videos will continue to increase. This
> is also currently being driven by the sheer volume of jihadi operations in Iraq, which
> are providing an ample supply of material for new releases.[64]

Policy Recommendations

A terrorist movement's longevity ultimately depends upon its ability to recruit new members as well as appeal to an expanding pool of both active supporters and passive sympathizers. The role of effective communication in this process is pivotal: ensuring the continued flow of fighters into the movement, bonding supporters more tightly to it, and drawing sympathizers more deeply into its orbit. "Without communication," Alex Schmid and Janny de Graaf presciently argued more than twenty years ago, "there can be no terrorism."[65] The revolution in terrorist communications described in this testimony has facilitated this process in hitherto unimaginable ways. Virtually every terrorist group in the world today now has its own Internet website and, in many instances,

---

[63] David Baran and Mathieu Guidère, "Sons et images de l'opposition irakienne," ("Sound and pictures of the Iraqi opposition,"), *Le Monde Diplomatique* (Paris), May 2005. An infelicitous translation, titled "Iraq: A Message From the Insurgents" was also published by *Le Monde Diplomatique's* English edition. See also, Robert F. Worth, "Jihadis Take Stand on Web, and Some Say It's Defensive," *New York Times*, 13 March 2005.
[64] IntelCenter, *Evolution of Jihadi Video*, p. 5.
[65] Schmid and de Graaf, *Violence As Communication*, p. 9.

maintain multiple sites in different languages with different messages tailored to specific audiences. Indeed, according to Professor Gabriel Weimann of Haifa University, there are some 4,800 terrorist or terrorist-related websites that currently exist.[66] The ability to communicate in real time via the Internet, using a variety of compelling electronic media——including dramatic video footage, digital photographs, and audio clips accompanied by visually arresting along with savvy and visually appealing web design——has enabled terrorists to reach a potentially vast audience faster, more pervasively and more effectively than ever before. Thus, the revolution in terrorist communications that has rapidly unfolded within the past few years is certain to continue. Its capabilities and products will likely also become increasingly more sophisticated in quality, content, and transmission capacity——and more numerous and pervasive than ever.

To date, at least, the United States, however, has not effectively contested the critical, virtual battleground that the Internet has become to terrorists and their sympathizers and supporters worldwide. Indeed, while our successes in the global war on terrorism (GWOT) these past four and a half years have deprived terrorists of many of the physical sanctuaries that they once enjoyed, these have been replaced with the virtual sanctuary provided by the Internet and the myriad opportunities described in this testimony for radicalization, recruitment, propaganda, and even training. Although it should be emphasized that U.S. government analysts report there is as yet no direct evidence specifically linking the Internet to recruitment of individuals to mainstream, established terrorist organizations or movements,[67] it is indisputable that the Internet has emerged as a key vehicle inspiring, motivating and animating both radicalization and violence. Evidence presented by British prosecutors, for instance, in a London court case involving the family members of one of two British Muslims who carried out a suicide bombing attack on a waterfront Tel Aviv pub in April 2003, clearly bear this out.[68] At the trial, the prosecution presented case exhibits gathered from the computer hard-drives of the perpetrator himself as well as that of his immediate family: including stored documents, material downloaded from the Internet, and e-mail correspondence.[69] The role that the Internet played in this specific case of radicalizing——or, at the very least, contributing to the radicalization of——Omar Khan Sharif, one of the two suicide bombers who attacked a waterfront Tel Aviv pub in 2003, is beyond doubt. Given the proliferation of terrorist and radical web sites and the widely available access to them, one can perhaps safely argue that this particular example is by no means an isolated

---

[66] Gabriel Weimann, "Terror On The Internet: The New Arenda, The New Challenges," Seminar Held at the United States Institute of Peace, Washington, D.C., 10 April 2006. Note that in the year since Professor Weimann completed his book, the number of terrorist websites increased from approximately 4,300 in May 2005 to 4,800 in May 2006.
[67] Discussions with U.S. government analysts responsible for monitoring the Internet, December 2005, February 2006, and March 2006.
[68] Crown v. Sharif, Sharif, and Tabassum, 2003-2005.
[69] Some of this material has now been posted on the BBC News web site. See "Suicide bomber trial: e-mails in full," 28 November 2005 at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/3825765.stm, accessed on 1 May 2006.

phenomenon. More to the point, it encapsulates the enormous information challenge America, its allies and coalition partners face in countering this propaganda of incitement and empowerment.

To date, however, U.S. public diplomacy and information operations efforts have been inchoate, if not, inadequate. Commendably and significantly, the U.S. Department of State has embarked on an ambitious program to develop new information sources and means of communication with the Muslim world. The creation of the Arabic-language television station, al-Hura, and the radio station, al-Sawa, are critically vital steps in this process. As is the expansion of the number of Voice of America broadcasts in the Arabic language. However, this reliance on traditional media sources (e.g., television, radio, and the print media as well) neglects the fact these outlets have been superseded by other media——viz., the Internet. In this respect, our communications efforts and standard information operations approach may be as mis-directed as it is anachronistic: relying upon increasingly less relevant and even irrelevant media so far as terrorist radicalization processes are concerned and failing to reach a vital audience segment whom we need to influence: e.g., the youth and young adults of the Muslim world that no longer get their news from established television or cable or radio stations——but exclusively from the Internet.[70]

The problem is that the internet, once regarded as an engine for education and enlightenment for America's enemies has become an essential means for the dissemination of propaganda: purveying the coarsest and most base conspiracy theories with a ubiquity and pervasiveness that is completely divorced from reality. The result is that the most outlandish and far-fetched views are acquiring a veneer of truth and veracity simply because of their unmitigated and unchallenged repetition and circulation throughout the Internet. Hence, while traditionally-based media vehicles like al-Hura and al-Sawa and the VOA may be effective at reaching and influencing one audience segment whom we of course must reach——that is, moderates who still get their news and information from these sources; such media are ineffective at reaching persons who may already have been radicalized by the Internet, and/or who only get their new information from this one electronic source alone. The objective of preventing moderates from drifting into radicalism or becoming radicalized can only be one side of the coin and one element of our strategy. The other side, and equally critical dimension, is preventing existing radicals from becoming both further radicalized and indeed violent. This essential element of our information operations is one that has not received sufficient attention. The inadequacy of our efforts in this realm is evidenced by the insufficiency of our efforts to date to counter jihadi use of the Internet as a virtual sanctuary and effectively challenge the propaganda, conspiracy theories, and messages of hate, intolerance and violence purveyed through this medium.

---

[70] This argument is based on a series of interviews with radical jihadis conducted by the author of this testimony in Indonesia during August, 2005.

However, in order for U.S. government information operations to become more effective, more specifically focused and better tailored to the variety of audiences we seek to inform and influence, we must obtain a far better understanding of our enemy and the constituencies that our adversaries have already proven effective in reaching and motivating. "If you know the enemy and know yourself," Sun Tzu famously advised centuries ago, "you need not fear the results of a hundred battles." The war on terrorism has now lasted longer than America's involvement in World War II: yet, even today we cannot claim with any credibility, much less, acuity to have fulfilled Sun Tzu's timeless admonition. Indeed, what remains missing four and a half years since this war began is a thorough, systematic understanding of our enemy: encompassing motivation as well as mindset, decision-making processes as well as command and control relationships; and ideological constructs as well as organizational dynamics.

Forty years ago the United States understood the importance of building this foundation in order to effectively counter an enigmatic, unseen enemy motivated by a powerful ideology who also used terrorism and insurgency to advance his cause and rally popular support. Although America of course encountered many frustrations during the Vietnam conflict, a lack of understanding of our adversary was not among them. Indeed, as early as 1965, the Pentagon had begun a program to analyze Vietcong morale and motivation based on detailed interviews conducted among thousands of guerrilla detainees. These voluminously detailed studies provided a road-map of the ideological and psychological mindset of that enemy: clearly illuminating the critical need to win what was then often termed the "other war"——the ideological struggle for the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people.[71] Even if the fundamental changes required in U.S. military strategy to overcome the Vietcong's appeal went ignored, tremendous effort and resources were devoted to understanding the enemy.

Today, Washington has no such program in the war on terrorism. America's counterterrorism strategy appears predominantly weighted towards a "kill or capture" approach targeting individual bad guys. This line of attack assumes that America's contemporary enemies——be they al-Qa'ida or the insurgents in Iraq——have a traditional center of gravity. It also assumes that these enemies simply need to be killed or imprisoned so that global terrorism or the Iraqi insurgency will both end. Accordingly, the attention of the U.S. military and intelligence community is directed

---

[71] The RAND Corporation actively contributed to these analyses in a series of detailed reports, based on voluminous interviews of captured Vietcong. See, for example: Leon Gouré, Anthony Russo, and D. Scott, *Some Findings of the Viet Cong Motivation and Morale Study: June-December 1965* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, RM-4911-12-ISA/ARPA, February 1966); Leon Gouré, J. M. Carrier, and D. Scott, *Some Findings of the Viet Cong Motivation and Morale Study: January-June 1966* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, RM-5137-ISA/ARPA, February 1966); J. M. and Charles Thomson, *Viet Cong Motivation and Morale: The Special Case of Chieu Hoi* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, RM-4830-2-ISA/ARPA, May 1966); J. C. Connell, *Viet Cong Motivation and Morale: A Preliminary Report* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, RM-4507/2-ISA, July 1968).

almost uniformly towards hunting down militant leaders or protecting U.S. forces——not toward understanding the enemy we now face. This is a monumental failing not only because decapitation strategies have rarely worked in countering mass mobilization terrorist or insurgent campaigns, but also because al-Qa'ida's ability to continue this struggle is ineluctably predicated on its capacity to attract new recruits and replenish its resources.

The success of U.S. strategy will therefore ultimately depend on Washington's ability to counter al-Qa'ida's and other radical jihadis' both in Iraq and elsewhere ideological appeal——and thus effectively address the three key elements of their strategy:

- the continued resonance of their message;
- their continued ability to attract recruits replenishing their ranks; and,
- their capacity for continual regeneration and renewal.

To do so, we first need to better understand the animosity and arguments that underpin al-Qa'ida and the wider radical jihadi movement, and indeed the region of the world from which its struggle emanated and upon which its hungry gaze still rests. Without knowing our enemy we cannot successfully penetrate their cells; we cannot knowledgeably sow discord and dissension in their ranks and thus weaken them from within; and, we cannot fulfill the most basic requirements of an effective counterterrorist strategy——pre-empting and preventing terrorist operations and deterring their attacks.

Indeed, all terrorist movements throughout history have presented themselves as monoliths: united and in agreement over fundamental objectives, aims, strategies, tactics and targets. Too often their opponents succumb to such fictions and therefore fail to seize a critical opportunity to identify and exploit opportunities: by deepening existing and creating new sources of dissension, widening emergent ideological fault-lines and driving wedges within movements based on internal disagreements. This approach of undermining terrorist groups from within has arguably been missing from the current conduct of the war on terrorism. Until we recognize the importance of this vital prerequisite, America will remain perennially on the defensive: inherently reactive rather than proactive——deprived of the capacity to recognize, much less anticipate, important changes in our enemy's modus operandi, recruitment and targeting.

In conclusion, as terrorist communications continue to change and evolve, so will the nature of terrorism itself. While one cannot predict what new forms and dimensions terrorism will assume during the rest of the 21st Century, this evolutionary process will continue and doubtless be abetted——and accelerated——by new communications technologies: as has been the case over the past decade. What is clear, though, is that the U.S. is dangerously behind the curve in

countering terrorist use of the Internet and especially its exploitation by radical jihadis. The Internet, as this testimony recounts, is a vacuum that has already been filled by terrorists, radical jihadis and their messages of hate, intolerance, violence and unmitigated enmity towards the U.S. It is incumbent upon us to act now——expeditiously and with appropriately resourced and directed efforts——to contest the virtual battleground of cyberspace and wrest control of this vital information source from our enemies.

The main part of the solution rests with building capacity in the information sphere among our allies and coalition partners by helping them to directly and effectively counter radical jihadi propaganda directed against their own people, governments and nations as well as against America and the West. To my knowledge, little if anything is currently being done as part of a concerted and directed strategy to help strengthen other countries' information operations capabilities, specifically in countering terrorist and radical jihadi use of the Internet. The other part of the solution affects our own government and how it is organized, resourced and directed to engage in information operations, especially with respect to the Internet. During the cold war, for instance, American information operations were championed by a dedicated government entity, specifically charged with this responsibility——e.g., the former United States Information Agency——which incontestably made a vital contribution to America's triumph over communism. Given the stakes of the current conflict, the time may be propitious to consider a similar uniquely dedicated and focused governmental body charged with coordinating all of our information operations——and that would include a mandate and resources specifically with regard to the Internet.