

Efforts to carry out electronic Jihad on the part of the Jihadi online forum members

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Background

The "Islam on-line" website reported on August 25th 2008 that attacking American and Israeli websites is considered "electronic Jihad"¹. In the report it was stated that the "Al-Azhar" Religious Ruling Committee has published a "fatwa" (religious ruling) allowing the hacking of American and Israeli websites damaging to Islam and the Muslims, in what is called "electronic Jihad". The fatwa said that "Jihad was set in Muslim tradition so that the word of truth [Islam – the translator] will rule, and in order to help the exploited and protect the religion, the honor, the homeland, the liberty and the human dignity [...]". Therefore electronic Jihad appearing on websites is allowed, according to the Muslim religion, as it is one of the means of resistance against the enemy.

The global Jihad organizations recognized the huge potential embodied in the internet as a tool for propaganda, publicity and the passing on of operational information by publishing guidebooks, magazines, movies and translations into foreign languages of declarations made by senior Al-Qaeda members and more². The intensive use of the internet made by these organizations has received comprehensive review in a report written by the United States Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs on May 8th 2008³. These organizations show impressive expertise in new technological knowledge, in programs and websites that can help them in their war of propaganda.

¹ http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1219339702875&pagename=Zone-Arabic-Shariah%2FSRALayout

² For an example of publications by the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, see: http://ict.org.il/Portals/0/Internet%20Monitoring%20Group/JWMG_Saudi%20Report.pdf, <http://ict.org.il/Portals/0/Internet%20Monitoring%20Group/JWMG%20-%20Report%20Summary%20-%2028.10.2008%20.pdf>, <http://ict.org.il/Portals/0/Internet%20Monitoring%20Group/JWMG%20-%20Al-Qaeda%20Invests%20In%20Propaganda%20for%20Spanish-Speaking%20Target%20Audiences.pdf>

³ The report is titled: "Violent Islamist Extremism, The Internet, and the Homegrown Terrorist Threat". See: <http://hsgac.senate.gov/public/files/IslamistReport.pdf>

As part of the war raging on the internet, it seems that electronic Jihad is a central component in the activity of global Jihad organizations against American, European and Israeli websites.

The use of fictitious e-mails

On December 14th 2008 one of the surfers at the Jihadi online forum "Al-Mujahideen Al-Electroniya" posted a piece titled: "A quick and easy way for creating fictitious e-mails and their uses (important for Jihad supporters)". According to the surfer, in the scope of electronic Jihad, fictitious e-mails can be used, to allow "the participation in various websites and forums, so that we can activate in this way an unlimited number of e-mails, that will be active for several hours only".

The online surfer believes "this technology is important for three reasons":

1. The security aspect: "in this way you will not need to use the personal e-mail, where your personal details are located while participating in online forums and websites [...] which may be detrimental... one should be wary of this".
2. The technical aspect: "in this way you can participate and activate your participation in forums and websites in less than two minutes, in case your account was terminated (for example, due to the publication of Jihadi content). You will not need to set up e-mail accounts on "Google" or "Yahoo" every time your account is terminated".
3. The propaganda aspect: "the participation on the websites becomes quicker. This way you can set up three accounts a day on YouTube, for example, and publicize through three accounts the Mujahideen publications. In this way you will make it harder for YouTube to locate the Jihadi publications and remove them. And if one account will be removed you will still have two additional accounts".

The modus operandi: according to the online surfer the implementation of his suggestion is true only for FireFox browsers, due to a unique application named: "Temporary Inbox", allowing the creation of fictitious e-mails.⁴



Screen grab of the application

The electronic invasion – attacking Western internet websites

On January 15th 2009 one of the surfers⁵ at the Jihadi online forum "Al-Shumukh" posted a piece titled: "The greatest electronic invasion in the world [...]". The surfer states that in the scope of the various campaigns run by the Jihad warriors on the forums and websites, he has noticed a call for a planned and wide-spread "propaganda invasion" for the Islamic nation. According to him, this "invasion" will be different than all previous "invasions and campaigns", as far as its deployments and scope are concerned.

The campaign of the electronic invasion

In this stage the brothers are required to spread a call for hackers and computer experts to join the "great invasion for the aid of the Islamic nation" on the Islamic and Arabic websites. To that end, cooperation between the website

⁴ <http://majahden.com/vb/showthread.php?t=16064>

⁵ This is a relatively new surfer, who has posted 51 posts so far.

owners is required, so that they too will be recruited to the campaign by publishing an announcement or clarification on their forums regarding the nature of the invasion. The surfer adds that all the campaigns should be centralized to one site that should contain "a welcome category" for the hackers and computer experts, containing words of thanks in order to boost their morale in face of the planned invasion. The surfer preferred this category be supervised by "one of the brothers who has some expertise in this field so that he defines for those joining, the characteristics and way of action, and also the time and starting point".

The objective of the campaign

"Destroying anti-Islamic Jewish and Crusader websites by any means. Penetrating crusader e-mails".

The advantage of the campaign

- a. Keeping the enemy busy with the propaganda aspect and tightening the noose around him.
- b. Distracting the enemy from the electronic war.
- c. Weakening the enemy's efforts and trying to harm him "by crashing a large number of his propaganda and commercial websites".
- d. Expertise and knowledge that will be acquired by the participants in the invasion in view of the cooperation between them. As far as the surfer is concerned, this is the greatest advantage.

A preaching campaign that will spur those in the field of Da'awa

There is a need to spread this campaign on websites and forums.

The surfer states that he has tried to activate such a campaign "a few days ago on the 'Ana Muslim' Jihadi forum but has failed for a number of reasons":

- a. Many surfers, participating in the forum, do not take the time to respond to the correspondence in the forum and prefer "to take and not to give". To fix this failure one of the learned sheikhs should be asked to approach, in writing, religious scholars and preachers, and ask that they take part in this.
- b. A large number of email accounts do not receive messages from Yahoo, Hotmail or Gmail. "I ask our brothers to prepare for us the sheikhs' e-mail addresses or at least provide us with their personal websites so that we can send them messages".
- c. There is a way to send hundreds of messages per minute and therefore "I ask the brothers who have expertise or knowledge about it to clarify to us this method in a simple way so that everyone can benefit".

The advantage of the campaign

- a. "Release" from the protection of the religious scholars. The participants of the campaign can criticise the crimes of the Zionists and the crusaders while the heads of the Arab countries and the religious scholars keep quite on the matter.
- b. Creating an awe-inspiring effect to the world regarding the firm stand of the Islamic nation.

An educational campaign and gathering all that is related to the war in Gaza

The objective of the campaign

Gathering all the materials regarding the war in Gaza including audio segments, movie clips, articles etc. To that end "I ask the forum supervisor [Al-Shumukh] responsible for the audio category to authorize this campaign and establish 4 categories to serve it:

- a. A special category for movies.

- b. A special category for audio segments.
- c. A special category for articles.
- d. A special category for photographs.

The advantage of the campaign

Gathering all the materials on the subject, this will enable keeping them and allowing visitors to get to know the subject.

An awareness and preaching campaign for youth

The objective of the campaign

To warn youth about inappropriate forums and websites, i.e., those that mislead the youth and direct them against the religion and distract them from the problems of the Islamic nation, according to the plan of western propaganda. "It is our duty to clarify for them their duty in face of their nation especially in this time".

The advantage of the campaign

- a. Recruiting youth to the aid of religion.
- b. Using the youth for the purpose of "our great electronic invasion against the Zionist-American enemy".

For the success of this invasion, the surfer calls on the forum managers to take the following steps:

- a. To omit the addresses in the forum calling for the above mentioned campaigns.
- b. In case the forum management is unable to do so, it should open a special forum dedicated to the above mentioned plan.

- c. Designing slogans and advertisements with attractive titles that will attract people.
- d. The current forum management should open a special category for complaints, regarding the invasion and the campaigns, to aid in overcoming technical obstacles in the way.
- e. The current forum management should open a special category dedicated to ongoing reports on the contribution of each participant to the plan. In other words, announcements of what each participant has done.
- f. The current forum management should open a special category where one of the participants in the plan will be appointed to analyze the ongoing reports about the rate of progress and the contribution of each participant and publish these results "twice each day".

The advantage of the campaign

- a. Locating weak spots and finding solutions.
- b. Competition between brothers, which will encourage them to contribute more to the plan.
- c. Spurring the brothers to cooperation and to electronic warfare.
- d. Boosting the brothers' morale.⁶

Call for hacking e-mails in Germany

On January 27th 2009 one of the "Al-Leyoth" Jihadi forum supervisors posted a piece regarding the hacking of e-mails in Germany on behalf of the "Jihadi Invasion of the Internet Brigades". In this piece the forum supervisor calls his readers to come to the aid of the global Jihad by way of electronic warfare that

⁶ <http://www.shamikh.com/vb/showthread.php?t=32098>

will focus on "a gathering of as many as possible German e-mails". According to the supervisor, any Muslim can join this initiative.

According to him, each participant should gather between 150 to 200 e-mails connected to a certain occupation, such as doctors. He presents the internet search engines as a tool for finding e-mails from Germany, and details the desired fields of occupation, according to the following order:

1. Universities, institutes, schools, teachers.
2. Hospitals, doctors, medical centers, HMO's.
3. Government offices, government institutions, government websites.
4. Legal organizations, offices and affiliates of international organizations in Germany, associations and bureaus.
5. Broadcast stations, newspapers, magazines, satellite channels.
6. Engineers, advisors, lawyers, judges.
7. Plant sites in Germany and anything related to the industry.
8. Marine, aerial and land transport companies.
9. Express mail companies, monetary exchange companies.
10. Restaurants, hotels, clothing and shoe companies.
11. Service companies, internet services, cable services, housecleaning, gardening companies.
12. Museums, opera houses, theatres, movie theatres.
13. German soccer sports clubs, swimming clubs, basketball clubs and more.
14. Anything of importance to the German society and not mentioned here.

The forum supervisor also provides some internet search words in German and proposes the use of the "Google" translation tool. In addition he asks the

participants to take precautionary steps and disguise their IP's and presents a detailed technical explanation on how to disguise it⁷. According to him, the latest version of the FireFox browser should be used and the TOR⁸ software should be installed on it. In order to complete the action, the forum supervisor directs the surfers to the www.ip2location.com site to check if the IP is indeed disguised.

It should be noted that the timing of this initiative to create a database of e-mail addresses of the various figures and organizations in Germany, comes after the threat given by "Abu Talha the German" on January 18th 2009 to the German government, regarding the carrying out of a terrorist attack on its land. It is possible that there is an intention to spread propaganda and information materials to these e-mail addresses surrounding this threat, so as to increase the sense of fear and anxiety amongst the German people, as part of the psychological warfare.⁹

Summary and insight

The Jihadi forums continue to be an active and fertile ground for surfers, wishing to express their support in Jihad activities and to contribute their part in the campaign against the west, much like in this case, by way of initiating electronic warfare. In this correspondence, the surfer asks the forum members and experts in the field to recruit themselves to a wide spread electronic war and to a propaganda war against the west. He suggests a comprehensive plan, and details the various stages and the rationale of each stage.

⁷ <http://www.levoth.com/vb/showthread.php?t=2665>

⁸ This software disguises identifying details of the computer and enables safe anonymous surfing. For the software website see: <http://www.torproject.org>

⁹ <http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/nefasahabgerman0109.pdf>

Despite the great ambition demonstrated by the surfer in his wish to leverage an electronic attack, it seems that his plan does not make much impact or receive many responses. One of the surfers even states as a response that he has noticed that about 20 surfers read the piece but did not respond or agree to help this initiative. It is possible that the lack of response on the part of the surfers to this initiative stems from the fact the surfer is relatively new to the website, and therefore they are not eager to join his plan and volunteer details about themselves. It is also possible that this surfer's preference to settle for one forum ("Al-Shumukh") as a platform for the planned electronic attack, and the fact he has not approached other Jihadi forums, contributes too to the insufficient response.