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Message in an Electronic Bottle: The Internet after 9/11

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Message in an Electronic Bottle: The Internet after 9/11

Posted on August 1, 2002 by Editor

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“Yet like messages in an electronic bottle from people marooned in some distant sky, their last words narrate a world that was coming undone. A man sends an e-mail message asking, “Any news from the outside?” before perching on a ledge at Windows on the World. A woman reports a colleague is smacking useless sprinkler heads with his shoe. A husband calmly reminds his wife about their insurance policies, then says that the floor is groaning beneath him, and tells her that she and their children meant the world to him.”[1]

“Fighting to Live as the Towers Died,” THE NEW YORK TIMES, May 26, 2002

Nothing could save the 1,947 World Trade Center workers trapped above the floors hit by two hijacked passenger jets. In the final 103 minutes before the fire ball reached steel melting temperature, causing the towers to collapse, 353 people sent cell phone and e-mail messages asking for help and saying goodbye. For the first time, computer integrated communication permitted victims of a massive attack to instantly connect with the outside world.
The e-mailed last words from the midst of the World Trade Center cataclysm, as chronicled by The New York Times, illustrate the danger that Americans face. In spite of our advanced technical prowess, we are vulnerable as never before. The wonders of our information age that once dazzled pale when we are unable to rescue ourselves. In a surprise hijacking of our own technology, terrorists have turned the Internet against us – secretly marshaling deadly arsenals with computer efficiencies in a crazed quest to duplicate more ruin.

On the first anniversary of the day that changed everything, let’s pause to review the seriousness of the threat — then look at how, thanks to computer networks, Americans are steadily being made less vulnerable to stealth attacks. Finally in honor of the 9/11 victims, let’s dream of how the spread of Internet-inspired political freedoms might one day create a world without terror.

.01 Nature of the Threat (return to index)

The global Internet infrastructure made possible the terrorist organization that carried out the 9/11 attack, signaling a new era of warfare – the emergence of a “virtual state” – a state-like entity without borders, organized electronically, capable of striking from shadows and leaving no option for retaliation or deterrence.

“The 11th of September was, if you will, an official and biting declaration of World War III,” said Efraim Halevy, the head of Israel’s intelligence agency, in a speech to the NATO Alliance Council in Brussels in July 2002. “This is a war in which the sides are not only countries but also terrorist groups that operate almost with impunity. It is a war which does not have clear fighting lines; it is a war that is being waged against free societies, with weapons and strategies we have not known until now.”[2]

While some experts argue that government reaction to terrorism is overblown [3] and polls show that most Americans are less afraid of war today than they were during the superpower stand-offs 30 years ago, evidence shows that the threat of Islamic terrorism is actually quite serious.[4] Most defense analysts believe that our lives are actually in more danger today than at any time during the cold war. Radical hate groups, rejecting the Western values and civil liberties, are well educated, well funded, increasingly well armed — perhaps with weapons of mass destruction – and ever devoted to their mission of destroying the Great Satan.

In a clash of civilizations, Islamic radicals perceive their way of life being overwhelmed by modernity. Influential clerics in Iran, Saudi Arabia and London see the creation of the global communication network dominated by American culture penetrating the Islamic world, challenging traditional customs and beliefs and drawing the young into irreligious and perverse mindsets.

“What they abominate about ‘the West,’ Christopher Hitchens points out about militant Islamists, “is not what Western liberals don’t like and can’t defend,” — such as U.S. support for Israel or oil interests in Saudi Arabia — “but what [liberals] do like about it and must defend: its
emancipated women, its scientific inquiry, its separation of religion from the state.”[5] The radical Islamic vision for the world was plain for all to see in Afghanistan under the rule of the Taliban – anti-democratic, no freedom of speech or religion, no equality for women, no middle class, brutal punishment for all considered immoral or unable to abide by strict Koran based dictates.

This radical vision has marked the borders of the Islamic world with bloodshed. Fanatical jihads rage in the Philippines, Kashmir, Chechnya, the West Bank, Sudan, and Nigeria. America and her allies are now being threatened. It must be stressed, however, that instigators of violence comprise a small faction of mainstream and peace loving Islamic believers.[6] Advocates of a literal holy war are estimated to make up between ten and fifteen percent of the world’s one billion Muslims.[7] Still, fifteen percent of the four million Muslims living in the United States equal 450,000 people who may be sympathetic to the terrorist cause.[8][9]

Al Qaeda — “The Base” in Arabic – has essentially claimed responsibility for the September 11 attacks. It is the leading anti-American terrorist organization in the world, joining with several other radical Islamic groups, such as the Iranian backed Hezboalla who are also sworn enemies of the United States. According to one intelligence report 5,000 U.S. residents are in some way tied to al Qaeda. The same source reveals that at least one hundred hardcore militants spread across the nation in small groups are actively plotting future attacks.[10]

Al Qaeda is well financed by oil money and its leaders are educated – sometimes gaining advanced degrees at western universities. Even though the holy warriors seem caught in a tribalism of the 13th century, they are technically sophisticated — skilled in using the web to administer an organization spread across 60 nations. In fact, some observers think that the group could not exist without computer-integrated communication.

By purchasing technology off the shelf and tapping the global Internet infrastructure, leaders are able to send coded or encrypted messages to adherents across the world via email or in web page chat rooms. Sometimes messages are hidden using steganography inside photo files. In July, investigators monitoring suspicious web sites and computer servers report that they may have discovered a coded message from al Qaeda’s charismatic leader Osama bin Laden to followers indicating that he is still alive.[11]

But not all messages are cryptic. “We have no hatred towards anyone, not even the Americans or Jews,” said one message posted on a radical Islamic web site based in the United States. “We just want to send them to hell where they belong in eternal flames of fire. God is Great!”[12]

The global electronic network permits terror groups to gather intelligence, gain recruits, raise funding, launder money and devise attack plans. Perpetrators of the 9/11 attack used public libraries to read emailed instructions undetected. Al Qaeda computers seized in Afghanistan and Pakistan show web searches of American military, cultural and economic targets — photos of Mount Rushmore, the Space Needle, the Statue of Liberty, the Brooklyn Bridge and the Sears Tower and blueprints of Hoover Dam and the Indian Point nuclear power plant in New York.
Understanding the importance of building morale for adherents while spreading fear among the enemy, al Qaeda routinely uses web sites for propaganda purposes. “We are coming back, God willing, from where you cannot expect us,” said an al-Qaida spokesman at www.jehad.net in July 2002. Knowing that his words would be reported by the U.S. media, Abu Ghaith promised new attacks against American targets and urged Muslims to “kill enemies of God everywhere.”[13]

One suspected leader of a terrorist cell in Seattle, James Ujaama — held for questioning by the FBI in July — is a native-born American convert to Islam. He is an experienced Web designer and promotes his anti-American foreign policy views on a Web site called stopamerica.org. According to the Seattle Times, Ujaama supplied laptop computers to the Taliban in Afghanistan in the late 1990s, and later helped holy warriors in London set up a web site for a British company, Sakina Security Services.

The Sakina Web site sought clients for the “Ultimate Jihad Challenge,” reported to be a paramilitary training course in the United States. The company, a suspected al Qaeda front, has been charged by the British government with seeking to “assist or prepare for” acts of terrorism. U.S. investigators discovered links between Sakina and a plan for a terrorist training camp at a southern Oregon ranch near the town of Klamath Falls.[14] Members of the Seattle group are thought to be under orders of Abu Hamza Al-Masri, a suspected Al Qaeda recruiter who runs a London mosque and is wanted in Yemen on terrorism charges. After the September 11 attacks, Al-Masri told newspapers that it would be a blessing if God destroyed the United States.

The high level of al Qaeda technical expertise was proven by a message received by the White House the day of the attack: “Air Force One is next.” Administration officials were shocked because the message frequency revealed that the terrorists had access to secret U.S. codes, causing the President to be flown to a nuclear war bunker in Nebraska. If al Qaeda know-how had penetrated the highest level of government security, a wider conspiracy such as the destruction of Washington D.C. was feared.[15]

Accessing the Air Force One codes, says the Chicago Tribune, was just one of al Qaeda’s technical feats, confirming that the organization had developed:

“a sophisticated electronics operation using unbreakable encryption, coded pictures and secret Web sites to coordinate anti-American groups operating in more than 30 countries. On the international market, they’re believed to have acquired hard-to-tap spread-spectrum radios, which switch frequencies rapidly, and sophisticated satellite phone systems, including an Inmarsat Compact M satellite phone, which is equipped with a 2,400-bit-per-second modem for data as well as voice transmission.”[16]

In a June message to the world posted on a radical Islamic Web site, al Qaeda leaders threatened to kill four million Americans.[17] Covertly assisted by rogue states like Iraq or Iran, which possess advanced weapons programs, authorities assert that terrorist infiltrators may be
able to acquire and deploy these weapons of mass destruction against Americans — producing new, more lethal 9/11’s.

The tenacious and elusive nature of al Qaeda and related groups makes stopping them difficult — short of creating a police state. At best, anti-terrorism experts say that we can expect a long period of low-level terrorist violence — such as the suicide bombings in Israel — and at worst, if weapons of mass destruction are employed, a doomsday scenario killing hundreds of thousands or even millions of people.

The fact that congressional leaders from both parties, and the Prime Minister of Great Britain, after attending secret intelligence briefings, unanimously support the Bush administration’s war on terrorism shows that the fear is not exaggerated.

.02 Significance of the Threat (return to index)

**Cyber war.** Analysts believe that al Qaeda is preparing for cyber warfare — and not simply hacking to disable American websites.[18] Terrorists may combine physical attacks, such as the explosion of a radiation bomb or blowing up a dam, with hacking into a city’s power grid or emergency response systems to maximize chaos. We know that because al Qaeda is well versed in the Internet from its inception, the group could employ cyber warfare against Americans in devastating ways.

By disabling or taking command of the floodgates in a dam or hacking into substations handling 300,000 volts of electric power, a terrorist could use virtual tools to cause bloodshed and destroy real-world property. A June 24th article in the Washington Post reports that al Qaeda may be planning to employ those techniques to enhance the impact of “kinetic weapons” such as explosives.

“The event I fear most is a physical attack in conjunction with a successful cyber-attack on the responders’ 911 system or on the power grid,” said Ronald Dick, director of the FBI’s National Infrastructure Protection Center. If terrorists could instigate a national outage of the U.S. Public Switched Network, it would bring almost all local and long distance telephone services to a halt, disrupt electronic banking transactions and silence emergency response systems.

Until recent revelations came to light, intelligence officials underestimated the potential of al Qaeda launching cyber attacks. Then, investigators noticed that operatives were devoting large amounts of time on the web apparently mapping possible targets. The Washington Post continued:

“Working with experts at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, the FBI traced trails of a broader reconnaissance. A forensic summary of the investigation, prepared in the Defense Department, said the bureau found “multiple casings of sites” nationwide. Routed through telecommunications switches in Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and Pakistan, the visitors
studied emergency telephone systems, electrical generation and transmission, water storage and distribution, nuclear power plants and gas facilities.

“Some of the probes suggested planning for a conventional attack, U.S. officials said. But others homed in on a class of digital devices that allow remote control of services such as fire dispatch and of equipment such as pipelines. More information about those devices — and how to program them — turned up on al Qaeda computers seized this year, according to law enforcement and national security officials.”[19]

Cyber warfare on some level is basic to the terrorist strategy. The 9/11 hijackers visited New York to record the coordinates of the World Trade Center with a global positioning device, practiced piloting with Boeing flight simulator programs on lap top computers and sent E-mails to supporters on September tenth, “Tomorrow is zero day.”

As Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said of al Qaeda’s technical expertise — they specialize in “destroying things they could never have built themselves using technologies they never could have developed themselves.”[20] But, when al Qaeda’s cyber sophistication is combined with obtaining weapons of mass destruction, truly frightening scenarios emerge.

**Biological Weapons.** Smuggling a small amount of biological agents into the country would be easier than drug trafficking — which brings tons of contraband across borders each year. Anthrax or botulism spread by aerosol, crop dusting aircraft or released from skyscrapers or covertly inserted into food or water supplies could infect huge populations.

According to a study by the Brookings Institution, contagious diseases like ebola, bubonic plague or smallpox deliberately spread in several cities at once could result in one millions deaths. An outbreak of these, or a variety of genetically engineered germs designed to be resistant to antibiotics, would overwhelm health care facilities, causing chaos and economic collapse.[21]

When the Bush administration announced plans to mount an attack against Iraq to destroy that nation’s cache of weapons of mass destruction, the New York Times reported that the government simultaneously is planning to increase production of smallpox vaccines in case of biological retaliation.

One way that Saddam Hussein could make good on his promise to turn the United States into a “living hell,” would be for Iraqi sponsored suicide terrorists infected with smallpox wandering throughout American city centers or airports. Dr. Kenneth I. Berns, an authority on bio-terrorism at the Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York City, believes that Iraq probably possesses weaponized smallpox, saying that the chance that Saddam would use such germs in a war against the United States is “quite high.”[22]

**Nuclear weapons.** A senior Iraqi defectors told the London Times that the Iraqi leader is pressing ahead with all three elements of his secret weapons project: biological, chemical and
nuclear. Iraqi officials say they will unleash all weapons in their arsenal if attacked.[23] While it is thought that Saddam’s nearly realized dream of possessing a nuclear bomb was cut short by the Gulf war in 1991, there have been recent signs of clandestine procurement of systems designed to produce bomb-grade fissile material.[24]

A smuggled nuclear device in the hands of terrorists is the theme of “The Sum of All Fears,” a Tom Clancy novel made into a film released this year. Yet the possibility of Saddam supplying terrorists with a portable nuke, if he had one, is not fanciful. Al Qaeda has actively sought to obtain nuclear material from the black market.[25] While Russia denies a report that some of its suitcase tactical nukes are missing, several former Soviet republics, now in great financial need, possess these weapons and the United Nations considers the danger serious enough that it has instigated a program to secure nuclear bombs and other radioactive materials from being sold. [26]

In spite of intelligence assessments that it is unlikely that al Qaeda has a nuclear weapon, Graham Allison, assistant secretary of defense in the Clinton administration, fears that “bin Laden’s final act could be a nuclear attack on America.”[27]

According to the Washington Post, the Brookings Institution estimated that “100,000 people would die if a nuclear bomb hit a major U.S. city and that 10,000 would perish in a successful attack on a nuclear or toxic chemical plant.”[28][29]

The report adds that attacking the shipping industry with weapons of mass destruction would cause the economy to suffer up to $1 trillion in losses. Any of the 5.7 million sea containers that enter United States ports each year could hide a weapon, since only two percent are inspected. Beginning in September, radiation detectors have been sent to ports and border crossing to prevent nuclear material and other mass weapons from entering the country.[30]

**Dirty Nukes.** Exploding a dirty bomb – which wraps conventional bombs with radioactive material – would be the easiest way for terrorists to achieve their goal. The Bush administration announced on June 11, 2002 that a suspected al-Qaeda operative was arrested for plotting the first stages of a dirty bomb attack in the United States.[31]

Compounding the problem is that obtaining radioactive material, used in medical facilities and at commercial operations, is relatively easy. The New Scientist magazine reports that there are literally millions of sources of radioactive material that terrorist could use to construct a bomb. Such an attack may not cause large numbers of deaths immediately, but certainly would result in terrible panic, economic devastation and could, depending on the type and amount of radioactive material, leave the ground zero of the explosion uninhabitable for decades.[32][33]

In July FEMA, the federal agency charged with disaster preparedness, reportedly began efforts to prepare for multiple mass destruction attacks on U.S. cities. The agency plans to create emergency evacuation cities that could house hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of
Americans who may have to flee urban homes if their cities are attacked. FEMA workers were given a deadline to compete the first stages of the plan by January 2003.[34][35]

While such large-scale attacks endangering thousands or even millions of people are possible, smaller hits, perhaps in several locations at the same time, are the more likely threat. “It’s a matter of when, not if,” is the mantra of more than one government official repeating the conclusion that Americans will probably face low-tech attacks. Here are a few scenarios.

**Passenger Jets.** Increased security makes hijackings more difficulty, but air travelers are still in danger. An al Qaeda agent is now on trial after being caught by a stewardess trying to light the fuse of a shoe bomb made of plastic explosive on a fight from London. The FFA warns that because there is currently no inspection of luggage, terrorists could slip timed explosives into cargo holds of passenger jets. Smuggled shoulder held surface to air missiles might bring down aircraft. Snipers armed with handguns could attack airport travelers.[36]

**Water Supply.** Intelligence from Afghanistan reveals that al Qaeda had developed a plan for a massive attack on regional water supplies in the U.S. Pipelines and pumping stations are the most likely targets since poisoning reservoirs with botulism or lethal chemicals requires truckloads of toxins. It is feared that terrorist may disrupt a city’s water supply before setting off firebombs to hinder fire fighting.[37]

**Ferries and Cruise Ship attacks.** On June 24th a group of Middle Eastern men were seen suspiciously video taping the interiors of Washington State ferry boats – a known al Qaeda reconnaissance procedure.[38] Earlier, the Coast Guard warned that terrorist suspects were interested in scuba diving.[39] One FBI warnings referred to al Qaeda targeting casualty rich cruise ships.

**Bombings.** The FBI issued warnings in June, based on intercepted messages that terrorists were planning to place bombs in rented apartments to bring down buildings.[40]

**Suicide Truck Bombs.** After the 9/11 attack, authorities discovered that large numbers of immigrants and international students had attended training programs to obtain heavy truck driving licenses. Terrorists cells in major U.S. cities could orchestrate on a single day a human wave attack by crashing fuel tankers or truck bombs into shopping malls, hospitals, government buildings, sports stadiums or schools.[41]

One feature of what a Rand Institution study calls netwar – twenty first century warfare assisted by electronic communication networks — is the tactic of swarming. Swarming occurs when militants mount a campaign of episodic, pulsing attacks by small units, spread across wide regions, all hitting multiple targets. Like killer bees dodging a bear’s claws and jaws, swarming circumvents traditional military might – making America’s billion dollar spy satellites, nuclear missiles and bomber fleets useless.[42]
Counteracting the Threat

In this last year, military and intelligence officials relied on Internet computer technology to prevent new attacks and advance the global war against terrorism. With the help of electronic monitoring, militants planning mass murder are tracked and arrested. Assets of terror groups are cut off through electronic international banking networks. Plots are discovered and exposed. Monitoring of e-mail and telephone communication helped authorities capture Jose Padilla, a US citizen in Pakistan, working on a plan to explode a radioactive bomb in an American city.

Attorney General John Ashcroft says that preventing terrorist attacks is now the primary goal of the Justice Department. Using new powers granted by anti-terrorism legislation passed immediately after September 11th, more than 129 people have been charged with crimes as a result of investigations. As of July 2002, 86 have been found guilty and 417 individuals were deported for violations of U.S. laws. Ashcroft says that hundreds more are currently the subjects of deportation proceedings.[43]

According to Justice Department statistics, more than 600 immigrants nationwide have been jailed and subjected to secret immigration hearing. The administration justifies these measures, questioned by civil liberty groups, as necessary to prevent future attacks. Most troubling for civil libertarians is that the Pentagon and the Justice Department sidestep legal protections that might benefit terror suspects by developing rules of detention and trial separate from the U.S. court system.

The nation faces “a new wave of terrorism, potentially involving the world’s most destructive weapons… It is a challenge as formidable as any ever faced by our nation,” says a Homeland Security plan document. The administration seeks a coordinated approach to counter new dangers, including creation of the Homeland Security Department, increased spending for civil defense and changes in state laws to facilitate the prosecution of terrorists.[44]

As an open society that values privacy and civil liberties, Americans are repulsed by the idea of federal agents spying inside the U.S. or the government detaining for questioning immigrants or visitors from nations that sponsor terrorism — even though it might reduce the chance of another 9/11. Critics on both the left and the right of the political spectrum fear that the war on terrorism may be a pretense for police state violations of fourth amendment prohibitions against unjust searches and seizures.

Ten city councils including Berkeley, California; Northampton, Massachusetts; Denver, Colorado and Eugene, Oregon passed resolutions opposing changes in laws permitting Federal agents greater power to gather information for counter terrorism purposes.[45] The Northampton “Resolution to defend the Bill of Rights,” passed unanimously on May 2, warns that efforts by Attorney General Ashcroft “threaten key rights guaranteed to U.S. citizens and non-citizens by the Bill of Rights.” Such as: “freedom of speech, assembly, and privacy; the right to counsel and due process in judicial proceedings; and protection from unreasonable searches and
Much criticism is directed at the USA PATRIOT act, passed overwhelmingly by Congress in the weeks following the 9/11 attack. The act gives federal law enforcement and intelligence officer’s greater authority to obtain and share electronically gathered evidence for counter-terrorism. It adds terrorism to the list of crimes that Federal investigators are permitted to secretly identify the source and destination of calls being monitored. Previously investigators were limited to “trap and trace” only at facilities used by foreign spies or the phones of those known to be engaged in international terrorism. Under the Patriot act, these tools can be used whenever it is relevant in revealing information about terrorist plots.

The act gives law enforcement the same authority over monitoring a suspect’s e-mail’s as their telephone communication. Voice mail recording may be seized and service providers may be required to give up customer information – although unlike European Union policies — Internet service providers will not be required to retain e-mail transmissions traveling across their servers for surveillance purposes.

Investigators are now free to secretly “sneak and peak” inside a suspect’s computer, either by physically entering their home to gather non-tangible evidence then leaving undetected or by using Internet linkups to enter a computer electronically for the same purpose. Instead of a search warrant, investigators are required to notify a judge of the monitoring and submit a report when the surveillance is complete.

The act also allows roving wiretaps – permitting Federal agents with court warrants to monitor the transactions of a suspect no matter what phone or computer he uses.

As draconian as these measures appear, there are at least three arguments refuting the claim that we are witnessing the slow undoing of our liberties by a budding police state. First, most of the provisions of the USA Patriot act are temporary and will be withdrawn by sunset clause on December 31, 2005.

Second, in time of war the rules change. When we consider that thousands — if not millions — of Americans are in credible danger of obliteration by weapons of mass destruction deployed on our soil, that such an attack would destroy our economy and way of life and effectively end the possibility of civil liberties altogether, emergency measures are justified. Failing to prevent mass terrorist attacks designed to murder tens of thousands — when it is possible by monitoring and exposing plots — would be a worse crime by our government than wartime limitations of the freedoms of certain suspects. While the Berkeley City Council condemns the increased surveillance, no one is surprised that the New York City Council supports these efforts to prevent another, perhaps much worse, attack.

The political calculus is reflected in the words of the Declaration of Independence when life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are listed in order of preeminence. You cannot enjoy civil liberties if
you are dead. The first task of government, therefore, is to protect life by securing the common
defense so that freedoms and the ability to reach individual potential (happiness) can be
achieved.

There are many examples form past wars in which American Presidents executed policies that
denied civil liberties on a much greater scale. During the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln suspended
habeas corpus and arrested suspects without charges. After the Peal Harbor attack during
World War Two, President Roosevelt prosecuted German terrorist infiltrators in military tribunals
and even instituted internment camps for Japanese Americans. The republic survived both of
these more severe liberty-denying episodes.

The nation’s founders, suspicious of government abuse of power, set up checks that will
continue to provide correction if today’s counter-terrorism measures go too far. The court system
is able to over turn legislation ruled unconstitutional and political pressure will keep law
enforcement within reasonable bounds.

In an age of swarming attacks and weapons of mass destruction, terrorist hijacking the Internet
to execute their global jihad endangers us all. We know that the cohorts of the same men who
murdered the World Trade Center office workers are actively working to do more harm —
vowing to repeat 9/11 ten times over. Because cold war military doctrines of deterrence by
kinetic force do not apply, we have no choice but to exploit the same computer integrated
communication technology that the terrorists are using to stop them.

Defense planners are taking inspiration from the advice of ancient military philosophy Sun Tzu
who taught that the first duty of a general is to prevent unnecessary bloodshed through cunning
strategy and efficient use of force. In The Art of War, Sun Tzu teaches that gathering intelligence
on those who plot war is a non-violent means for gaining an advantage that may save lives by
reducing the radius of damage that an enemy attack may inflict.

Similarly, Rand netwar theorists argue that just as the elimination of piracy on the high seas in the
nineteenth century required a strategy of international consensus, America and its friends must
now network to defeat modern terrorism. Cooperation is already occurring in terms of intelligence
sharing among allies — leading to several arrests of terrorist plotters. In the past year we have
seen military, intelligence and diplomatic leaders across the world joining together to prevent
attacks. The freezing of electronic banking assets of terror groups is one of the most striking
non-violent successes of the international campaign to reduce our vulnerabilities.

Within the Federal bureaucracy, anti terrorism networking will require deep, all channel
 collaboration among military, law enforcement and intelligence agencies. While rivalries and lack
 of communication hindered effectiveness in the past, the creation of the Department of
 Homeland Security – bringing one hundred agencies under one head – is an example of how
computer integrated communication can strengthen our defenses. The 37 billion dollar
department is the largest government re-organization in fifty years and will depend on the Internet
One example of how electronic networking increases homeland security is a new cargo tracking system first introduced at Seattle’s and Tacoma’s ports — which combined are the nation’s third-largest. The computer system monitors thousands of cargo containers worldwide from origin to destination, reducing the chance that terrorist will succeed in smuggling a nuclear weapon.\[49\]

.03 **Hope for the Future** (return to index)

In *The Shield of Achilles*, historian Phillip Bobbitt points out that for the last five hundred years it took the resources of a state to destroy another state. The threat of attack by a set of known possible adversaries created the nation-state as we know it. With the advent of high-speed global communication, non-state entities now pose a security threat that will lead to the emergence of a new kind of political reality which he calls a “market-state.”\[50\]

The market-state will utilize the resources of the Internet infrastructure to empower the individual citizen as never before — raising the promise of democracy to new heights. By showering the individual with the new standard of wealth – information – the Internet releases the inherent buoyancy of human freedom, creating a new political epoch. The goal of future governments will be to actualize the potential of each citizen, rather than simply maintain territorial or economic integrity. Improved encryption and anonymous servers will make governmental spying on citizens difficult, eliminating fears of Big Brother watching our every move.

Aided by the Internet, citizen watchdog groups or non-governmental organizations now become key players in national as well as international politics – sometimes becoming more influential than traditional politicians or diplomats. In this de-centralized society, personal liberties are protected through enhanced public pressure and the court system. And electorates better informed by instant access to universal information promote better policy making by representatives. Democracy overall is lifted.

As more people of the world go online, as computer speed increases and costs decline, authoritarian dictatorships will wither away in the light of Internet assisted freedom. Rule by dictatorship requires the close control of information through propaganda. But, such centralized control becomes close to impossible in a cyber society. In China a majority of computer users now read international news pages, rather than depend on the official line by the government press.\[51\]

The global information networks may succeed in spreading democracy even into the Islamic world, eventually resolving the current conflict at its roots. The United Nations *Arab Human Development Report* concludes that democratic reform is needed.\[52\] Already Web based organizations devoted to secularization are permitting Islamic people to learn about social alternatives.\[53\][54] With pluralism comes peace. Jean Kirkpatrick, former United Nations ambassador, was correct when she observed that self-governing nations rarely attack their
neighbors. Democratic Islamic nations that permit freedom of speech, religious diversity and
equality for women and foster a justice system that prosecutes corruption must be established
before terrorism will end.[55]

One year ago 3,000 lives were lost in the worst terrorist attack in history – more deaths than in
any battle fought by the United States. Damages exceeded 33 billion dollars. [56] The towers that
once dominated the Manhattan skyline are gone now, leaving behind a question about the
impact of the attack on our future: are free societies strong enough to overcome the hidden
agents of totalitarianism set so viciously against us? Will our rescue message set adrift be
heeded?

The hope that a new era of super-computer amplified freedom, inspired by American innovations,
will finally defeat global terrorism is perhaps the best memorial that we could give the victims of
9/11.

– Gary Gillespie is Associate Professor of Communication at Northwest College, Kirkland,
Washington

Endnotes (return to index)

[1] “Fighting to Live as the Towers Died,” THE NEW YORK TIMES, May 26, 2002, Section 1,

Israel, July 3, 2002

10, 2002 “I basically think we are really overreacting to this in a fairly large way,” said George
Mason University economist Roger Congleton. “I think it would be useful for the press and the
government to be reminded that the risks are not as gigantic as we seem to have been
encouraged to believe over the last year.”
http://www.upi.com/view.cfm?StoryID=20020809-100721-7830r

2002 “A poll taken by CNN/USA Today/Gallup on May 28-29 showed 22 percent “not worried at
all,” 37 percent “not too worried.” Against that sanguine 59 percent, only 9 percent are “very
worried” and 31 percent “somewhat worried.” We are less worried than we were during the Cold
War, yet the United States may be seriously more vulnerable today.”
http://www.usnews.com/usnews/opinion/articles/020617/archive_021625.htm

The Muslim population in this country is not like any other group, for it includes within it a substantial body of people—many times more numerous than the agents of Osama bin Ladin—who share with the suicide hijackers a hatred of the United States and the desire, ultimately, to transform it into a nation living under the strictures of militant Islam. Although not responsible for the atrocities in September, they harbor designs for this country that warrant urgent and serious attention.


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[49] “Coast Guard stays in shape to guard our coast, Real searches of incoming ships are
augmented with drills about terrorism,” Wednesday, July 17, 2002 By MIKE BARBER SEATTLE
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Wednesday, August 07, 2002 “Their governments don’t like it, but citizens of such countries as
Iran and China are turning to the Internet to exchange forbidden ideas and taste a measure of
freedom denied them in everyday life. And the authorities have found there isn’t much they can
do about it.”
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blames Arab culture and Arab tyranny for Arab problems,” The City Journal, July 3, 2002
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ideas of rationalism, secularism, democracy and human rights within Islamic society.
http://www.secularislam.org/

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[55] Benjamin Netanyahu, “The Root Cause of Terrorism — It’s tyranny,” *Wall Street Journal*, Friday, April 19, 2002. “[O]nce the terrorist regimes in the Middle East are swept away, the free world, led by America, must begin to build the institutions of pluralism and democracy in their place. We simply can no longer allow parts of the world to remain cloistered by fanatic militancies. Such militancies, once armed with nuclear weapons, could destroy our civilization. We must begin immediately to encourage the peoples of the Arab and Islamic world to embrace the idea of pluralism and the ideals of freedom—for their sake, as well as ours.”
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This entry was posted in Uncategorized by Editor. Bookmark the permalink [http://bcis.pacificu.edu/interface/?p=2596].

24 THOUGHTS ON “MESSAGE IN AN ELECTRONIC BOTTLE: THE INTERNET AFTER 9/11”

**Dexter**

on January 30, 2014 at 4:02 AM said:

My spouse and I stumbled over here by a different page and thought I might check things out. I like what I see so now i am following you.

Look forward to checking out your web page again.

**gold ira entrust**

on January 30, 2014 at 5:13 AM said:

Everyone loves it when folks get together and share thoughts.
Great website, continue the good work!
http://thecallofdutyghostsaimbot.blogspot.com/
on January 31, 2014 at 2:29 AM said:

An outstanding share! I’ve just forwarded this onto a coworker who has been doing a little homework on this.

And he in fact ordered me lunch simply because I found it for him…lol. So let me reword this…. Thanks for the meal!!
But yeah, thanks for spending time to discuss this matter here on your website.

ceiling fans with lights
on January 31, 2014 at 2:20 PM said:

It’s perfect time to make a few plans for the future and it is time to be happy.
I’ve read this pput upp and if I could I want to recommend you few fascinating issues or suggestions. Maybe you can write subsequent articless relating to this article.

I wish to learn more issues approximately it!

Quinton
on January 31, 2014 at 11:40 PM said:

Hey I am so delighted I found your web site, I really found you by accident, while I was browsing on Aol for something else, Nonetheless I am here now and would just like to say thank you for a incredible post and a all round entertaining blog (I also love the theme/design), I don’t have time to go through it all at the minute but I have bookmarked it and also added in your RSS feeds, so when I have time I will be back to read a great deal more, Please do keep up the superb b.
free nx cash
on February 1, 2014 at 3:41 PM said:

I’m curious to fin out what blog platform you’re working with?
I’m experiuencing some small security problems with my latest site annd I’d
like too find something more secure. Do you have any solutions?

make money from home bbb
on February 2, 2014 at 5:21 PM said:

I do agree with all of the ideas you have offered to your
post. They are very convincing and can definitely work.
Still, the posts are too short for starters. Could you please extend them a little from next
time?
Thanks for the post.

Rob
on February 4, 2014 at 5:03 AM said:

I was suggested this website through my cousin. I am now not
positive whether this put up is written via him as no one else know such certain about
my trouble.
You’re incredible! Thanks!

cash support designed
on February 4, 2014 at 8:14 AM said:

Way cool! Some very valid points! I appreciate you penning this post plus the
rest of the site is very good.
Emory
on February 4, 2014 at 8:47 AM said:

Today, I went to the beach front with my children. I found a sea shell and gave it to my 4 year old daughter and said “You can hear the ocean if you put this to your ear.” She put the shell to her ear and screamed. There was a hermit crab inside and it pinched her ear. She never wants to go back! LoL I know this is completely off topic but I had to tell someone!

online casino profits
on February 4, 2014 at 8:52 AM said:

Thanks very nice blog!

africa
on February 4, 2014 at 10:15 AM said:

Hey, thank you for ones feedback! I would suggest that saying “God died on the cross” is not particular more than enough theological terminology to accurately describe what happened there. Vague terminology like which could cause deviant thinking for the trinity. Of course I do not feel it is the cardinal sin to use vague phrases, but I think it can reveal our confusion when it comes to the trinity.

nigeria entertainment news
on February 4, 2014 at 10:26 AM said:

This extremely answered my drawback, thank you!
nigeria entertainment news
on February 4, 2014 at 10:35 AM said:

Thanks significantly for providing persons with this sort of a remarkable opportunity to read crucial reviews from here. It’s always so superb plus packed using a good deal of fun for me personally and my office peers to visit your internet site minimum 3 times every week to find out the new points you have. And indeed, I’m also definitely satisfied with your astonishing tips served by you. Some 2 details in this posting are completely the simplest we’ve ever had.

investing terms
on February 4, 2014 at 1:58 PM said:

Hi there great blog! Does running a blog such as this take a large amount of work? I’ve very little knowledge of computer programming however I was hoping to start my own blog soon. Anyway, if you have any suggestions or techniques for new blog owners please share. I know this is off subject however I just had to ask. Thanks a lot!

Mabel
on February 4, 2014 at 2:28 PM said:

Excellent article! We are linking to this great content on our website. Keep up the good writing.

Milton
on February 4, 2014 at 3:30 PM said:

Your mode of telling everything in this piece of writing is in fact good, all can effortlessly know it, Thanks a lot.
Katia
on February 4, 2014 at 3:45 PM said:

Hey just wanted to give you a quick heads up and let you know a few of the pictures aren’t loading correctly.

I’m not sure why but I think it’s a linking issue. I’ve tried it in two different web browsers and both show the same results.

Janna
on February 4, 2014 at 4:55 PM said:

Thank you for another wonderful article. Where else could anybody get that kind of info in such a perfect approach of writing? I have a presentation subsequent week, and I am at the search for such info.

video marketing tips 2013
on February 4, 2014 at 8:30 PM said:

I was wondering if you ever thought of changing the structure of your website?

It’s very well written; I love what you’ve got to say. But maybe you could a little more in the way of content so people could connect with it better. You’ve got an awful lot of text for only having one or two images. Maybe you could space it out better?

kissing on the mouth
on February 5, 2014 at 3:51 AM said:

This site was… how do I say it? Relevant!! Finally I’ve found something that helped me. Cheers!
Alan  
on February 5, 2014 at 8:53 AM said:

I am in fact thankful to the owner of this site who has shared this enormous article at here.

monopoly nintendo  
on February 5, 2014 at 1:18 PM said:

I love what you guys tend to be up too. Such clever work and exposure! Keep up the terrific works guys I’ve added you guys to my blogroll.

http://www.alltvstandsforflatscreens.com/  
on February 6, 2014 at 8:29 AM said:

Very good blog! Do you have any recommendations for aspiring writers? I’m hoping to start my own website soon but I’m a little lost on everything. Would you recommend starting with a free platform like WordPress or go for a paid option?

There are so many choices out there that I’m totally overwhelmed ..
Any ideas? Cheers!