



**exclusive**

**Ronen Bergman**

**How did you get to know about the Al-Mizan forum on the internet?**

"Via another web forum, Majid Al-Islam. I was a member there."

**Why do you want to join the Al-Mizan web forum?**

"Because of my love for all Muslim brothers all over the world and because I want to get to know people involved in the Islamic revolution, and the enemies of Islam everywhere and anywhere."

**What were your first impressions of the network and what do you know about our participants?**

"The excellent impression the network made is one of the reasons I so badly want to become a member of this forum. I think this is a wonderful forum and in line with my feelings and ideas."

**Are you a member of other Jihadi forums and if so, which?**

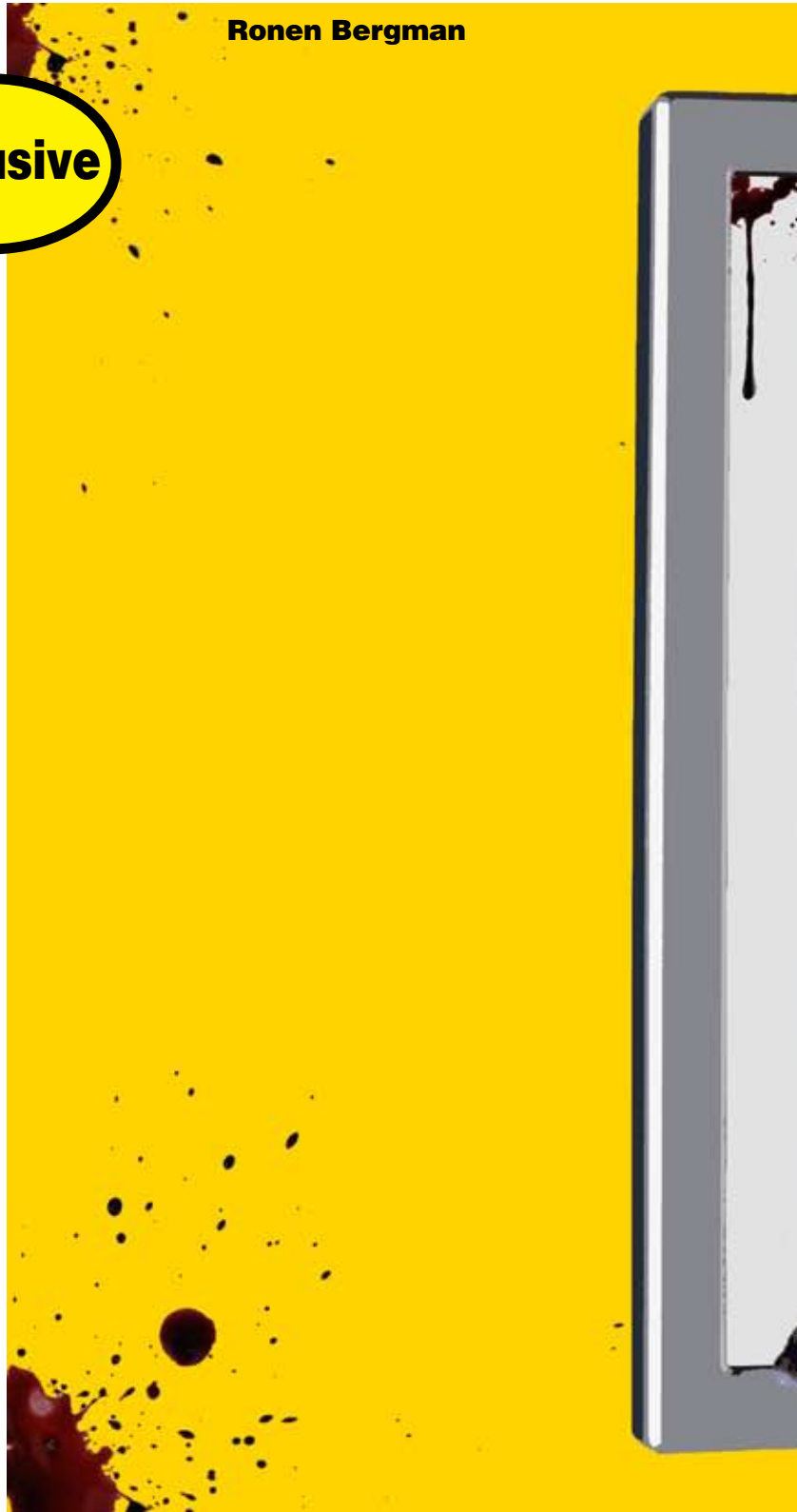
"Yes, I am a member of a few forums. The important ones are Majid Al-Islam and the Sada Ard Alribat. I hope I will soon be a member of your forum."

**(The above is part of a conversation that took place on the web at the beginning of February between the internet surfer "Muhib Al-Mujahideen" and the administrators of the Al-Mizan Forum.)**

Only rarely does Al-Mizan - one of the more prestigious Jihadi forums - accept a new member. Fresh candidates are asked to fill out a questionnaire detailing who they know on other forums and to email back answers on questions relating to Islamic jurisprudence and other religious issues relevant to the Jihadi struggle. Then they wait patiently for the website administrator's decision. The screening process is strict.

Two weeks after the interview took place, the 'candidate', Muhib Al-Mujahideen (The Mujahideen Lover), was approved and became one of the privileged few to gain unlimited access to the subjects posted on the forum. Since then Muhib downloaded tens of hours of videos documenting bomb making tutorials and gained free access to hundreds of movies documenting Salafi terrorist attacks (led by Al-Qaeda) as well as documents calling for carrying out operations against 'infidels'.

Muhib Al-Mujahideen earned the right to take part in a special discussion group that analyzed possible plans of attacks to be carried out by Al-Qaeda operatives



# JIHAD DOT

Loading



# COM

A rare trip to the dark side of the internet exposes the latest theater of terror activities: highly convincing videos that depict the preparation of explosive devices within minutes, warehouses of information for carrying out mega-hits and terror activities both in Gaza and around the world; and Terrogence, the Israeli terror hunters, who pursue the Jihad fighters from a hangar in the Sharon, situated on the edge of the Cyberworld

***“As Gaza is cut-off, the internet is the only medium that enables Hamas to raise funds, spread information or show off its successes. Almost every attack or exercise is filmed using a cellular phone of more sophisticated equipment”***

***A 12.7mm heavy machine gun deployed on a pickup appeared in clip three seconds long. Another clip showed how the gun could be used against helicopters. The photos, including a full ID on the pickup were sent to the Israeli Army, who took it out***

***An Arabic edition of a National Geographic movie on the underground infrastructure in Paris was uploaded to Jihadi forum. Attached to the movie was a note - “One accident in the sewage system will wreck the city, and take it back to the 13th century”***



in Paris. He has been exposed to articles by prominent Jihadi theoreticians who are involved in jurisprudence and in charting the future of the movement worldwide. In order to obtain access, Muhib Al-Mujahideen presented himself as a zealous Jihadist, eager to take part in terrorist strikes across the world.

With this in mind it was a little surprising to meet Muhib Al-Mujahideen at his workplace, a large hangar in Bnei Zion, a village in central Israel. ‘His’ real name is Meital, recently discharged from the Israel Defense Force after completing her military service, and today working in an intelligence company named ‘Terrogence’. The company’s main resource is its ability to infiltrate, under-cover, secret web forums and blogs, which are closed off to the outside world. Terrogence’s staff, all civilians, pose as members of extreme Islamist activists and painstakingly establish their cover, a process that can take months or even years. Their activities resemble those taken by spies who take on a well-rehearsed cover story before being sent to a hostile Arab country. However in this case, the fake passport and spy paraphernalia have been replaced by computers, screens, keyboards and a sound understanding of the language and theology of the extreme Islam.

#### **The World is Flat**

Terrogence was established two and a half years ago by Gadi Aviran, who up to the year 2000 was a senior IDF ordnance and bomb disposal specialist, working as an intelligence analyst in the research division of Aman (The Israeli Military Intelligence Corps), focusing on the capabilities of terrorist organizations. The basis for the founding of Terrogence was the burgeoning of social networks on the internet which made it possible for people to live a full life in cyberspace.

“I had the feeling,” says Aviran, “that a whole world of knowledge existed, relevant to every person on the planet, that had never been investigated or checked and that was not properly covered by the academic world or by the intelligence community. Under our feet, or more correctly, under our fingers, an entire organism had developed in which terrorism was living, breathing and growing by leaps and bounds. Only the understanding of this media and intelligent collection of information on what’s going on in our region can



Founder, Gadi Aviran (standing), and its CEO, Aviram Halevi

help us stop it.”

The staff, all of whom served in elite IDF units, or as security specialists, is fluent in English, French, Arabic, Farsi, Turkish, Spanish and other languages. Terrogence’s CEO, Aviram Halevi, an ex-deputy commander of Sayeret Matkal says, “You won’t find the talent and resources that we hold – experience and linguistic skills - anywhere else, especially outside Israel”.

The company hangar in Moshav Bnei Zion, once a chicken coop, houses the teams of specialists, sitting at table formations. Each one of them has at least one computer with two large screens. The company has its own central system that allows the team members to operate multiple identities, avoid confusion, thus reducing the possibility of mistakes that could lead to exposure. At the same time, the software keeps an eye on the major Jihadi cyber-activists while identifying their connections and contacts.

The action takes place at two central desks. The collection and translation desk is headed by Shai Arbel and is comprised of seven members: Inbal, the team leader for information collection and an expert on Palestinian terrorism;

Meital, a collector who specializes in Iraq and Afghanistan; Tzachi, a collector who specializes in Shiite material and a transcriber of audio material; Zvi, an Arabic translator; Sharona and David, information collectors and translators of Farsi; and Yuval a collector in the field of cyber-terror and an investigator of entities and networks.

Five people sit at the analysis desk: “M”, a senior Israeli researcher on Iranian and Shiite affairs; “N”, an expert on WMD proliferation and regime stability; Gal and Nitzan, weapon systems specialists, particularly focused on explosive devices and rockets; and Ran, a graphic artist responsible for illustrating and designing final reports.

At two nearby tables sit Aviram Halevi the CEO, Gadi Aviran the founder and chief analyst, and Adi Angel the web researcher and production manager. In addition the company employs on an hourly basis Turkish and Spanish translators, specialists in chemical and explosive materials, experts in weapons systems, a technology consultant in the field of cyber-networks and hacking defenses, software developers for



Terrorist training in planting an IED and kidnapping soldiers. Al Bureij refugee camp, from an Alqassam brigades video clip

the company's unique systems, and others.

This very respectable cadre of specialists enables Terrogence to swiftly assemble a team of investigators, who can tend to any specific requirement set by the security establishment in Israel or overseas, on any subject and at short notice. "All the data sharing web platforms," says Aviran, "produce huge layers of information which could not have existed, not only 20 years ago, but even 4 years ago. The terrorists, especially those affiliated with the global jihad network, surf on top of this wave and exploit it to the maximum. We are up there with them."

"The internet," he continues, "flattens the world. Time and geography are no longer of importance. A threat detected in Indonesia is a danger for Spain too, as activists exchange information on common forums and blogs and do everything they can to distribute it further. We see this phenomenon occurring daily, minute by minute. An activist in Libya says: 'I want to manufacture explosives made up of X, and within 3 hours he has all the necessary data compiled in an orderly manner, that includes

a video tutorial and the recipe for preparing it. There are so many activists around, that even if one of them is not online at a specific moment, others will readily fill the gap."

"On the other hand the problem is that intelligence and law enforcement agencies tend not to share information with their counterparts overseas. In other words, for example, if a terrorist strike is being investigated by a Western police force, they won't - for their own reasons - share the gathered information in full with the Moroccan and Pakistani security agencies, meaning that those authorities won't know the modus operandi of the terrorists, even though this information already exists in Morocco and Pakistan and is being used by the terrorists there.

#### Pickup truck online

The world as seen from the Bnei Zion hangar is not a pleasant place. The amount of evil that appears on the screens of the company's analysts is very worrying. There is no shortage of examples.

Two months ago a warm letter of thanks to Terrogence was sent by a senior Israeli intelligence fig-

ure to a restricted internal mailing-list. It appears that while analyzing a training video photographed by a Hamas activist using a cell-phone and posted on the web in order to boast to his friends, the company investigators identified a 3-second clip showing militants firing a 12.7 millimeter heavy machine gun mounted on the back of a pickup truck. The weapon was capable of bringing down a helicopter. Another animation video that was produced and distributed by Hamas to select activists demonstrated how to use the machine gun effectively against aircraft.

Close examination of the clip showed that the truck carried a tarpaulin cover folded up as an accordion, presumably to camouflage the gun when not in use. In order to enable identification of the truck the company simulated views of it in different poses, such as the truck with the camouflage device open, folded, etc. The pictures, including an exact identification of the truck's make, model and year of manufacture, were given to the Southern Command intelligence unit and to the Air Force. Two days later the truck

was located and destroyed in an accurate missile strike.

Another video produced by the Al-Qassam brigades, posted on one of the organization's closed forums, described training sessions given to activists in the Nusirat refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. The height of the clip was a demonstration in which activists attacked an IDF post simultaneously using RPG rockets, sniper fire, explosive charges to break through the surrounding fence and a tunnel - which had been previously prepared. According to the plan of attack, after drawing the guards' attention, two terrorists entered the outpost, abducted a soldier and withdrew under cover of fire.





Terrorence works with public diplomacy organizations, and with the corporate world. The terrorence team

# Jihad



The video-clip presented a range of the organization's abilities which were not previously known. In addition to physical training the trainees were shown sitting in classrooms learning theoretical material from uniformed teachers with instructors' insignia. All the material uncovered by Terrorence was handed to the security agencies.

Another video produced by the Al-Qassam brigades documented a military exercise being held in the Al-Bureij refugee camp in Gaza. During the exercise an activist was seen crawling towards a model of an armored vehicle and placing an explosive charge at its rear. After the charge was detonated the video showed a soldier being abducted from the vehicle. Photo enhancement showed that the explosive charge in the video was made using a part from an irrigation system manufactured in Israel.

The information drawn from the abduction exercise carries significant importance. "From the docu-



***"In Iranian blogs one can find news items that were censored. The blogs also enable us to witness the strict crackdown against 'immorality', closing newspapers and endless arrests. A short time ago a young man was detained for posting a joke on Ahmadinejad"***

mentation of terror attacks in Iraq we learned of similar modes of operation - attacking a stationary parked armored car," says Gal Egozi, a weapons system analyst. "The Gaza video added the abduction dimension that could pose an additional problem for military forces that use standard patterns of combat against Hamas. The Hamas' combat tactic could also be used against targets that are not specifically military, such as trucks waiting at border crossings or even against civilian contractors.

In a thirteen page document posted on a Palestinian forum, a leading explosives expert answered questions that were raised in other Jihadi forums. In his document he describes how trucks carrying containers of poisonous gas such as chlorine could be blown up in densely populated areas. The topics discussed also included an historical survey on the use of chemical weapons and offered explanations on the effects of different gases in more vulnerable areas.

## Surfing and Shooting

Over the past few years attempts have been made in Israel

and worldwide to convince internet suppliers not to host websites, forums and blogs affiliated with terrorist organizations. "It's a Don Quixote type of campaign and it's not getting us anywhere," says Aviran. "If they close a forum down it will spring up somewhere else within no longer than a minute and a half and I'm not exaggerating. The good guys are creating an effect opposite to what we want - instead of the terrorists working in known areas of the internet where they are easily located, they are being driven into the far recesses of the web."

"The Gaza precedent", Aviran adds, "may be the clearest example of all. Since Gaza has been locked down, the internet has become the only free means to rouse support, raise funds, transfer information and demonstrate their skills. We witness more and more the Israeli tendency to run and spill the beans, but that is nothing compared to the boastful nature of Hamas and Jihad activists. There is hardly an operational exercise, training session or simulation carried out by the Jihad organization that isn't filmed

A four Quds3 rocket launcher, found in a closed web forum

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using a cell phone or professional photographic equipment.”

In April 2006 Terrogeance's staff noticed an unknown type of mobile rocket launcher firing in Gaza. "As the weapon system was unknown, we referred the issue to Southern Command Intelligence Branch, who in turn informed us that it did not exist. We then handed them photographs extracted from a video where you can clearly see 3 rockets being launched. A week later they told us that the vehicle had been destroyed, killing two terrorists inside it."

A new box-type launcher for 4 rockets, identified in a showcase picture aired by activists of the military arm of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement, formed the basis of a report that Terrogeance delivered to intelligence agencies in 2007. "The launcher in this new form provides both camouflage and protection from the weather, thus enabling the launcher to be placed in position well before the launching. The importance of this is that the time from the decision to shoot - to execution - to next firing, is significantly reduced," says Nitzan, a Terrogeance weapons analyst. Aside evaluating the technicalities of the rocket launchers and related ammunition, the report included an analysis of the operational significance, and focused on comparisons between the new box version and the semi-buried rocket launchers deployed by Hezbollah, dozens of which were discovered during the Second Lebanon War. The report pointed to many similarities between operational concepts employed by the Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah and gave early warning on the possibility that the Gazan terrorists may further adopt Hezbollah's tactics, including partly burying the launcher in the ground.

The report was relayed to relevant security authorities along with the addition of a warning that noted that the change in ter-



rorists' tactics would require an upgrade in the IDF's preparedness against the threat of rocket fire. During the first week of February, the Israeli Egoz commando unit uncovered the first underground rocket launcher position in the Gaza strip.

## Explosive Videos

It's not only Gaza that is busy on the internet. In July 2006 a series of video tutorials on bomb making was posted for the first time on a closed Jihadi forum. The videos contained detailed information on how to manufacture improvised explosives using raw materials freely available on the open market, and using simple preparation techniques and tools easily found in any kitchen.

Inbal, a Terrogeance employee who found a video using a false alias says, "There were twenty five hours of footage, all featuring a masked instructor, who went into great detail - covering everything teaching the theoretical basics on a whiteboard to fully demonstrating the manufacture of explosives and testing their efficiency in small quantities. The instructor reminded the viewers a number of times during the movie that all the 'formulae' had been tried by him in the past."

Gadi Aviran: "The importance of the tutorial cannot be underestimated. Just a few years ago the ability to manufacture explosive materials was in the sole realm of a handful of experts - such as the

Palestinian 'engineer' or other terrorists trained in Al-Qaeda camps. The proliferation of the knowhow, as demonstrated in the aforementioned video, today enables isolated and compartmentalized terrorist cells embedded in the West world to secretly manufacture explosives without being in constant touch with the instructors. This makes locating them, as well as identifying their operational materials, very difficult.

"There are literally hundreds of recipes on the web for the preparation of improvised explosives, and each one has several variations. Each new formula that is published immediately requires security agencies worldwide to update or develop detection systems - such as automatic sniffing machines and dogs. We collect these formulae obsessively as a database for the development of detection systems".

Unknown governmental authorities tried to delay the spreading of bomb-making videos by knocking some of the Jihadi affiliated sites off the web. However these efforts were too little, too late. Hundreds of thousands of surfers have already viewed their content. Twenty five hours of video were transcribed by the Terrogeance translation team and were transferred to intelligence agencies in Europe and the US in order to develop protection systems. Investigators succeeded in identifying some data on the masked leader and his identity and location were

transferred to the country where he now resides.

## From Paris to the Vatican

In a note published in a global Jihad forum, a member disclosed the existence of a system for identifying sniper fire deployed on US military vehicles in Iraq.

"This is important information for everyone that holds a sniper's rifle. My brothers, in the name of Allah, do you know what the system is? Here is a picture (a picture is shown). This system, brothers, provides the precise location of snipers. It is based on a set of microphones that are all connected to a central device that defines source of fire. The system is mounted on a Hummer type vehicle".

... "When a shot is fired microphones on the car roof are activated and determine the acoustic frequency of the muzzle blast. Within moments the equipment locates the exact position of the sound emitted by the gun, and thus enables the Crusaders to find the activist .... What you must know is that a silencer installed a sniper gun will render their tracking equipment useless. My brothers, I hope that I have helped you with this warning notice. God bless your fight!"

Shai Arbel of Terrogeance: "Following this warning, terrorists in Iraq began using silencers. Information resources used



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Keeping a watchful eye on Iran's growing influence



by the insurgents, were flooded with information on quality silencers”.

In one of the three leading global-jihad forums Terrogence investigators came across a discussion on the use of lasers for blinding aircraft pilots and surveillance. The “With the correct application of such equipment”, notes the writer, “it is possible to fully blind a pilot and even down a plane”. The discussion goes on for 20 pages and includes multiple witness accounts of experiments carried out to produce laser weapons, and a discussion of the effectiveness of the system that, in their view, would not only affect an aircraft’s various tracking and communication sensors but hamper its weapons system and even cause it to crash.

At the end of 2006 Al-Jazeera broadcasted an episode of the documentary series “Mega Cities”, originally produced by the National Geographic Channel. The specific chapter focused on the underground infrastructure of the sewage, electricity and Metro infrastructures of Paris, and featured those responsible for their upkeep and safety. One of the engineers mentions “a very thin wall” that separates the Metro from the sewage system, and that causes recurring malfunctions. Immediately following the broadcast, a senior activist in one of the Jihadi websites identified the terror potential and provided a link to the program. He attached a short message: “This video shows the dark side of Paris, a city that never sleeps.... The engineer explains how a small mishap in the sewage

system could destroy Paris and reduce it to a third world city. The idea itself does not appear in the TV episode itself but this is the reason I uploaded this documentary ... This is how to return Paris to the 13th century”.

A full report on the movie, its interpretations, discussions and other related data was transferred by Terrogence to the French intelligence agencies for immediate action. “Typically, military or intelligence agencies do not have enough time to deal with internet issues,” says Aviram Halevy. “Our clients here in Israel and overseas are drowning in the information they gather from classified sources and from the web. They are completely overloaded. Their problem is how to filter the information. Terrogence brings them a complete product, not Terabytes of loose data.

Gadi Aviran:

“In some cases our work does not uncover information unknown to the various Intelligence Community, but rather provides help in declassifying intelligence they already gathered from sensitive sources, allowing them to act on the information without worrying about exposing or endangering the source”.

Isn't it possible that the terrorists - who know they're being tracked - are flooding the Web with false information?

“If you and I were sitting in a room and you tried to fool me with false information on how to make a bomb, you could succeed. But if



***“The internet has flattened the planet. Time and geography have lost much of their importance. A threat in Indonesia is as relevant in Spain”.***

there was an additional expert, say from Sweden or Saudi Arabia, in the room with us, they would immediately react to the disinformation.”

In a speech at a German university on September 12, 2006, Pope Benedict 16th quoted a 14th century Byzantine emperor stating “Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new, and there you will find things

## Intelligenc Money

Terrogence’s CEO, Aviram Halevi, says, “It is not trivial, for a company whose business model is based on information content services to make money”. Terrogence seems to have a clientele that includes intelligence communities in Israel and abroad. These agencies are drowning in the masses of information that they themselves collect and do not have the time, human resources and sheer capacity to comb the vast cyberspace.

This is where Terrogence comes into the picture. It’s people build contacts with the intelligence community in Israel, the United States and Europe and offer them two types of services: payment per specific piece of information or payment per task. For example, the US military pays regularly for information on Jihadi activities against US forces in Iraq. The company’s staff even provides a series of workshops in the US for a number of government agencies.

Terrogence refuses to divulge their pricelist for intelligence or information tasks but claims that from the day the company opened its doors, it has provided a living for all its personnel, without any outside investment.

The company has clients far from the classic world of intelligence who are interested in its services. For example, a government agency responsible for public diplomacy hired Terrogence to collect information to show that an extreme Islamic organization that deals in terror, is not selective about who they target or the methods they use. International civilian financial bodies hire the company’s services for the purposes of risk assessment before investing in the Middle East.

Aviram Halevi: “The company succeeded in selling services to strategic Israeli and international clients in its very first year of operation, when there were only 3 or 4 people working in the company. As a result, we were able to grow in a controlled manner on the one hand and establish our customer base and abilities - products, and services - on the other.”

Hamas activist with battar  
improvised anti-tank rocket



only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached". These words unleashed a severe storm across the Muslim world and were debated in many forums and blogs, among them websites infiltrated by the 'Jihadists' from Bnei Zion. Among other things, Terrogence detected a cell preparing to strike the Vatican's computer servers. "We are talking about terrorists," says Adi Engel, Terrogence's product manager, "who are regarded by intelligence agencies as running an 'electronic Jihad', attacking IT infrastructure worldwide in the name of the global Jihad network.

"Their goal", adds Yuval Mond, the cyber terrorism expert who uncovered the cell, "was to knock down the Vatican computer servers for a long period of time. The attack was to be executed using software that was 'tailor developed' by an activist who identified himself as a Saudi citizen. The cell members posted messages on the main Jihadi orientated forums calling on Islamist surfers to participate in this attack by downloading and running the software. The 'zero hour' was set for 6pm on October 5th, giving the activists - and us at Terrogence - ample notice, and time to get ready for action.

Mond downloaded the soft-

ware and Terrogence began to analyze the software. At the same time a message was sent to the Vatican authorities warning them of the impending electronic attack. The operation was executed at the set time but due to pre-emptive steps taken, it was only partly successful. The Vatican's server operation slowed down but did not shut down as had been planned. The Jihad activists then set another date, on the October 11th, but the second attempt also failed.

Similarly, Terrogence staff claim that they came across an attempt to attack a major Israeli bank's servers. Following Terrogence's warning, the bank's IT experts took the necessary precautions to thwart the attack.

#### Ahmadinejad Online

One of the company's core activities is tracking terror related tactics, information networks, and activists who serve as focal points for dispensing operational information. Yuval, who specializes in tracking activists adds: "Often these activists leave an 'internet trail' behind them that enables us to gather data on their identity - whether that be their real name, whereabouts, or their means of communications.

Yuval provided an example of how he unveiled a 'cyber-Jihad' forum administrator, who, due to a line of mistakes, enabled Ter-

rogence to identify him by connecting his Jihadi web-alias to an actual name. "At the end of our investigations we established that the subject was studying computer sciences in a Western country. We had his full name, age and even a picture of his car in his native country, Bahrain. The details were transferred to the local police in the country where he was studying at the time".

Iran is one of the countries with the liveliest blog community, estimated at numbering ninety-thousand participants. These include leaders, politicians and other public figures. It is not surprising, therefore, that Farsi ranks as the 14th most popular language on the web.

Sharona runs the Farsi blog tracking at Terrogence. She emigrated to Israel at the age of 13 from Teheran, and later served in the IDF's Unit 8200. "In a country where free speech is very limited," she says, "the blogosphere is the only place where people can let off steam, especially those in the upper strata, reporters and human rights activists. Some choose not to heed government orders and at times face the risk of imprisonment for voicing their opinions. Journalist blogs receive tens of thousands of visitors every day from inside Iran".

"In these blogs one can find news-worthy reports that are not authorized for publication in the official press, or full reports on news items that are hidden in long lost sections in other news papers. These generally include vivid pictures of 'vice operations', carried out to enforce public morality in Iran, or harsh criticism of Ahmadinejad's government and other events. Through the blogs one can get a picture of a significant increase in the enforcement of religious law and repression of free speech, the closing down of newspapers and news agencies and the ongoing and ever-increasing arrests. The regime in Iran closely follows events on the internet and does not fear arresting anyone who speaks out against the government. Recently the internal security services arrested a young man who circulated a joke about Ahmadinejad on the web.

