

Open invitation: Are YOU able to wage 7th generation warfare?

by Yigal Schleifer via quill - christian science monitor *Saturday, Jan 24 2009, 10:30pm*
international / mass media / other press

Blogs, YouTube: the new battleground

[Why swallow the preposterous propaganda that emanates from America and its allies? Do not count yourselves among banjo-playing, mindless American morons that actually believe Obama represents real change. DO NOT BE A VICTIM of events, SHAPE events and wage digital warfare on the net against the nefarious forces that seek only to enslave and deceive the FREE WORLD!]

OUR VICTORY IS ASSURED; do not remain passive. Be an ACTIVE PARTICIPANT in THE PUSH FOR JUSTICE and REAL DEMOCRACY. Write and video events for the world! We invite YOU to contribute as do all other INDEPENDENT SITES. Be a part of the SOLUTION not part of the moronic, PASSIVE, problem! Ed.]



Pursue war criminals and free Sam -- image by Cam Cardow

Istanbul, Turkey - The recent battle in Gaza between Israel and Hamas wasn't only fought with bullets, bombs, and missiles, but also with keystrokes. Observers say that through Facebook, YouTube, and other Web-based applications, the online community participated in shaping the news, and was enlisted in the effort to influence public opinion in an unprecedented - and sometimes worrisome - way.

"There were two wars going on. There was the one going on on the ground, and a parallel war happening in the virtual world," says Amira Al Hussaini, Middle East and North Africa editor for Global Voices Online, a website that aggregates the work of bloggers from around the world. "All the [online] social-networking tools were used to the best of people's abilities on both sides."

The online war over Gaza was relentless. Hackers on both sides worked to deface websites, with one attack successfully redirecting traffic from several high-profile Israeli websites to a page featuring anti-Israel messages. Facebook groups supporting the opposing sides were quickly created and soon had hundreds of thousands of members.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) set up its own YouTube channel, showing footage taken by unmanned drones flying over Gaza, while Palestinians responded with the launch of Palutube.com,

with raw footage showing the destruction in Gaza.

One group, an online collective known as Help Israel Win even encouraged users to download a program that would enlist their computer in an online effort to overload Palestinian websites.

Another online organization, called the Jewish Internet Defense Force, has employed various methods to remove or disable Facebook groups that, it says, are clearly antisemitic or actively promote Islamic terrorism or genocide - and thus break "terms of service" rules and possibly some international laws. [Editor's Note: The original mischaracterized the online behavior that the JIDF targets.]

"We believe in direct action both to eradicate the problems we face online and to create the publicity that will cause those with the power, companies like Facebook and Google, to take the needed action themselves," a spokesperson for the group, who asked to remain anonymous because of security concerns, wrote in an e-mail.

But it's not just independent activists who were busy online. Al Jazeera, the Qatar-based news network, complemented its traditional coverage with innovative new media features, such as sending out reports from Gaza via Twitter, an online messaging service, and posting an interactive map showing where war-related incidents in Gaza and Israel were happening.

"This is the first time that new media worked as a proven concept for how a mainstream media organization can cover an event like this online," says Riyaad Minty, a new media analyst with Al Jazeera.

Meanwhile, the Israeli government has been working hard to utilize new media tools to press its case. At the beginning of the conflict in Gaza, the Israeli consulate in New York held what was described as the first "governmental" press conference using Twitter. The online event was open to anyone with a Twitter account.

The country's Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, working together with the Foreign Ministry's public relations department, has also announced that it is looking for a multilingual "army of bloggers" to help in the aftermath of the Gaza operation.

"The blogosphere and new media are another war zone. We have to be relevant there," the head of the IDF's Foreign Press branch, Maj. Avital Leibovich, recently told The Jerusalem Post.

But some see the enlistment of the Internet in the Gaza battle as part of a troubling trend.

"We've been seeing the rise of what I refer to as citizen propaganda," says Ethan Zuckerman, a research fellow at the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University, who observed a similar online information battle during last summer's conflict between Russia and Georgia.

"Rather than becoming the cafe of the world, where we interact on common ground, the Net has become a very effective place to rally people to your own cause and try to coordinate their actions."

Adds Mr. Zuckerman: "I think what has become really interesting is that in an era when you have armed conflict between states, you now have people online looking to see how [they] can become part of that conflict without leaving their computers."

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2009/0123/p04s03-wome.html>

Cleaves Alternative News. <http://cleaves.lingama.net/news/story-1410.html>