

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

THE WORLD WIDE WEB OF WAR

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ABSTRACT

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Modern communications, combined with the near instantaneous publication of information on the World Wide Web, are providing the means to dramatically affect the pursuit, conduct and public opinion of war on both sides. The current war in Iraq is the first war in history where we have seen soldiers, independent journalists and citizens in the war zone publishing interactive, first-hand accounts and photos of life and events by web logs or blogs. We have also seen the enemy create slick web sites containing information and professional quality graphics and video of their operations and exploits, including gruesome beheadings. U.S. military and government public affairs elements, and even mainstream media organizations, have scrambled to deal with this onslaught of unregulated reporting as it rapidly grows in popularity and capability. This paper examines the rise of war blogs and other communications to assess their immediate and longer term impact on U.S. policy and military strategy, and to suggest ways that the U.S. can overtly control them or use them more effectively.

THE WORLD WIDE WEB OF WAR

Modern communications are providing people the means to dramatically affect the pursuit, conduct and public opinion of war on both sides. Portable phones and computers with connectivity to the Internet, the global network of interconnected computer networks, are becoming more widely available to journalists, troops, enemy combatants and civilians involved in war to access and post current war-related news and information on the World Wide Web, the global information service that operates over the Internet. In the war in Iraq, this rapidly expanding capability has directly impacted the policy, strategy and tactics on both sides. Complaints from U.S. National Guard troops fighting in Iraq about the lack of body and vehicle armor resulted in intense public pressure on the U.S. administration to fix the problem. Video footage from journalists staying at the Palestine Hotel in Baghdad that showed a U.S. tank turn, aim and fire a round at the hotel killing two reporters provided visual evidence to contradict U.S. military press reports that claimed the incident was accidental. In the first week of April 2003, Iraqi citizens knew that U.S. forces had captured the Baghdad airport and were advancing toward the city despite Iraq television news reports claiming that Iraqi forces had retaken the airport and were driving U.S. forces back into the desert. Iraqi insurgents were able to readily gauge the negative effect that their suicide bombings of hotels in Amman had on Jordanian Muslims.

This paper examines the growth of the World Wide Web and its supporting communications infrastructure in the U.S. and internationally to assess its immediate and longer term impact as a mass medium for exchanging news and information about U.S. policy and military strategy. It also looks at weaknesses in U.S. strategic communication and suggests ways in which the U.S. can better counter al-Qaida's growing propaganda campaign targeted at sympathetic Muslims world wide.

The World Wide Web was officially created in 1990 by Tim Berners-Lee of CERN, the Switzerland-based European Organization for Nuclear Research. However, it wasn't until 1995 when Netscape Corporation released its first web browser and Microsoft released the Windows 95 operating system that the Web became readily accessible to the general public. In that year, Nielsen Corporation estimated that 14.9 million American adults, or 6% of the U.S. population, accessed the Web.¹ Ten years later estimates put the number of Internet users in the U.S at more than 203 million, or 68% of the U.S. population.²

In 1997, in an article entitled "The World Wide Web as Mass Medium,"³ Robert Klepper listed eight key barriers to the use of the Web as mass medium: slow modems, bandwidth

crisis, user difficulty, search difficulty, expense, limited sales revenue, user expectations and advertising rates. All of these barriers have since been overcome due in large part to the growth of broadband Internet connections and new web technologies that facilitate the delivery, quality, manipulation and retrieval of information. The impact of the Web on the mainstream news media in the intervening years has been noticeable. Daily newspaper readership among adults in the U.S. dropped from 52.6% to 37.5% in the decade between Operation DESERT STORM and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM,⁴ and its decline is accelerating today. According to *The State of the News Media 2005* report compiled by the Project for Excellence in Journalism, local and national TV network news viewership has also declined, while radio and cable news have remained relatively stable.⁵ The only media sectors currently undergoing audience growth are alternative weeklies, ethnic media and the Web. "In 2004, 42% of adults, or some 92 million Americans, went online for news...."⁶ While that number is only up slightly from 2003, the frequency of online access increased due in large part to the increase in Web content and improvements in Web search engines. In addition to adults, nearly 16 million American teenagers aged 12-17 years old went online to get news in 2004.⁷ These statistics confirm that the Web has indeed reached the status of mass medium and is still growing.

Web logs, or blogs for short, have become a major new source of online news and dialog. These personal on-line journals first appeared in 1997 but became more widely available in 1999 when Pyra Labs made its user-friendly Blogger software freely available over the Web.⁸ In 1999 there were an estimated 50 blogs. In 2004, blog readership increased 58% over 2003 to 32 million Americans, with 8 million of these readers also being creators of blogs.⁹ By the middle of 2005, the number of blogs grew to over 14 million.¹⁰ The rise of blogging has been facilitated by the introduction of new blogging tools introduced by the four largest Web portals that make it easy for anyone to create their own blog. America Online (AOL) introduced blogging tools in 2003 followed by Microsoft Network (MSN), Yahoo! and Google in 2004.

Blogs received early notoriety in 2002 with the advent of war blogs. They received even greater awareness in early 2004 when Howard Dean created a blog and used it to help raise funds for his 2004 presidential bid and land him a victory in the New Hampshire democratic primary. Later in 2004, several large media organizations developed blogs. In addition to the continuing war in Iraq, high profile political subjects that gained national media attention for blogs in 2004 included the 2004 Presidential elections, the authenticity of CBS documents questioning President Bush's National Guard record and Trent Lott's controversial comments about Strom Thurmond before his 100th birthday party. As a result, blogs achieved credibility as a source of raw or first-hand news unobtainable by other means, as a forum for real-time

opinions and debate of events of interest to the public, as watchdogs of traditional media reporting and as a means of keeping an important story alive long after it fell off the radar screens of mainstream news organizations. Blog popularity as a news source stemmed from the Web advantage of speedy publication, on-demand user access and the ability of users to provide immediate feedback to the authors on any published subject.

Thanks in large part to the growth of the Web and weblogs, Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM are considered the first Internet wars. Some 77% of online Americans used the Internet in some connection with the Iraq war at its beginning in March 2003 and over half of those online got news about the war on any given day.¹¹ One of the earliest and most popular war blogs was "Where is Raed?" written by an Iraqi citizen under the pseudonym Salam Pax. It first appeared in late 2002 but gained more widespread attention in March 2003 during the beginning phase of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. Pax humanized the enemy by providing first-hand accounts of how he and other Iraqi citizens were preparing for what they knew was an inevitable U.S. invasion; he provided Iraqi views and opinions about the U.S. invasion as it took place; and, he provided comparisons of what he saw on the ground versus what was being reported in the world news media, such as the Iraqi government's efforts to construct oil-filled trenches on the outskirts of Baghdad to slow the advancing U.S. forces.¹² At about the same time, more blogs began appearing from other Iraqi citizens, independent journalists and even U.S. soldiers. These blogs reported first-hand accounts of the fighting in Iraq unavailable from the mainstream media as well as the feelings and opinions of the authors, some in support of U.S. policy, others anti-war.

The scope and diversity of information in war blogs has allowed special interest groups to rapidly build and strengthen arguments for their respective causes further influencing U.S. and world public opinion. Web sites, books and documentary films authored by U.S. anti-war activists such as Michael Moore have been fueled by troops in the war zone who have expressed negative opinions about the war and their experiences in blogs, emails and letters. While these anti-war publications proved insufficient to defeat President Bush in the 2004 presidential elections, they have significantly questioned the administration's arguments and policy for the war in Iraq and have helped shift public opinion against the war.

Although blog readership is still lower than other major news sources, the mainstream media, for one, takes blogs seriously. The influence of blogs on public opinion is heightened by their growing linkage to mainstream media organizations and opinion journals. This linkage is evident in several ways. First, many news people and organizations are avid consumers of political blogs. Second, several major media organizations have either hosted blogs on their

web sites or hired prominent bloggers as contributors. One of the most well known media-hosted bloggers is Kevin Sites a former cameraman for Cable News Network (CNN) who began a war blog on the side while on CNN assignment to Iraq at the onset of the war.¹³ His blog "Kevin Sites in the Hot Zone" was the blog that produced the video of the U.S. Marine who shot a wounded Iraqi insurgent while the insurgent lay quietly on the floor of a mosque in Fallujah creating a temporary international incident. He currently reports for Yahoo! not only from Iraq but from other locations in the Middle East such as Iran, Syria and Israel. Third, several prominent news reporters left their jobs at major news companies to start war blogs. One of the more well known bloggers in this category is Christopher Allbritton, a former Associated Press and New York Daily News reporter who traveled to Iraq in April 2003 as an independent journalist financed solely by contributors to his blog.¹⁴ Finally, major Web portals such as Google and Yahoo! have begun to host links to blogs on their homepages. A recent visit to the Yahoo.com web portal revealed links to 73 Iraq war blogs.

These linkages to traditional media outlets have increased the stature of blogs as a reliable source of political news. In their 2004 report "The Power and Politics of Blogs," Daniel W. Drezner and Henry Farrell concluded that blogs "... affect political debate by affecting the content of media reportage and commentary about politics. Just as the media can provide a collective interpretive frame for politicians, blogs can create many of the interpretive frames for the media to appropriate."¹⁵ They added that while there were millions of blogs, most of which simply repeated already available content, the appearance of blog aggregation sites like Technorati.com and web technology such as Really Simple Syndication (RSS), made it easy for users to extract the important nuggets of new and useful information about selected topics being posted on blogs. Research by the Pew Charitable Trust dispelled another common criticism of blogs – that because of the partisan nature of many blogs readers simply used blogs to reinforce pre-held beliefs on a subject. It found instead that people who access blogs actually obtain greater exposure to different points of view.¹⁶

The expansion of the World Wide Web is not only an American phenomenon, it is a global trend. The world had over 1 billion Internet users by the end of 2005, almost 16% of the world's population.¹⁷ The key to its expansion has been the massive expansion of the international communications infrastructure that occurred in the "dotcom" boom of the late 1990s, spurred by deregulation of the telecommunications industry as a result of the *Telecommunications Act of 1996*, and the subsequent "dotcom" bust of the early 2000s that reduced the cost of access to this infrastructure. According to the *CIA - World Factbook*, there were 94 million Internet users in China in 2004, 29.2 million in South Korea in 2003, 13.8 million in Taiwan in 2005 and 4.3

million in Iran in 2003, just to name a few.¹⁸ Internet access in Iraq under Saddam Hussein's authoritarian rule was estimated at only 3,000 users but has since grown to over 157,000 active users, mainly at several dozen Internet cafes opened either by independent operators or the State Company Internet Services, or in individual homes with satellite modems.¹⁹ Internet usage worldwide is expected to increase substantially with the introduction of new cellular phones and other hand-held devices entering the market today that allow connection to the Internet, and with the Internet's coming adoption of the Internet Protocol version 6 (IPv6) standard. IPv6 will dramatically increase the number of Internet Protocol (IP) addresses available for use so that every device and every person will be able to have one.

As further help to the global expansion of the Internet are pressures to lower the cost and portability of Internet access and usage. Competitive pressures are causing a steady decline in the cost of computers and other devices for accessing the Internet as are the efforts of non-profits like the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who, in cooperation with an organization called One Laptop per Child and Quanta Computer Incorporated, is striving to produce a \$100 wireless laptop computer for the initial sale or distribution to more than 15 million children in poor countries.²⁰ The proliferation of shareware and freely provided software, such as Google's recent decision to offer users a free software startup package called Google Pack consisting of the Mozilla Firefox web browser, Realplayer media software, an instant messenger program and Adobe Acrobat Reader, are also contributing to the lower cost of Web access. Microprocessor manufactures are already producing lower power consumption chipsets for mobile computers and devices, and battery manufactures are introducing new types of rechargeable batteries to power these portable devices that are smaller, safer and longer-lasting.

The growth of the Internet infrastructure, its portability and its declining cost of access, combined with the broad range of emerging web-enabling technologies and applications are having a dramatic effect on getting news and information both out of the war zone for U.S. and world consumption, and back into the war zone for access by citizens, journalists, U.S. soldiers and enemy combatants directly involved in the war. For example, journalists who covered Operation DESERT STORM in 1991 worked with a camera operator using a large, expensive satellite phone weighing 50-60 pounds to transmit printed and scanned analog images via converters to network news desks whenever they were able to get a good satellite connection.²¹ In Operation IRAQI FREEDOM a journalist like Kevin Sites worked alone using a commercially available Sony digital camcorder, laptop computer, small inexpensive satellite modem and phone to upload his stories and video directly to the Web by one or more satellite transmission paths from almost anywhere.²² Expanded satellite services, like INMARSAT's Regional

Broadband Global Area Network (BGAN) service introduced in 2002, have provided significant new transmission paths to users in a region with a limited communications infrastructure. Internet connectivity via satellite also allows users to access the Web for the latest news reports on the war. Journalists working for large media companies usually don't upload and publish their reports directly to the Web like some independent journalists, but they can now upload their stories and video directly to their network's computerized news production system where production specialists can instantly integrate the journalist's feed with incoming news wire feeds of related stories, supporting information or graphics from Web searches and supporting scripts, and then send the combined news package out to subscriber bureaus or web sites throughout the world.²³

Future warfighting is likely to be even more visible to the world, even when it occurs in some of the most remote, oppressed and undeveloped parts of the world. Washington Post video journalist Travis Fox reported in July 2005 about the success he had in placing calls with his T-Mobile Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) cell phone from remote locations like a fishing boat off Sri Lanka, the Syrian dessert near the Iraq border, Egypt and the Gaza Strip.²⁴ In Sudan, Africa's least developed country ruled by Omar al-Bashir, *Parade Magazine's* number 1 ranked worst dictator,²⁵ the leaders of the country's two main rebel movements battle each other as bloggers over the Internet accessed via Thuraya satellite phones.²⁶

During the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the Iraqi government limited the population's access to the Web and controlled media reporting from inside the country. Despite government controls and threats, censorship and a limited communications infrastructure, some citizens and foreign journalists were able to access international news reports of the war via satellite Internet access. Salam Pax is one example. Another is Anne Garrels, a reporter on assignment to Baghdad for National Public Radio. She writes in her book *Naked in Baghdad* how she successfully hid her satellite phone from Iraqi censors and used it to remotely access the Internet to transmit uncensored news reports to her bureau chief and stay current on world news coverage of the war.²⁷

While the global expansion of the Internet and the accessibility of Web news and information continue to democratize content about the war, they also enhance the enemy's ability to wage war. The Iraqi government used its access to the Web to augment its intelligence collection activities.²⁸ Under the circumstances, this information provided little help in countering the U.S. advance militarily, but it may have helped Fidayeen and Baath Party

members accurately judge when U.S. forces would enter Baghdad and coordinate their plan to simultaneously disappear *en masse* when U.S. troops entered the city.

More recently, Iraqi insurgents, including al-Qaida in Iraq, have used their access to blogs and media online reporting to provide them valuable information to counter U.S. objectives. Video messages produced by al-Qaida leaders such as Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, Usama bin Laden and Ayman Zawahiri, have all used negative events and public opinion about U.S. activities in Iraq to enhance their propaganda. Advanced web search engines provide the enemy a wealth of information about U.S. policy, objectives, tactics and weaponry with the push of a button. Google Earth provides users commercial satellite imagery of much of the world including parts of Iraq. Global supporters of al-Qaida and opponents of the war post information on the Web to aid the enemy. Several soldier blogs have been shut down out of concern for military operations security (OPSEC).

Use of the Web by al-Qaida and its supporters as a propaganda and recruitment tool began in 2004 and has increased dramatically in its quality, sophistication and adaptability. Al-Qaida posted its first Web content in April 2004 with a short video clip called "Heroes of Fallujah" showing insurgents laying a roadside bomb and watching it blow-up a U.S. armored personnel carrier.²⁹ It was followed by a posting to the al-Ansar Web forum of the video of the beheading of Nickolas Berg, a U.S. citizen looking for contracts in Iraq. According to the Search for International Terrorist Entities (SITE) Institute in Washington D.C., Abu Musab Zarqawi's group publishes an average of nine online postings per day and has expanded its content to include memorials to suicide bombers, tactical details of al-Qaida in Iraq operations, the names of mosques in Syria where would-be recruits can volunteer for duty, communiqués from Zarqawi, transit routes into Iraq from Syria and Turkey, propaganda films, tradecraft on how to make a suicide bomb vest and how to use surface-to-air missiles and religious justifications for jihad.³⁰ To avoid detection, these groups temporarily host some of their material on other unsuspecting web sites and alert supporters to the material's location via e-mail. They also are credited with capturing information about the people who access their web sites.

The rapid rise in the sophistication of enemy cyber capabilities suggests that al-Qaida may soon develop the capability to conduct cyber attacks on the U.S. critical infrastructure. Keith Laurdeau, Deputy Assistant Director of the FBI, testified in U.S. Congressional hearings in February 2004 that; "Terrorist groups are increasingly adopting the power of modern communication technology for planning, recruiting, propaganda purposes, enhancing communications, command and control, fundraising and fund transfers and information-gathering." He goes on to predict that "... terrorist groups will either develop or hire hackers

particularly for the purpose of complementing large physical attacks with cyber attacks.”³¹ In the same Hearing, Dan Verton, the author of the book *Black Ice*, relates an interview he had with Sheikh Omar Bakri Muhammad, the leader of a London-based organization called al Muhajirun and self-proclaimed spokesman for the political wing of al-Qaida. He quotes Bakri Muhammad as saying; “In a matter of time, you will see attacks on the stock market. I would not be surprised if tomorrow I hear of a big economic collapse because of somebody attacking the main technical systems in big companies.”³²

In the years ahead, as the U.S. scales down its military involvement in Iraq and transitions down the scale of political violence from the use of military force to politics, the battle will shift its focus in some part to the Web both in terms of an information campaign and a possible cyber attack campaign. The military’s role will change from its emphasis on kinetic operations to an emphasis on information operations. This in turn will require a refinement in the commander’s intent, a different set of military skill requirements and an increased need for cultural and human intelligence. There is some evidence that this shift is beginning to occur. Army Lt. Gen Peter W. Chiarelli, who replaced the outgoing commander of Multi-National Corps Iraq in January 2006, stated the emphasis of his tenure would be to improve the quality of life for Iraqis rather than killing or capturing guerrillas.³³ His rationale for this shift is elaborated in more detail in an article he wrote for the July-August edition of *Military Review*.³⁴

But Chiarelli’s civil-military operations are only a supporting capability to the five-sided Information Operation’s coin. Winning enemy combatants and their supporting populace over to the political process in Iraq by countering false propaganda, as one of the objectives stated in the *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*,³⁵ is another. The U.S. military is supporting that objective primarily through its psychological operations (PSYOPS) campaign in Iraq. Its e-mail and leaflet campaign early in the war to influence Iraqi forces not to fight was considered a success, but its more recent effort to pay TV stations and newspapers in Iraq and Kabul to broadcast or print favorable news stories, turned counterproductive when it was revealed by the press in December 2005. The effort was widely criticized in the media and disavowed by top U.S. military officials and the White House.³⁶

Even with success, the military PSYOPS campaign in Iraq will not be sufficient to win the Global War on Terrorism as it moves from Iraq to other fronts. The military public affairs and military support to public diplomacy strategies in Iraq will require closer cooperation with the diplomatic means of power and must be extended to the broader audience of al-Qaida members and its supporters world wide.

Other than missteps by the terrorists themselves, such as the much criticized al-Qaida bombings in Jordan, there is little evidence to suggest the U.S. and its allies are winning the information war either in Iraq or globally. Publically, there appears to be no effective counter to the success of al-Qaida's propaganda campaign targeted at its supporting populace, except perhaps the progress of democratic elections in Iraq. Jihadist web sites are proliferating on the Web and have wide appeal to the global Muslim population. There appears to be no shortage of volunteers for suicide bombings. Al-Qaida communiqués usually go unchallenged in the media. Recent news reports following the January 31, 2006 release of a tape by Ayman Zawahiri, for example, focused on its contents, questions of its authenticity, the timing and purpose of its release, the quality of the video and whether it was an indicator of future terrorist acts in the U.S.. There were no reports from U.S. Government officials countering its pronouncements that the recent U.S. missile attack on Zawahiri in Pakistan was an attack on innocents, or that the U.S. is fighting Islam and Muslims or that calling President Bush a butcher is like the pot calling the kettle black.

While the *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq* says little about the need for an effective information operations campaign, the recently declassified October 2003 Department of Defense *Information Operations Roadmap* does. It also recommends improvements. For one, the *Roadmap* reports that; "... our PSYOPS campaigns are often reactive and not well organized for maximum impact." It emphasizes the need to improve military PSYOPS defined as; "... planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence the emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals."³⁷ The *Roadmap* specifically recommends that Special Operations Command PSYOPS efforts should; "... permit the timely, long-range dissemination of products with various delivery systems. This includes satellite, radio and television, cellular phones and other wireless devices, the Internet and other upgrades to traditional delivery systems"³⁸

For another, the *Roadmap* delegates maximum authority to Combatant Commanders to plan and execute information operations and suggests that; "DoD Public Affairs should be more proactive in support of U.S. Government diplomacy objectives to include a broader set of select foreign media and audiences." One key recommendation in the *Roadmap* is for the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs to; "Develop a global web site supporting U.S. strategic communication objectives. Content should be primarily from third parties with greater credibility to foreign audiences than U.S. officials."³⁹

The U.S. may be winning the war in Iraq, but if so, it's largely due to the stubborn persistence of President Bush in staying the course militarily despite faltering approval ratings, and in improved U.S. competency in conducting effective military counterinsurgency operations and political reform initiatives. It's not because the U.S. is waging an effective information campaign. The lack of an effective information campaign against al-Qaida is not just due to the shortfalls in military information operations. Strategic Communication, defined as the proactive and continuous process that supports the national security strategy by identifying and responding to strategic threats and opportunities with information related activities,⁴⁰ is supposed to be a synchronized interagency effort supported by Public Diplomacy, Public Affairs, and related elements of Information Operations. Public Diplomacy is primarily a responsibility of the Department of State. Similar to PSYOPS, Strategic Communication seeks to understand and inform domestic and foreign audiences and opinion makers, only openly. The recently released 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* promises that; "The Department [of Defense] will work closely with interagency partners to integrate strategic communication into U.S. national security policy planning and operations. The battle of ideas ultimately will be won by enabling moderate Muslim leadership to prevail in their struggle against the violent extremists."⁴¹

One weakness in that promise is that U.S. Strategic Communication is in a state of disarray. Its problems have been documented in at least three recent U.S. Government reports: the September 2004 *Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication*,⁴² a 2004 report published by the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy⁴³ and the April 2005 U.S. Government Accounting Office (GAO) report on *U.S. Public Diplomacy*.⁴⁴ Each report makes recommendations that have either not been implemented or have been ineffectively implemented. That may be due to the fact that many of the recommendations are either bureaucratic in nature or expensive to implement. One thing that all three reports agree on is the growing importance of the Internet to an effective communications strategy and the need to create web sites that take advantage of modern web technology. Despite support for more and better use of the Web, the Broadcasting Board of Governors, the body that oversees the government-owned broadcasting services, announced cuts to Voice of America (VOA) radio broadcasts to the Middle East and no expansion of VOA operations over the Internet.⁴⁵

If the U.S. wants to win the information war against al-Qaida, the U.S. Government must develop and effectively coordinate a communications strategy. At a minimum, it should support the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* objective to "Win the War of Ideas."⁴⁶ As the

Strategy says, it should; "... make clear that all acts of terrorism are illegitimate..." "... assure Muslims that American values are not at odds with Islam ...," and, "... use effective, timely public diplomacy and government supported media to promote the free flow of information and ideas to kindle the hopes and aspiration for freedom of those in societies ruled by the sponsors of global terrorism."⁴⁷

The methods of communicating content should be updated to more effectively reach its intended audiences. For one, it should create both English and foreign language web sites or blogs that are credible, of high quality and provide factual information to combat the propaganda published on al-Qaida and supporting web sites. The Broadcasting Board of Governors might create a "Blog of America" on the Internet to complement VOA radio broadcasts. If so, traditional methods of communicating information to young audiences who have greater access to the Internet will not be as effective without reinforcing web-based sources, and they may be viewed with greater skepticism. Therefore, any Web presence should employ the latest web technologies such as RSS for referencing supporting content from other web sites or blogs, and make use of audio and streaming video technology to convey its message to a broader audience.

Besides blogs, a host of new technologies are appearing on the market today that allow news providers alternative ways to deliver content to more people. Two of the most well-known emerging technologies are audio programs called "podcasts" and video programs called "videocasts" which can be heard or viewed on the portable Apple iPod or other MP3 video music players. The U.S. communications strategy should also take advantage of these new content delivery technologies.

The content of what the U.S. Government delivers must be improved too. Jarret Brachmann, in a recent article in *The Officer* argues that the U.S. and its allies need to better understand the long-term strategy of jihadists and do a better job of separating the broader Muslim populations from the body of jihadist ideology. He believes one of the main problems is that; "... [U.S. and allied] governments view this jihadi Internet as abstracted from its strategic underpinnings, arguing instead that few people are actually accessing this material..."⁴⁸ when in fact the opposite is true.

With regard to U.S. soldier and journalist blogs, the question that U.S. policy and military leaders must decide is whether they should more tightly limit or control these improved means of war zone communications. As for soldier blogs, many of the troops who maintain wartime blogs say that they improve their morale and the morale of their families back home and are careful not to divulge sensitive operational information. Others think that troop communications

provide useful information on issues or problems that need attention, such as the issue of National Guard armor shortages. Still others believe that U.S. troops, like any other U.S. citizens, are entitled to free speech so long as they uphold their professional responsibility to preserve U.S. political objectives. Opponents argue that individual troops aren't always the best judge of what information may or may not be sensitive and that commanders who are responsible for reviewing their communications don't have the time to devote to censorship duties.

Certainly, the military could easily restrict the availability and use of communications equipment and establish severe penalties for violations, but at what cost to morale, and would there be a public backlash now that the public has become accustomed to this new source of information? Despite reports that several soldier blogs were shut down by the military during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM for OPSEC reasons, there have been few cases where bloggers have revealed sensitive information. The most well known OPSEC violation of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM occurred when Geraldo Rivera diagrammed a map of U.S. troop locations in the sand on live TV while covering the operation for CNN. He was subsequently forced out of Iraq.

The issue of control over journalists is less recent than troop blogs. The experience of journalists in the U.S. invasion of Somalia, where dozens of reporters and TV cameras were waiting on shore for the U.S. amphibious landing, led back to the practice of embedding journalists with U.S. military units in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. This approach offered journalists a greater level of protection and unique access to the battle in exchange for some control over their movements around the field of battle and the information they reported.

The issue of controlling news reporting deals more with non-embedded journalists. Historically, their reporting has been more controlled to a degree by the enemy and by the poor public communications infrastructure in the countries where wars have been fought. The experience in Iraq however showed that advances in communications technology and transmission means have made it difficult, if not impossible, for even an authoritarian dictatorship to control what journalists reported.

The U.S. military could also control embedded journalists more tightly, but not without severe and unrelenting criticism from the media. What would be nearly impossible to control would be the independent journals and citizen bloggers, two sources that are typically less favorable towards U.S. military operations. Soldier and embedded journalist reporting may actually provide a counterbalance to independent journalist and citizen reporting since, in aggregate, the former tend to lean towards a more pro-U.S. policy.

In summary, the Web has grown rapidly in the first few years of the 21st Century as a means for almost instantaneous publication of news and information about U.S. military operations both from and to the war zone, even in countries with authoritarian leaders and poor public communication infrastructures. It has made the latest wars in Afghanistan and Iraq the first true Internet wars. The Web's linkage to traditional media organizations and its global accessibility have made it an influential source of news and information that the U.S. and international publics have turned to to shape their views and opinions about the war. Since 2004, the Web has also become an effective medium for al-Qaida to disseminate its message of jihad to its supporters throughout the world and attract new followers and sympathizers. Al-Qaida's successful use of the Web suggests that the Global War on Terrorism will not end with the war in Iraq, and in fact may lead to more sophisticated use of the Internet for cyber attacks on the U.S. critical infrastructure.

To date, the U.S. has not been successful in developing an effective communications strategy or information operations campaign to counter al-Qaida's web-based information campaign. Efforts to coach U.S. troops in advance of interviews with the media and to plant favorable stories in the foreign press were uncovered and widely criticized. Both diplomatic and military efforts that could have been used to develop and implement an information campaign have not been effectively marshaled and coordinated. As a result, the U.S. is losing the information war so important to defeating the terrorists in what is widely viewed as a long-term political war.

Attempts to stifle soldier and journalist communications from the war zone is not the answer. The U.S. must heed the recommendations put forth in the Department of Defense *Information Operations Roadmap* and the 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*. It must coordinate and implement a comprehensive campaign to support national security objectives with the intensity of a political election campaign. It must deliver content on the Web using the latest web-enabling technologies. Unlike radio, TV and newspapers, the Web can convey in-depth content in words and images almost instantaneously to an international audience on demand, and can be quickly adjusted and augmented in response to audience feedback. If the words of Ayman al-Zawahiri are true, that; "We are in a battle in a race for the hearts and minds of our Umma,"⁴⁹ then the U.S. needs a horse in the race, and it needs the best trainer and jockey it can find.

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