

Terrorism, hate Web sites on the rise

Mixed news

The Los Angeles CA-based Simon Wiesenthal Center (SWC) and the Canadian Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre (FSWC) in Toronto, last month released their annual report on the dark side of the Internet, *Digital Terrorism and Hate 2006*, at an international launch event in Ottawa.

The main news in this eighth annual update of the interactive CD report is that the number of known terror and hate Web sites, newsgroups, blogs, chat rooms and online clubs worldwide has now passed 6,000 — a 20 per cent increase over the previous year.

“It’s not so much the numbers, any more,” however, noted SWC Associate Dean, Rabbi Abraham Cooper, representing the LA Center at the launch. “International terrorists now see the Internet as a core component of what they do.”

In fact, Cooper says, the Internet has become a virtual ‘university’ for terrorists, making available manuals on how to build ‘dirty’ bombs and brew up poison gas, tutorials on how to use global positioning (GPS) devices, tactics for attacking motorcades and armoured vehicles — even ‘how-to’ videos for suicide bombers.

Problems evolve with the tech

The materials available to terrorists and hate mongers on the Net are not only becoming more numerous and diverse, Cooper says. They are also becoming more technically sophisticated. Just a few years ago, terror and hate Web sites were largely static, HTML-formatted efforts. Today, they are becoming increasingly sophisticated, employing the latest in video, animation and other technologies to get their message across.

“Every new technical advance is being incorporated by terrorists [in their online efforts],” Cooper warns.

In a broader sense, Cooper observes, the current convergence of the Internet with fast-evolving communi-



Harvey Goldberg (far right) of the CHRC receives a copy of *Digital Terrorism & Hate 2006* from (left to right) Rabbi Abraham Cooper, Leo Adler and Avi Benlolo, FSWC President and CEO, at the Ottawa launch. (Photo: The Communications Group)

cation technologies such as smart phones and GPS devices potentially offers terrorists enhanced worldwide command and control functionality.

Special concerns

Of special concern to the authors of the report is the increasing tendency of hate groups to target children and young people with their online offerings.

Leo Adler, National Affairs Director of FSWC, says hate sites which masquerade as educational resources remain a major concern. These sites may also offer games, videos, music downloads or even clothing items bearing hate symbols or slogans.

Adler also notes that immigration remains the number one focus of Canadian-based and Canadian-targeted hate Web sites. Specifically, Adler says, the number of Web sites promoting hate against Islamics has grown sharply since the terrorist attacks in New York City on September 11, 2001.

Canada a role model


Significantly, the report states that most Canadian-targeted hate Web sites today are not hosted on Canadian servers. In fact, Adler notes, many are hosted on US servers where such content can legally remain on display due to

that country’s fundamental constitutional protection for freedom of speech.

In contrast, Adler says, Canada has emerged in recent years as an international role model for dealing with online terrorism and hate, citing FSWC’s strong alliance with the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) and the Canadian Association of Internet Providers (CAIP).

What you can do

Anyone who comes across a Web site which they believe promotes terrorism or hate is invited to send the URL to a new e-mail address (digitalhate@wiesenthal.net) which is monitored directly by FSWC researchers. Law enforcement officials can contact FSWC in Toronto, directly.

Copies of the *Digital Terrorism and Hate 2006* report are available free of charge to law enforcement officials, educational institutions and the media, and can be purchased by anyone directly from the SWC online store at: <http://www.wiesenthal.com/>. 

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