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ТЕРРОРИЗМ ЧЕРЕЗ ИНТЕРНЕТ

As the individual communication and mass media tools develop, the strategies and tactics of psychological war have developed in the same dimension, and have become a kind of art and science in highly complicated levels. From this point of view, the communication era we live in is also defined as the era of psychological wars.

As a result of the changing balances of the world and the differentiation in the international affairs, the method of cold wars has substituted for the hot wars. The psychological war which appears to be the requisite of the cold war, and the low intense conflicts as the unavoidable element of this has revealed the concept of terror.

Terrorism which is the element of the psychological war generally arises as a result of putting the invasive opinions and activities, which already exist or are artificially formed, in action on a specific purpose. Terrorism tends to display variation along with the improving and changing conditions in the world, and increases its effect and strength with the new facilities and capabilities obtained depending on the developing technology day by day. The internet is an increasingly useful tool for terrorists, whose online activities include information-sharing, propaganda, and possibly, cyber terrorism. Over the last ten years, the number of terrorist sites has jumped from less than 100 to as many as 4,000. "This has particularly taken off since the war in Iraq, as many of the insurgency groups there have many sites and message boards to help their network," says Michael Kern, a senior analyst at the SITE Institute, a Washington DC-based terrorist-tracking group. "The greatest advantage [of the internet] is stealth," says John Arquilla, professor of defense analysis at the Naval Postgraduate School. "[Terrorists] swim in an ocean of bits and bytes." But the same anonymity that draws terrorists into the cyber world may also enable law-enforcement officials to spy on them undetected

During the global crackdown after the 9/11 attacks, intelligence agencies in several countries were able to infiltrate terrorists' lines of communication. In response, experts say, terrorist organizations turned to the internet. With sophisticated encryption tools and creative techniques such as "dead dropping"-transmitting information through saved e-mail drafts in a web mail account accessible to anyone with the password-the internet has proven an efficient and relatively secure means of correspondence.

Today, terrorists give orders, plan attacks, and even send funds via online message boards and chat rooms. Terrorist sites also serve as virtual training grounds, offering tutorials on making bombs, firing surface-to-air-missiles, shooting at U.S. soldiers, and sneaking into Iraq from abroad. The internet also provides a venue for terrorists to disseminate their message, experts say. Terrorist sites broadcast propaganda videos designed to boost morale, raise funds, or recruit new members. Abu Musab Zarqawi's al-Qaeda in Iraq has proven particularly adept in its use of the web, garnering attention by posting footage of events like roadside bombings the decapitation of American Nick Berg, and kidnapped Egyptian and Algerian diplomats prior to their execution. On July 29 Zarqawi's group released "All Religion Will Be for Allah," a forty-six-minute propaganda video that an August 5 Washington Post report described as "slickly produced" with "the feel of a blood-and-guts annual report."

Experts say the internet could also provide a theatre in which to launch attacks in the form of cyber terrorism. "Al-Qaeda operatives are known to have taken training in hacking techniques," Arquilla says. Terrorists could conceivably hack into electrical grids or security systems, or perhaps

distribute a powerful computer virus. "It's certainly a possibility," Kern says, though "it's not the No. 1 threat right now."

There is some debate within the counterterrorism community about how to combat terrorist sites. Some experts say monitoring websites can provide valuable information about terrorist activities. "You can see who's posting what and who's paying for it," Kern says. For instance, German officials "err[ing] on the side of watching rather than disrupting," issued early warnings prior to the Madrid train bombings in March 2004, Arquilla says. Other experts advocate a more aggressive approach; they say shutting down websites, even temporarily, can disrupt a terrorist group's activities.

To stop the increase in terrorist recruits, the U.S. and Europe must discredit extremist ideology, which takes Koranic passages out of context, preaches hatred against non-Muslims and seeks to spread Islam through violence. Muslims who want to be a part of the modern world of science and technology must confront and stop these Islamists from preaching violence and hatred. They must get the ulamas (Muslim scholars) and ustaz (religious teachers) to preach that Islam is a religion of peace, not terror, and that it is tolerant of other peoples and their faiths, as Muslim scholars have proudly asserted.