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A comparative look at two cultural sub-groups online ventures

Online Jihad versus Gaming Industry

While the internet is the center of attention for the jihadists as well as the contemporary gaming industry, the article aims to provide the reader with a controversial comparison: both groups are heavily active on the internet, using similar modes, such as forums, blogs, YouTube, websites and social networks (facebook) and both groups consist of a young generation that was brought up with computers. Similar to the gaming industry, the jihadists encourage and disseminate also “user generated contents” that have led to an increase of jihadist propaganda. Similar patterns can be found among fans and followers of the gaming industry, who in the meantime are in great parts incorporated in the industry’s actual process of designing games and whose feedback can lead to the surrender of new projects. The comparison of both groups intends to show the reader how smart, professional and technically able the internet is being exploited by contemporary terror groups such as al-Qa’ida.

"DO NOT SEND A SPY WHERE A SCHOOLBOY CAN GO" – ROBERT DAVID STEELE.

“Raids on forums and blogs – today it’s your websites and tomorrow it’s your soil and territory, o servant of the cross! Call to every brother who has a blog and who has expertise of blogs to participate with us in this blessed raid” – (Al-Hakim 2009).

The intention of this article simply is to provide the reader with some observations of the internet by the author. The internet in its full spectrum is being used by many groups and organizations of all kind using various social networking platforms or other elements of the contemporary internet. However, the two groups are henceforth compared in a practical stance. Both who are in great parts exclusively using the internet and who are not only both highly dependent on the World Wide Web, are also in part results of this specific, fast changing and influential development:

The Gaming Industry (GI) and al-Qa’ida (AQ). While surfing the internet over the past years, being within AQ’s online spheres as well as keeping track of recent developments of the GI (out of personal curiosity, of course), the similarity of both of these characteristic groups is their apparent appeal to a particularly younger generation, which possess an outstanding IT-fluency. What once was confined to a selected few, so-called computer freaks, a technical and intellectual avant-garde in the early to late nineties, who had as much the technical capacities as well as personal abilities to use, shape and alter the internet, is in the meantime a common thing for the majority and part of everyday life.

The technical diversity with the possibilities of colorful, intercultural and multilingual filmed and audio recorded data as well as writings in general make up wide parts of the richness of the contemporary internet that is being used, consumed and authored by countless people worldwide,
thus providing the global community with
a fruitful field in which various web-based
sub-cultures have **unfolded** and developed
over the past years. The possibilities men-
tioned are in parts developed and carried
by those who use the internet, namely the
individual user and specific online groups.
Both AQ and GI are groups who **deploy**
their advertisements, their propaganda,
their promotional trailers and filmed sui-
cide bombing clips online, within a genre-
based specific cluster (Marin/Wellmann 2009)
and within a characteristic framework. However, and this is the main obser-
vation and the underlying fundamental
principle of this article, both groups, like
many others on the so called “web 2.0”
are using same and similar means of
promoting their specific **notions**, ideas,
products, videos and writings, with a simi-
lar effect on what users are contributing in
terms of technical **proficiency** within a
“cult” or “pop-cultural” content. This dis-
semination and this borderless **virtually**
indefinite free public space grants the in-
dividual followers, fans or adherents the
possibility to have the exact same means
and potentials of replying and becoming
an interactive (counter-)part of the indi-
vidual genre-based cluster. For the gaming
industry, this may be by being an online
“gamer” participating in and playing
various electronic games such as “Chess-
master – Grandmaster Edition”, “World of
**Warcraft**” or the more **infamous** and
publicly discredited “Counter Strike” by
the successful publisher Valve'. Generally,
the GI can be seen as an avant-garde when
it comes to promoting products (games)
on the internet. The avant-gardism of the
GI includes successfully promoting new
and upcoming video games on all levels of
the internet, reaching out to a huge crowd
on a global scale.

While the crowd of jihadist followers,
forum-members and participants is consu-
ming mostly Arabic based videos, writings
and other forms of propaganda, such as
pictures, the majority can best be termed as
“armchair jihadists” who live and dwell
within the online spheres of AQ and have
the ultimate wish to join the real-life
Mujahidin. The process of radicalization
and its long-term aspired outcome of being
recruited or at least inspired to undertake in-
dividual operations (al-Suri 2004) is **craf-
ted** in a professional and ideological man-
ner by the Senior and Junior Leadership
circles of AQ. Many “armchair jihadists”
ador to the specifically determined inter-
pretation of religious concepts chosen by
the ideological authoritative circles of AQ
and can see a practical and mostly military
output of these definitions within AQ’s ex-
tensive library of videos (Hafez 2007).

**The GI’s fans, on the other hand, the so called **“gamers”**, are the ones using the internet with all its options and possibilities to meet and mostly play multi-player games online.**

The GI could be termed as the present
avant-garde of the “web 2.0”, an industry
that has over the recent years subsequently
designed games and gaming products that
are in some parts exclusively played with
others over the internet. The avant-gardism
set by this particular industry is bound to
the core technical developments and foun-
dations of the world’s hard- and in wide
parts software manufacturers, that are being
professionally and for pure commercial rea-
sons exploited by the GI. With the dawn of
blogs and online forums, facebook, YouTube
and Twitter, besides the “classi-
cal” websites, the GI had been one of the
first enterprises with its popular branches
and genres that extensively used this “web
2.0” functionality in a comprehensive way
for its entrepreneurial purposes.
Thus the GI is one of the pioneers when it comes to using a comprehensive spectrum of the internet for its promotions to reach out to a maximum number of potentially interested people online. The offerings span from promotional tours within Facebook to meticulous updates regarding specific game developments, upcoming publication dates to announcements within official and non-official forums and a wave of websites and blogs that publish general information to the immense gamer community. Furthermore fans and gamers establish blogs and create Facebook groups by themselves on their own account and share their personal thoughts and game experience. In some cases, during stages of introducing new games, the GI released demos, video clips, graphical impressions and level designs for the fans to comment and follow up within the spheres of the GI’s internet. In many cases official forums exist where the various gamers can comment, rate or criticize the game – and are moderated by official administrators and read by the development team. But the internet also generates plenty of critical thought that is freely disseminated – unlike within the AQ controlled online spheres, where most critics are mostly immediately edited or even banned. The broader and civil spectrum of gamers has its effects on the various gaming dedicated news outlets and blogs that pick up current trends from the forums and webpages of clans who are in some cases heavily criticizing the GI and have in the past even forced the industry to respond.

Similarly, various political parties have picked up this online trend and discovered its resources. In most cases political parties are just as much active on Facebook and YouTube besides having various blogs to promote their cause. One example is Austria’s President Heinz Fischer who just recently announced via his homepage and YouTube his aspired re-election campaign in 2010 – he is also active on Facebook. US President Barack Obama’s YouTube Channel is one of the main outlets to regularly address the nation – a cheap, quick and easy to use platform that terror networks and subgroups such as AQ have picked up in previous years by their technical understanding and their need to facilitate the internet by all means as strategic propaganda platforms. AQ’s “Islamic State Iraq” YouTube Channel shows in some parts of its videos sniper attacks, IED or suicide operations “against the Crusader forces” in a quickly accessible format and nevertheless offers the high quality videos within its various forums for download. Just like fans and followers of the GI, the online jihadists have created independent channels on YouTube as well and are re-hosting, re-disseminating and re-publishing the publications of AQ and its affiliated torrents.

WHAT DOES ALL OF THIS HAVE TO DO WITH AQ? WHY COMPARE THE GI WITH AQ?
As stated, the same means and mechanisms offered to a global and local audience through the facilities of the internet
and specifically the “web 2.0” have been penetrated and exploited by AQ systematically. Since the dawn of the internet and its discovery by AQ, that subsequently started hosting its propaganda and magazines systematically under the auspices of the Saudi AQ branch in 2003 (Prucha 2010), the internet has gained vital importance for AQ and its related torrents and other jihadist – primarily Arabic speaking – groups worldwide. With blogs established, forums created, facebook profiles and groups set up and YouTube as a free and easy to use platform to quickly spread jihadist videos, AQ has substantially infiltrated the internet and proudly calls this the “raids on websites, blogs and forums” and has incorporated the internet as the vital backbone for radicalization, motivation and recruitment of potential online siblings. Another important aspect for AQ and its sympathizers are the various groups that in most parts seem to be publishing exclusively online and exclusively via jihadist forums, such as the Global Media Front (GIMF), or the Ansar Mailing List Newsletter, to name two of many. Furthermore a number of “media” and “language departments” strive to supply a growing community of online jihadists with non-Arabic material, increasingly in German next to English, Urdu, Dari, Pashto or Russian translations of videos and ideological writings.

**Over the years sub-torrents adhering to the global AQ ideology deployed local messages and threats in their local language.**

Just as the GI has certainly discovered the multi-lingual setting of the internet, so has AQ and seeks to speak out for and to all Muslims who follow their radical creed and militancy. The internet does not only enable AQ to rapidly respond to claims made by either Western media or governments, but it allows AQ to issue its “truth” as in contrast to the “lies”. The up-to-date responsive character of AQ in a highly professional ideological as well as technical manner may be one of its reasons of success as a global terror group which has led to various mergers with other radical-Islamist or jihadist groups in the past. When the Taliban kidnapped a group of South Korean Christian missionaries in Afghanistan, it was the leadership of AQ under Abu Yahya al-Libi who defended, justified and praised the action of “our fellow Mujahidin”. Also the notion was systematically reinforced and emphasized by al-Libi that AQ and Taliban are indeed fighting together for the same cause and the identical sake (al-Libi 2007). AQ has what the German Red Army Faction could only dream of and what was frequently emphasized in their writings and statements in the 1970s, in planning “the next steps” (ID-Verlag 1997): Comprising propaganda for the armed struggle; explaining the masses why it is necessary and unavoidable and how it can be prepared (conspiratorial leaflets and graffiti).

AQ on a technical stance like most online active groups, including the GI, has taken up the next steps that are perhaps a logical result of the contemporary technological development. Both groups are part of what can be termed a youthful “pop-cultural movement” that draw attention on the internet by specific messages and products and both groups have a specific language, graphical symbols in a highly individual iconography limited within its culture that is confined to the individual influence zones. While the same AQ related videos can be found within facebook, there are also specific groups that use fbolkbook to upload, host and propagate their personally made graphics, pictures and videos. What the GI terms as “user genera-
ted content”, that can even consist of individually programmed “modifications” (mod) for games, also applies to torrents of AQ and its skillful members who “modify” in their terms and in their worldview various pictures and subsequently republish them in ideologically adherent but independent groups on platforms like Facebook.

Quelle: Internet

”Jihad solves everything” – on facebook

With particular “products” openly broadcast on the internet, always easy to download and install, a specific “corporate guideline” has unfolded that makes sense for the GI but is something of a surprise for AQ and its subgroups. The icons, names, symbols and general layouts of documents and videos used provide a coherent guideline that is used and respected within both online groups. However it must be noted that the graphical violence addressed by AQ as well as the purely virtual mode of violence hosted by the GI very much differ from each other even if some icons and pictures may suggest a greater relationship – that AQ very well exploits for its purposes. Contrary to the fact that both groups have overlapping elements, the sympathizing online jihadists are the ones exposed to extreme forms of real violence – with a real-life ideological jihadist agenda and actual battle zones portrayed in romantic pictures – it is the jihadists who, unlike the gamers of online or multiplayer games, are propagating the various forms of violence shown within a tight radical ideology (Prucha 2010; al-Batush 2009; Bonney 2004), using similar practical and technical methods as the gamers (or political parties). Gamers are consumers of a legal content. This may naturally include so-called “first person shooters” (FPS), or “killer games” and are neither exposed to real forms of violence and bloodshed and do not suggest to commit such acts in real life (Williams/Skoric 2005). Nevertheless such games have a certain reputation, despite various studies and assertions. “A longitudinal study of an online violent video game with a control group tested for changes in aggressive cognitions and behaviors. The findings did not support the assertion that a violent game will cause substantial increases in real-world aggression” (Williams/Skoric 2005).

The majority of the consumers of the GI simply enjoy various games and genres although some controversial games have been publicly branded as having inspired real forms of crimes or made them possible, such as the worldwide school shootings.
Screenshot of the Indonesian language forum at-Tawbah that hosts the same content from the Arabic forums – the videos are subtitled. On the right the main symbol of the forum proudly shows a right arm with its index finger extended to the sky, to indicate the “oneness of God” (tawheed), before an A.K. 47 with the banner of the “Islamic State of Iraq”. Needless to say the laptop is the prime and perhaps only media outlet and the basic foundation (and all that’s needed) for the jihadists’ propaganda warfare in the 21st century. The banner of the forum (top of the picture) shows two armed Mujahidin watching an explosion. One of the armed Mujahids is holding a Dragunov sniper rifle, a deadly rifle frequently shown in specially filmed Iraqi sniper attacks as published by the “Islamic State of Iraq” media outlet, al-Furqan, or groups such as the “Islamic Army in Iraq” who dedicated a whole series to their insurgent war hero “Juba, the Baghdad Sniper”. These are the aspired male role models for the generations of armchair jihadists in combination with their real-life male mujahidin role models (either fighting, struggling, praying and alive or deceased, killed “on the path of God”) in the various romanticizing jihad videos published by AQ and its affiliated groups. Everything in this banner has been made in a professional way, with a fantastic 3D graphic that could match many 3D games as well.

THE BEST OF ALL WORLDS – THE BROAD SPECTRUM OF CONTEMPORARY ONLINE JIHADISTS

With many more examples at hand, one last comparison of AQ and the GI shall be made. It may be true to best describe the situation as AQ having the best of all worlds online, as they may freely use, modify or simply propagate specific ideas and concepts within a framework the contemporary jihadists see fit to further their cause. Again, the main promotional tool and platform for the armchair jihadists as well as for real-life battle-hardened leaders are the online forums, and perhaps will remain so over the coming years. Facebook, YouTube and blogs are free, easy to use33 and practical add-ons to spread what the RAF termed “leaflets and graffiti” to reach out for the hearts and minds of a younger generation. While the GI is of course – like other cultural circles – influenced by the current political conditions of the world, the followers of AQ have the freedom to choose what products may seem useful for their jihadist endeavours and what deserves to be condemned and thus banned. Gaining practical experience in military training is a divine command according to AQ’s ideology and so it may be natural that some armchair jihadists in their fantasy world play online games. Besides the constant consummation of mostly Arabic handbooks on mines, sniper rifles, grenades, guerilla and urban warfare tactics, some elements freely roam the GI’s product scale, using whatever games and mindsets suit them. It may be logical to find that with the GI and its fans developing so called “modifications” (mods), add-ons or enhancements for already published games, to keep certain games attractive and thus popular, that a great deal of such mods are purely multi-player based and have a dominating “Western forces versus Oriental looking Insurgents attitude”. For the jihadist the graphical and role-playing elements published by mostly Western GI branches regarding the Arabic-Muslim, Iraq-Palestinian, Afghan Insurgent are nevertheless highly appealing. Any form of warfare, at best against American or Western soldiers, may serve as a parallel to actual conflicts around the world within the Islamic countries that AQ vows to defend and ultimately liberate.
from its direct as well as indirect occupation. One’s violence intense fantasy world of being or becoming a real-life Mujahid is of course fueled by the products of the GI and the resonance one may receive by publishing professionally made pro-jihadist pictures within the forums. Besides the publications of AQ’s warfare (militarily and ideologically) concepts, armchair jihadists may exploit online what was taken by the Lebanese Army as lessons learned in the conflict with the Fatah al-Islam in the Palestinian refugee camp Nahir al-Barid in 2007 (Dagher 2009): how to operate and move according to theoretical handbooks and practical videos in an urban- and guerilla warfare-like condition; understanding the enemy’s aspired movement and setting up concealed positions for sniper attacks or IED’s that gives any guerilla troop an advantage over a state organized hierarchical military.

One example that made its way to the jihadist spheres is the “mod” for Valve’s “Counterstrike” entitled “Insurgency – Modern Infantry Combat”34. Here the individual armchair jihadist can indeed get a feeling as a sniper or a loosely organized cell fighting against a squad of US soldiers. This game consists of several multiplayer maps that have an Iraq like setting where two teams play against one another: The US Army, with different soldiers attributes (engineers, snipers, heavy machine gunner et al.) versus an insurgent group that look like a gang of prime time Hollywood Mujahidin.

Online jihadists are in some parts also fans and followers of the GI product range that may be just as much appealing to them as to anyone else seeking fun, without a jihadist or political agenda. But what is striking, is the deliberate “user generated content” published by various online jihadists, who use games such as “Insurgency – Modern Infantry Warfare” to place manipulated screenshots of the game freely within the online forums, sometimes even in the specific “pictures” section. These pictures are mostly “stamped” with icons of online jihad and equipped with religious slogans and suggest an active combatant role within AQ’s ideology and in contrast to the videos of actual real-life Mujahidin, the online armchair jihadist has the feeling of participating in an actual war that also affects his personal and private life as a “Muslim” – and so far it is being proclaimed by AQ’s huge library of online documents and videos.

Other “mods” and jihadist favored games, mostly FPS35, are also found within the general propaganda of AQ and sometimes are even portrayed in videos uploaded by individual users, mostly “stamped” with jihadist icons of the “Islamic State of Iraq”.

What moves it up the danger-spiral is the combination and the mix of AQ’s ideology that is openly and freely disseminated over the internet, with its various propaganda and media departments. Calling out to spread such propaganda, as it is perceived as the only true interpretation of “Islam”, forum members frequently advise to reach out by all means of the internet: Infiltrating, thus committing “missionary work” in favor of pro-violent and radical interpretations on facebook, YouTube and other, non-jihadist and multi-lingual, forums and to start blogs all over the net. AQ can be
termed as an avant-garde, as it considers itself, and it has been using the internet professionally for the past years and it has proven to be capable of adapting to changed circumstances, may they be virtually online or real-life offline. The GI’s mechanisms to use the internet are closely related to how another technically fit generation understands and considers the internet, namely the followers, the armchair jihadists and actual fighters, bomb makers and the whole leadership caste of AQ.

A picture taken from the “Insurgency – Modern Infantry Warfare” game (during loading process), however, this picture was “stamped” by an online jihadist sympathizer. The ideological and theological implication as based on religious and historical sources has its expression by the “frontier of Islam”. Again we see a brave Mujahid carrying the banner of Jihad, with the Shahada written on it. The “frontier of Islam” is attributed to a comprehensive ideological mindset of AQ globally – basically meaning the defense of “Islamic borders” and “Muslim territory” as set forth by specific religious and religious-historic sources (Prucha 2009).

A picture taken from the “Insurgency – Modern Infantry Warfare” game (during loading process), however, this picture was “stamped” by an online jihadist sympathizer.
led to the general question to what extent an individual can be an online games addict: http://www.askapadwe.com/81/are-a-lot-of-people-really-addicted-to-world-of-warcraft/

* http://www.valvesoftware.com/

The most renowned “armchair jihadist”, Younis Tsouli, who had the alias “Ihabii 007” (“Terrorist 007”) was one of the first generation online jihad sympathizers who used his technical skills to become one of AQ’s chief networker in the West. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4156/is_20080120/ai_n21206775/.

* Mostly termed al-jihad al-fardi, relying on the principle that jihad is an individual obligation valid for all capable Muslims as implied by scholars such as Yusuf al-‘Uyairi (Al-‘Uyairi 2004). Plenty of mostly Arabic documents and sources openly advocate setting up, maintaining and establishing cells of Mujahidin. Most prominently the 1.600 page writing by Abu Mus‘ab al-Suri, who considers practical implications and possible threats to ambitious secret operating – whether active or as “sleeper cells” – worldwide: http://tawhed.ws/dl?i=f3r0098v (Arabic).

A translation of excerpts has been made by Brynjar Lia (Brynjar 2008) with a biography of al-Suri. Additionally Usama bin Ladin describes the importance of well established and connected cells of Mujahidin to carry out operations in general according to the example of the 9/11 hijackers in the as-Sahab Video production “High Hopes, part II”.

* Frequently calls are made to the individual members of AQ’s online spheres to become active and “strike the enemies of God”. Jihad, with all its military interpretation and obligation, is an individual obligation (“fard ‘ayn”) – a concept often repeated by jihadist groups in general. The “Fort Hood Shootings” in Texas, USA, had been instantaneously celebrat-ed by the online jihadists, with Major Nidal Hassan being a “Muslim hero”, a “true Mujahid” according to some statements in jihadist forums, who defended and avenged the Muslims within the heart of the enemy. The implication is that this was an operation accordingly entitled al-jihad al-fardi. Allegedly Major Nidal Hassan was an online sympathizer of AQ internet spheres and had e-mail contact to Anwar al-Awlaki, an open sympathizer and alleged recruiter for AQ: http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/11/13/blogging-imam-who-knew-fort-hood-attacker-and-911-hijacker-goes-silent/?scp=6&sq=fort%20hood&st=cse.

* These videos can be highly appealing to anyone who has read and consumed specific AQ related writings or listened to pro-jihadist sermons (khutba). Some of the videos are of a purely militarily nature and show jihadist implementations of their proclaimed “proper” life as a “Muslim”, committed to God and the alleged divine command of undertaking armed preparations and operations against “the enemies of God”.

** Blogs being part of what is widely claimed being the so-called “web 2.0”, their success is based on the possibility creating a blog easily, very fast and without any or much administrative work. A blog enables any user of the World Wide Web to publish their thoughts, opinion, mindset, articles, videos, pictures et.al., while visitors of these blogs mostly have the chance and are encouraged to post replies, comments or simply congratulations to the blog owner. http://www.problogger.net/archives/2005/02/05/what-is-a-blog/.

** Forums are of general great value, whereas the individual members have the possibility to freely open discussion topics (“threads”) and reply to other members (“postings”). Both subgroups GI and AQ heavily rely on the individuality of their members while by “official” postings and threads members are encouraged to engage in a wanted direction. Within the spheres of AQ as in the GI, the forums particularly are responsible for the unfol-lowing of relevant questions, suggestions, demands and claims by its members that have forced a response as much as from AQ Senior Leadership or the adoption of gaming products by the GI. Forums are often mistaken for chat rooms. Unlike a chat room, however, where information is provided by the participants in real time, by typing or speaking, a forum shows the individual postings submitted by its members over an indefinite period of time, thus they are longer lasting than a chat room.

* www.facebook.com – a “social networking” site, where the individual member can (re-) connect with old friends and join specific groups, become a “fan” of, for example, TV-shows, rock bands, electronic entertainment and so on. All of this is public and by becoming a “fan” of a TV-show, all your friends will know of this and perhaps pick up your taste and follow the very same TV-show as well. In the past years, products have been specifically advertised via facebook, promotional trailers of Hollywood blockbusters for instance can be played as well as web-based interactive mini-games. Besides local and global media on facebook, the GI is using facebook just as much as political parties, like the “Future Movement” of Lebanese Sa‘ad al-Hariri, Hizbullah, torrents of AQ (“Uzbekistan Martyrdom Academy”) or the al-Huthi movement of Yemen/Saudi Arabia. Almost everything can be found on facebook.

* www.youtube.com – an online portal that houses billions of videos. Again, various branches of the international industry advertise their products on YouTube as much as the GI or people who submit their own, private home-made clips they
want to share with the online world. Users have the possibility to comment and rate videos. Hezbollah videos can be found as easily as any AQ related video or the YouTube Channel of Hamas (“Hamas Tube”). Various computer manufacturers have discovered that private users publish commented home-made videos on the type of hardware they are using and have begun to, in some parts, exclusively host their official advertising videos on YouTube. For a nicely written overview of YouTube: http://www.surfnetkids.com/safety/YouTube_what_is_it_and_why_use_it-19026.htm.

YouTube: For a nicely written overview of their official advertising videos on YouTube. For example the “Left 4 Dead” and “Counterstrike” dedicated Clan119: http://www.clan119.com/.


16 http://www.heinzfischer.at/.

17 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hfxQurRwqDA.


19 http://www.youtube.com/user/MrObama.

20 http://www.youtube.com/user/oovOovoo.

21 AQ has over the years also published a wide variety of hacker manuals and programs that enables it members to communicate securely with PGP encryption and other tools.

22 Such as a group of pro-jihadist AQ affiliated individuals, based in Austria’s capital Vienna, who claimed to be members of the GIMF and opened the “Caliphate Voice Channel”. In 2007 two videos in German demanding a withdrawal of German and Austrian troops from Afghanistan had been issued while threatening the corresponding government in case of non-compliance. For a detailed report in German: http://onlinejihad.wordpress.com/2007/03/11/terrordrohungen-gegen-osterr-und-deutschland-auf-soldaten-in-afghanistan-als-auch-gegen-wirtschafts-und-tourismus-ziele/.

23 In this writing al-Libi builds his arguments on various historical arguments and religious sources to legitimize hostage taking in Islam. Some of his arguments are in accordance with jihadist operations in Grozny who in 2003 asked the Saudi AQ chief ideologue al-‘Uyairi for his legal opinions that had been used to justify the execution of seven captured Russian Special Police members.

24 Part of this “romance” is the extensive portrait of killed Mujahidin in battle, the shuhada’ (“martyrs”). The shuhada’ are a vital center of AQ’s ideology and propaganda. Pictures of deceased Mujahidin are frequently shared and countless as-Sahab and other AQ videos are purely dedicated to the element of the shuhada’.

25 These include successful and older titles such as Valve’s “Counterstrike” or the 2009 published “Call of Duty – Modern Warfare 2” by Activision – both distributed and playable online via Valve’s online platform Steam (http://store.steampowered.com/about/). Most games have single-player (offline) and multi-player (online) elements, a list of the “most popular PC games” of the FPS genre can be found here: http://www.gamespot.com/games.html?type=games&category=First-Person+Shooters&platform=5.

26 http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,614558,00.html.


28 All you need is an e-mail address – which can be obtained very quickly and anonymously.

29 http://www.insmmod.org/.

30 Call of Duty – Modern Warfare 1, published by Activision, is another title favored by the online community of jihadists. Like in the above mentioned example, graphical elements have been modified in favor of the jihadist global agenda and disseminated primarily within the jihadists’ forums.
A picture taken from the “Insurgency – Modern Infantry Warfare” game (during loading process), however, this picture was “stamped” by an online jihadist sympathizer. The “frontier of Islam” is attributed to a comprehensive ideological mindset of AQ globally – basically meaning the defense of “Islamic borders” and “Muslim territory” as set forth by specific religious and religious-historic sources (Prucha 2009).

Sources of information

Further Literature and Links