



# TRC TWW Report

Terror Web Watch Report



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**Graphic:** Left: anti-Semitic audio cassette tapes called "The end of the Israelites" found in Hamas-linked Tulkarm Charitable Society. Right: Iranian-published anti-Semitic literature in English available at the Frankfurt (Germany) Book Fair. (Right photo: [www.zombietime.com](http://www.zombietime.com))



## Editor's Note

The final Terror Web Watch edition for 2005 will be published on December 22, 2005, as the Terrorism Research Center's offices will be closed on December 23 for the holidays. There will be no TWW edition published on December 30, 2005. The TWW will resume normal publication on January 6, 2005.

## Orientation/Introduction:

Please review the introduction to the Terror Web Watch at [Intel Report](#).

## Item 1: The Purpose of Hostage Videos

The hostage videos produced by Salafist insurgents and their allies serve multiple purposes in advancing the worldwide Sunni insurgency. The videos are meant to inspire Muslims to support the jihad, to humiliate the governments of the hostages, to horrify and frighten non-Muslims, to raise funds for jihad organizations, and to demonstrate that Christians will pay a hard price for attempting to convert Muslims. It is worth noting that hostage videos are the part of the jihadis' media campaign that is at least meant to influence the wider Islamic and non-Islamic worlds. These are videos made by militants for other militants and would-be mujahedin and so have a narrower purpose than most Salafist media.

Most of the videos produced to date have been timely and of high production quality, suggesting the militants believe the videos are an essential element of the jihad that they are waging via the media. The tapes seem well-rehearsed, and the producers use of many of the props found in films of Muslims held in the West -- manacles, hoods, orange jumpsuits, etc. -- seemingly meant to tell audiences that "what goes around comes around." Overall, the hostage videos have been a net plus for the jihadis, even given the anger expressed in the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds over the spate of beheading videos televised in 2004-2005.

Inspiration: The hostage videos are meant to show the militants' supporters, especially those considering becoming jihadis, that the insurgents can strike when and where they want to, even when their targets are protected -- as in Iraq ([Country Profile](#)) and Afghanistan ([Country Profile](#)) -- by the world's sole superpower. The captives tend to be chosen carefully. Generally they are non-Muslims or Muslims who are readily identifiable as working for or cooperating with an infidel or apostate government. By definition, both can be categorized as "enemies of Islam." Thus, in the context of the videos, the militants are seen as controlling their environment, defying infidel forces, and exacting revenge from the enemies of the faith.

Humiliation: One of the strongest and most consistent themes in the public words of bin Laden and other Islamist militants describes their intention to reciprocate for the "80 years of humiliation" that the West has meted out to the Islamic world. The militants generally date the start of this period from the World War I-era Sykes-Picot Treaty, which, they claim, divided the Ummah into "multiple statelets" and led to the dissolution of the Ottoman caliphate in 1924. In addition, hostage-taking and military/terrorist attacks -- and the videos that record these events -- are meant to show young Muslims that they can beat and humble Islam's foes, thereby beginning to undue the defeatism that shadowed bin Laden's generation because of the Muslim world's loss of three wars to Israel ([Country Profile](#)) and three to India ([Country Profile](#)) since 1967.

Psychological Impact: This is the aspect of the videos that is most clearly directed toward non-Muslim audiences. The helplessness and hopelessness of the captive is emphasized by the presence of the heavily armed captives, the manacled and oft-times hooded status of the hostages; and the captives' well-rehearsed and pitiful pleas for aid from their governments are all meant to terrify non-Muslim audiences. Even with this mainly non-Muslim orientation, however, it must be presumed that the videos have some restraining effect on Muslims thinking about working for infidel or apostate regimes.

Fund Raising: Quite simply, this type of "action" video has been -- since the Afghan jihad against the Soviet Union -- a tool with which to elicit financing from wealthy Saudis and other Gulf Arabs. Initially, the videos focused on Islamist combat operations conducted against the Red Army and, after the Soviets' defeat, the forces of the Tajikistan ([Country Profile](#)) government. The videos were, then, used in two ways with potential donors: (a) to provide *bona fides* for groups requesting funding and (b) to demonstrate to established donors that their



funds were being well spent and the enemy was being killed. It was only during the first Chechen-Russian war (1992-1996) that Salafist militants fighting with the Chechens began to video the treatment accorded to captive Russian soldiers, including the beheading of some of the captives. These videos were reported to have been welcomed by donors in the Gulf, who responded with increased funding. The West learned of these videos only because some were captured by the Russians; there was no effort by the jihadis to facilitate widespread broadcasts of the type seen since 2004. And while it appears that the beheading videos from Iraq alienated some Muslims -- Zawahiri advised Zarqawi to kill them with a bullet because the public disliked beheadings -- there is little reason to believe that private screenings of beheading videos for mujahedin patrons in the Gulf has stopped.

Anti-Christian: A growing aspect of the hostage videos is their anti-Christian nature. US military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq brought in their wake large numbers of Christian Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) bent on humanitarian relief and proselytizing. The presence and conversion campaigns of so many Christian missionaries on Islamic territory, and the tendency of Muslims to view Christian NGOs as agents of the US government, has made Christianity appear to be an increasingly genuine threat to Islam's survival. Few acts are more universally detested in the Islamic world than that of a Muslim who decides to leave his faith for another. As a result, Salafists and other militants appear to be eager to capture Christian relief workers and to use videos of them not only to humiliate the captive's government, but to warn Christians against proselytizing and present Muslim audiences with seemingly incontrovertible evidence that "Christian crusaders" are out to destroy Islam.

## **Item 2: Defeat the Message-Defeat the Terrorist**

Communication is one of the most important weapons a terrorist group possesses. Terrorist communications traditionally have been limited to the area of operation in which the terrorism group operates. With the global introduction of the Internet and World Wide Web, terrorists have the ability to communicate globally now. Al-Qaeda ([Group Profile](#)) has long understood this and has often issued directed communications in this manner. Al-Qaeda has used a media spokesman and issued communications in the form of written statements, audio tapes, videotapes, and posted communications to websites. But, in the last 10 years, there has been a shift in how communications have been distributed by terrorists. Years ago, most Islamists terrorist propaganda communications consisted of written forms, audio, and Beta tapes. Examples of these are some of the earlier video and audiotapes circulated in mosques, souks, and backrooms in Peshawar, Kabul, and Riyadh. Today Al-Qaeda sympathizers and supporters can receive communications, statements, and videos via the Internet and websites. More protected communications can be sent to chat rooms and password-protected sites that become much more difficult to detect.

While the means of communications is important, who is communicating the message and what is communicated via audio and the visuals are even more important to gain the attention of the targeted audience. Propaganda ministers and advertising executives have understood the power of an "eye and ear catching" piece of communication. Who is actually seen or mentioned by name in these communications can be a show of support for an up-and-coming individual. To be seen with the leader of a movement or group confirms the status of that individual. The proximity of Sulaiman Abu Ghaith, one of the original spokesmen for Al-Qaeda in some of Osama Bin Laden's videos gave him status. Sulaiman Abu Ghaith was often seated next to Bin Laden and Ayman Al-Zawahiri in a number of earlier videos released by Al-Qaeda.

Osama Bin Laden, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, and Abu Musa'ab Al-Zarqawi have communicated in broad ideological statements. There are often central themes that these leaders want to communicate and reinforce. In reviewing a number of statements issued by these terrorist leaders, some central themes continue to show up. These include:

- appeals to targeted audiences;
- anti-Semitic and anti-Crusader rhetoric;
- anti Al-Saud and anti-Hashemite rhetoric;
- statements of liberation for Palestine;
- statements of liberation for Iraq;
- Quranic verses;
- Al-Qaeda's defensive jihad;
- statements praising Al-Qaeda leaders, brothers, and operations



- statements urging additional attacks on America.

Al-Qaeda's media team has created a wall in an attempt to protect their ability to communicate. These efforts are to enable Al-Qaeda's leadership to continue to communicate with their targeted global audience. Counter-terrorism operations have also hindered Al-Qaeda's ability to communicate on a short-term and regular basis. Thus, we often see regional commanders of Al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia ([Group Profile](#)) and Iraq ([Group Profile](#)) issue statements, describe their victories, announce the martyrdom of their brothers and update their sympathizers. They are also using these communications to seek additional finances and recruits. Abu Musa'ab al-Zarqawi pledged his support to Osama Bin Laden in a statement issued on the World Wide Web. Zarqawi was seeking a global audience when he issued his *bayat* to Bin Laden. By using technology, Zarqawi is able to increase his ability to communicate not only within his area of operation, but also worldwide. Some of the above mentioned themes can be seen in Zarqawi's statement below:

*The Commander Abu Musa'ab al-Zarqawi's pledge of allegiance to the Sheikh of the Mujahideen Osama Bin Laden. To the anger of the enemies of God and the joy of every Muslim, In the name of God, the Merciful and the Compassionate*

*Praise God who lines up the ranks of Mujahideen and divides the unity of the Infidels, Praise to God who says "Stay together as God's group and do not divide," and peace and blessings upon the believers. This is a gathering of the ranks in the face of the enemies of the religion, in the style of he who was harshest to the infidels and also the most compassionate. Peace and blessings on his friends and companions who raised the sword of truth in one hand, destroying the heads of deception.*

Osama Bin Laden, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, and Abu Musa'ab Al Zarqawi will continue to motivate, incite, and recruit using statements directed to targeted audiences via the Internet. Understanding the power of communication is important if we are going to defeat terrorism. Defeat the message of the terrorist, and you can defeat the terrorist. Defeating these directed messages limits the terrorist's ability to communicate broadly, limits their ability to recruit globally, and limits their ability to attract personal and financial support.

### Item 3: Al Qaeda's On-line Underground Railroad

Evidence shows that Al-Qaeda and its broader ideological movement use the virtual sanctuary of the Internet to disseminate propaganda, wage psychological warfare, recruit potential operatives, raise funds, train members and sympathizers, and exercise command and control over its amorphous network. It is widely believed that the Internet allows Al-Qaeda to accomplish the above tasks in relative anonymity. However, as western intelligence and law enforcement officials continue to adapt to Al-Qaeda's on-line *modus operandi*, the sanctuary of the Internet has become less secure.

As a result, Al-Qaeda operatives and supporters have adapted their on-line tactics to increase the group's operational security. One example of how Al-Qaeda supporters and operatives adapted their tactics is the use of proxy servers as a means to protect their on-line identities. A proxy server acts as an intermediary between the originating Internet connection, i.e. the Al-Qaeda operative or supporter, and the destination website. In some cases, the proxy server will strip away the IP address of the originating Internet connection, thereby obscuring the identity of the Al-Qaeda operative or supporter.

Evidence of Al-Qaeda's increased use of proxy servers can be found in postings to the group's affiliated message boards. One particular message posted in January 2005 listed hundreds of proxy servers. An analysis of this list of proxy servers reveals important information about Al-Qaeda online *modus operandi*.

First, the list of servers appears to be an original compilation of available proxies. The individual proxy servers listed in the Al-Qaeda forum were more than likely gathered from other websites that host information on available proxy servers. The effort required to build this list indicates that Al-Qaeda operatives and supporters place a premium on operational security and will invest the effort required to ensure their lines of Internet-based communications are protected.





In addition, a random sampling reveals that over 76% of the proxy servers listed on the Al-Qaeda website are located in Japan ([Country Profile](#)), China ([Country Profile](#)), Korea ([Country Profile](#)), Taiwan ([Country Profile](#)), Hong Kong ([Country Profile](#)), or Singapore ([Country Profile](#)). It is apparent that Al-Qaeda operatives and supporters prefer proxies located in the Far East. This conclusion is further bolstered by a message posted to an Al-Qaeda web forum that states, "Perhaps we preferred Japanese sites...because the links are instant, without a wait" and "Japan's first priority is not counter terrorism." It, therefore, seems that this list of proxy servers was gathered to serve the need for speed and security required by Al-Qaeda supporters and operatives located in the Middle East.

However, it is also possible that the overwhelming percentage of proxies located in the Far East reflects the increased infection rates of Asian computers. As broadband availability has increased throughout Asia there has been a corresponding rise in the number of infected computers. The analysis of the list of proxy servers posted to the Al-Qaeda website reveals that a large percentage of the posted servers were blacklisted. It, therefore, appears that hackers compromised many of these servers to create a network of spam relays. Al-Qaeda operatives and supporters are then able to piggyback off these vulnerable machines and use them as proxies. This shows how Al-Qaeda operatives rely on poor security practices on the part of negligent systems administrators to bolster the on-line campaign.

While Al-Qaeda's use of publicized proxy servers has the potential to further protect the identity of the group's operatives and supporters, the use of these servers is not a foolproof strategy. Most obviously, publishing a list of proxy servers on a known Al-Qaeda forum is the functional equivalent to a Cold War era spy publishing a list of dead drop locations in the newspaper. Simply stated, Al-Qaeda operatives and supporters have effectively told Western intelligence and law enforcement officials which servers they will use to connect to the Internet. As a result, should these intelligence and law enforcement officials decide to monitor these proxy servers, they should be able to observe the true location of Al-Qaeda operatives and supporters and the websites they are visiting.

Al Qaeda's increased use of proxy servers should be properly viewed as both a challenge and an opportunity. While a proxy server does offer Al-Qaeda operatives and supporters a high degree of anonymity, they also offer Western intelligence and law enforcement officials the opportunity to eavesdrop on Al-Qaeda's Internet-based lines of communication.

## **Item 4: Video: Execution of Badr members by AQ in Iraq**

A video attributed to Al-Qaeda in Iraq ([Group Profile](#)) was released earlier this month. The video showed the murders of four men on a street corner in Iraq ([Country Profile](#)). Two gun-wielding men cross a street, round four men into a circle, and begin shooting at the four. As the bodies lie on the ground, the two gun-wielding men yell "God is Greatest." An Arabic description runs beneath the tape, explaining that the victims are members of the Shiite Badr Brigade, and the executioners belong to the Omar Corps, a unit within the Al-Qaeda in Iraq organization charged with eradicating Badr members. A translation of the attack description reads:

[begin translation]

The murder of four members of the impure al-Ghadr Corps of treason by the thwarting hand of the Omar Corps

[end translation]

The filming of a terrorist event is an effective propaganda tool originally utilized by the Lebanese Hezbollah ([Group Profile](#)). In this case, Al Qaeda in Iraq similarly used a pre-positioned cameraman to film an attack and used Internet websites to project their footage. The video demonstrates the group's effectiveness in perpetrating operations and positions the Omar Corps as defenders of the Sunni faith by attacking a Shiite militia, which is linked to the torture and killing of Sunni Muslims. Furthermore, the daylight public execution sends a message to those linked with the Badr Brigade--or any Iraqi cooperating with the Iraqi government--that they are vulnerable at any time and at any location.



The use of language in the description of the attack is also significant. The Badr Brigade is described as impure or unclean. And the name of "Badr," which is a location associated with an early monumental battle for Muslims, is changed to "Ghadr," meaning treason or betrayal of faith. Referring to the Badr Brigade as the "dirty corps of treason" stems from their cooperation with the Coalition forces occupying Iraq. The term may also be a reference to Badr members' support of Iran ([Country Profile](#)) during the Iran-Iraq War, implicitly discrediting the organization to Iraqi nationalists.

Lastly, Al-Qaeda in Iraq is attempting to undermine the current Iraqi government by creating chaos in the country and exacerbating a civil war. The religious tensions are rife in Iraq. The Badr Brigades (officially the Badr Organization, since 2003), has been accused of executing Sunni Muslims in Iraq and was reportedly running two secretive Interior Ministry prisons that were starving, torturing, and killing Sunni Muslims. They are the militant wing of Iraq's most powerful Shiite political party, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), which is closely aligned with the Shiite theocracy of Iran. Al-Qaeda in Iraq will continue to attack Badr members, seeking sympathy and support from a Sunni Iraqi population that fears the effects of a Shiite dominated Iraqi government.

This video is available by request.

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