



**Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center
at the Israel Intelligence Heritage
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Terrorism and Internet: charges have recently been filed against two Israeli Bedouins, members of the Islamic Movement. They are suspected of acting on behalf of Al-Qaeda. They formed and maintained contact with Al-Qaeda through the Internet, based on their ideological affinity with radical Islam.¹



The homepage of Al-Ikhlās, one of Al-Qaeda's major websites, accessed by one of the suspects. Left: information on terrorist attacks in Iraq. Right: a photograph of Ayman al-Zawahiri, Osama Bin Laden's deputy. Access to the forums on the website is only allowed to registered users using a password.

¹ According to a report by the Israel Security Agency and the charges filed against the two at the Beersheba District Court.

1. Joint activity of the Israeli security forces in May-June 2008 led to the arrest of two Bedouins, who are suspected of joining Al-Qaeda and acting on its behalf and on behalf of global jihad elements against Israeli citizens. The two suspects are **Taher Abu Skut** and his nephew **Omar Abu Skut**, both aged 20-21, from the Bedouin town of Rahat in south Israel, members of the Islamic Movement. During interrogation, the Israel Security Agency discovered an extensive network of contacts the two had made with Al-Qaeda and global jihad elements, based on their ideological affinity with radical Islamic ideology.



Omar bin Salama Abu Skut



Taher Abu Skut

The Internet connection with Al-Qaeda

2. The charges filed at the Beersheba District Court shed light on the connection Taher Abu Skut and his nephew Omar Abu Skut held with Al-Qaeda operatives through the Internet. Following are some highlights of their online activity:²

a. In 2002-2006, Taher Abu Skut started becoming closer to Islam and act within the Islamic Movement in the town of Rahat. In 2006, Abu Skut, who is knowledgeable about computers, started reading Islamic articles online and access Islamic websites using his home computer and from other locations. Some of the websites he accessed belonged to Al-Qaeda and global jihad elements and called for the destruction of Israel.

b. Taher Abu Skut accessed Al-Qaeda's **Al-Hisba**³ and **Al-Tartiq**⁴ (?) websites, where he registered using the nickname **Abu Mus'ab** and was given a secret number to identify himself on the forums. During his participation in those forums and in online conversations, he met an operative known as **Izzat al-Islam**, who was the director of Al-Qaeda's world media front and the head of the online forum. In early 2007, Taher brought his nephew, Omar, to the Al-Hisba website. Later, in early 2008, Abu Omar

² Further details on the affair can be found in a Yedioth Ahronoth article by Ronen Bergman: "The Secret Forum of Terrorism: an Inside Look" (July 11, 2008, in Hebrew).

³ **Al-Hisba** is the enforcement of the Islamic commandment of "doing good and preventing wrongdoing". There formerly existed the function of policeman/supervisor called *muhtasib*, whose role was to monitor public and Islamic morality in markets.

⁴ We are not familiar with a website by this name.

Skut also accessed two other websites associated with Al-Qaeda: **Al-Ikhlās**⁵ and **Al-Buraq**.⁶



The homepage of the Al-Hisba forum site, one of the major websites associated with Al-Qaeda. It includes technical information pertaining to the Internet (including information published by hackers working for Al-Qaeda), a wealth of information on Al-Qaeda's ideology (including radical Islamic literature), news, and updates. The company hosting the website seems to be located in Singapore.



Al-Buraq, a well-known, major forum website associated with Al-Qaeda in Iraq. It contains a great deal of information on Al-Qaeda in Iraq, radical Islamic ideology, video and audio clips praising jihad (holy war). The company hosting the website seems to be located in South-East Asia (Singapore or Malaysia). The website is probably managed from Pakistan.

c. During his activity on the Al-Hisba and Al-Tartiq forums, Taher Abu Skut met many Al-Qaeda operatives under various nicknames. As part of their correspondence, the operatives asked him to provide them with information on Israeli sites frequented by many people in order to perpetrate suicide bombing attacks against civilians. He was

⁵ **Ikhlās**—devotion, loyalty, particularly in the religious context (that is, religious devotion or loyalty).

⁶ **Al-Buraq**—according to Islamic tradition, one night Prophet Muhammad rode from Mecca to Jerusalem on a beast of heavenly properties, a winged horse of sorts, called Al-Buraq. When Muhammad arrived in Jerusalem, he prayed on Temple Mount and then ascended to heaven, where he was given by Allah the precept of performing the five daily prayers of Islam. Muhammad is then said to have returned from Jerusalem to Mecca. The Wailing Wall is called **Al-Buraq** by Muslims.

also asked to provide information on the process of issuing an entry visa to Israel and to locate sites on the border between Israel and the West Bank where Al-Qaeda's jihad warriors (*mujahedeen*) can infiltrate into Israel in order to perpetrate terrorist attacks.

d. In response to the Al-Qaeda operatives' request, Taher Abu Skut communicated information about a club in Eilat, the central bus station in Beersheba, the border between the West Bank and Israel, the power station of Ashkelon, and IDF bases in Beersheba. In early 2008, he sent additional information on a bus station in Beersheba, night clubs in Eilat, railroads, the Azrieli Towers in Tel-Aviv, the Ben Gurion Airport, soldiers' gathering places in the Negev desert, and areas from which it is possible to infiltrate into Israeli territory.

e. During his activity on the Al-Tartiq and Al-Hisba forums, Taher Abu Skut was asked to distribute "information files" on Islam and global jihad, articles, movies and such through the Internet. On a request by Abu Abd al-Rahman, the advertising director on Al-Qaeda's forums, Omar Abu Skut designed images, announcements, posters, and articles pertaining to global jihad and distributed them to other websites. On a request by another operative, Taher and his nephew produced movies about the activity of global jihad and about Muslim captives. The two also distributed Islamic books and articles from the Al-Hisba website to other websites on the Internet.

f. Omar Abu Skut had two hard drives on his computer, which contained documentation of terrorist attacks perpetrated by global jihad across the world, including in Afghanistan and Iraq. The hard drives also included books on jihad warriors (*mujahedeen*), books on manufacturing explosives, as well as videotapes of Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden and his deputy Al-Zawahiri, in which they speak about jihad against the Jews and the Christians.

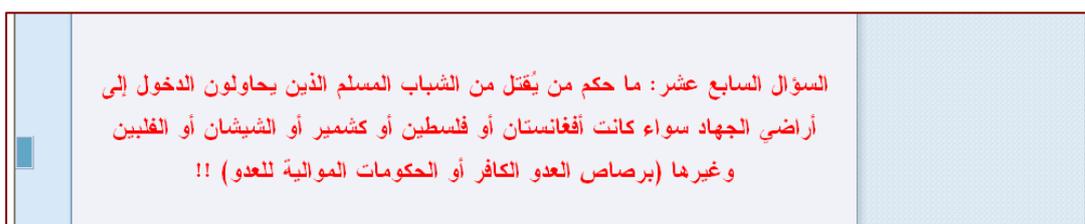
3. In the charges filed against them on July 9, 2008, by Israel's Southern District Prosecution, they were accused of such serious offenses as membership in a terrorist organization, assisting the enemy in a time of war, and communicating information to the enemy with an intent to compromise state security.

Al-Qaeda's online handling of terrorists worldwide

4. Al-Qaeda and global jihad organizations make massive use of the Internet both for indoctrination and for operative activities, including recruitment and handling of terrorist operatives across the world. In the present incident, the Internet once again was used to recruit Israeli citizens to the ranks of global jihad based on their affinity with the ideology of Al-Qaeda and radical Islam, distributed online.

5. The phenomenon of Al-Qaeda's recruiting and handling terrorists from across the globe through the Internet was extensively covered in a report published by the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs on May 8, 2008. Titled **"Violent Islamist Extremism, The Internet, and the Homegrown Terrorist Threat"**, the report discusses the extensive use made of the Internet by Al-Qaeda, global jihad elements, and groups associated with radical Islam, and voices concerns over the exposure of American citizens to the websites of Al-Qaeda (the full report is available on the Senate website).⁷ Those issues should also be of concern to other countries (including Israel) facing "homegrown terrorists" handled by Al-Qaeda. Those terrorists go through a process of losing their own identity and embracing the jihadist ideology of Al-Qaeda and radical Islam, distributed through the Internet and in other media.⁸

Example materials from Al-Qaeda's websites



Q&A on matters of religious law on the Al-Hisba website: here, a web surfer asks on the forum about the status of an Islamic operative killed while attempting to infiltrate "the lands of jihad in Afghanistan, Palestine, Kashmir, Chechnya, the Philippines, and other places" (updated on July 14, 2008).

⁷ <http://hsgac.senate.gov/public/files/IslamistReport.pdf>.

⁸ See our Information Bulletin: ["Terrorism and Internet: a US Senate report¹ analyzes the extensive use made by Al-Qaeda of the Internet in its war for hearts and minds. The report voices concerns over the exposure of American citizens to the websites of Al-Qaeda and other radical Islamic organizations"](#) (July 14, 2008).



The Al-Hisba website: a transcript of Bin Laden's tape, titled "The Road to Thwarting the Plots", released on December 29, 2007.



The Al-Buraq website: an example of a message written by one forum member in response to a claim of responsibility for a terrorist attack against the US forces in Iraq (updated on July 14, 2008): "Allah, bring victory to the jihad warriors [walking] your path; Allah, let them [reach] the necks [of the enemies]; may Allah bless you, lions of the two rivers [Tigris and Euphrates]; may Allah bless the army of the jihad warriors". The website contains several claims of responsibility for terrorist attacks against the American forces operating in Iraq.



A link on the Al-Buraq website to praise songs for the "Islamic Army" in Iraq. The song collection is called: "Rejoice, Nation of Islam". The songs contain incitement to violence.