

3 Products

At the heart of the insurgents' media endeavor are the products they create and distribute. These run the gamut from simple press releases to slickly produced films. This section of the report surveys the range of those products, dividing them into two broad categories: text and audiovisual materials. The survey includes not only products created by Sunni insurgent groups fighting in Iraq, but also texts and audiovisual materials produced by groups and individuals sympathetic to the insurgency.

3.1 Texts

Insurgents have been quick to embrace the latest technological advances to produce and distribute their media products, but text remains central to their media endeavor. Text materials have a number of advantages for insurgents beyond ease of production and distribution. The written word everywhere remains the preferred medium of record and authority. For insurgents, who are eager to present themselves not as ragtag bands of guerillas, but as the tip of the spear of a far larger and more significant movement, the creation of a body of written materials is a crucial indicator of the insurgency's durability and seriousness (see Figure 6).

Texts are also the traditional medium of ideological discourse, another important component of the insurgency. While insurgent groups represent a variety of ideological platforms, hard-line Islamist rhetoric has come to predominate. As a February 2006 report by International Crisis Group¹ concluded, "[V]irtually all [insurgent groups] adhere publicly to a blend of Salafism² and patriotism, diluting distinctions between foreign jihadis and Iraqi combatants...." This remains true

1 *In Their Own Words: Reading the Iraqi Insurgency*, February 15, 2006, International Crisis Group (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?l=1&id=3953>).

2 Salafism refers to a movement that takes the first three generations of Muslims ("al-salaf al-salih," or "the virtuous ancestors") as an ideal community and espouses what one might call a "radically traditionalist" approach to personal behavior, and even political systems. Jihadist Salafists endorse violent means to restore the early Islamic community's perceived way of life in the modern world. For more on Salafism, see *Understanding Islamism*, March 2, 2005, International Crisis Group (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3301&l=1>).



Figure 6. Sunni insurgent groups and their supporters produce a wide array of text products, from press releases to magazines to books

today, as the numerous text products created by insurgents and sympathizers clearly show, although the actual commitment of individual insurgent groups to global jihadist ideology is questionable (see Section 6.3, Message and Ideology).

The sheer volume of statements is striking. In March 2007, just two insurgent websites posted nearly 1,000 statements issued by 11 insurgent groups.

3.1.1 Statements

The basic unit of insurgent media textual production is the statement, usually no more than one page in length. These can be divided into two basic genres. The vast majority of insurgent statements are, in effect, press releases announcing the conduct of an “operation” against coalition military forces, Iraqi government forces and institutions, or Shi’ite militias. A smaller number of statements clarify the positions of insurgent groups on political issues.

The sheer volume of statements issued by insurgent groups is striking. Forums and “news” sites such as **World News Network** aggregate statements and organize them, frequently with logos included to ease the identification of the insurgent group associated with each statement. In March 2007, for example, two websites, **World News Network** and **Mohajroon**, a jihadist forum with a special section for insurgent statements, together posted nearly 1,000 statements issued by 11 insurgent groups (see Figure 7).

3.1.1.1 Operational Statements

As noted above, statements fall into two basic genres: operational press releases and general statements. Most operational statements announce successful attacks on coalition forces, Iraqi government forces, and Shi’ite groups and militias. A smaller number of composite operational press releases provide an overview of operations conducted within a certain period of time or in a specific geographic region. Some announce text and audiovisual publications.

In form, insurgent operational statements strive to convey credibility by mimicking press releases issued by official organizations elsewhere. They bear the official logo of the issuing group even when they appear on Internet forums. The texts are formulaic and do their best to appear factual, providing the time and location of an attack, target, a brief description of the fighting, and damage estimates, from killed and wounded “enemies” to an enumeration of equipment destroyed.

Statements by Iraqi insurgent groups in March 2007*	
Group	Total number of statements
Islamic Army in Iraq (IAI)	249
Ansar al-Sunnah	196
Islamic State of Iraq (ISI/Al-Qaeda)**	162
Mujahidin Army	143
Shield of Islam	89
Jaysh al-Fatihin	39
Jaysh al-Rashidin	33
Just Recompense Brigades	26
Islamic Front of Iraqi Resistance (JAMI)	14
Jihadist Brigades of Iraq	12
1920 Revolution Brigades	3
Total	966
<p>*Source: World News Net and Mohajroon (aggregated). Statements that may have been posted elsewhere were not included in this table, which is intended to demonstrate the general media profile of the insurgent groups on two specific websites. Because press releases sometimes appear several days after the operations they announce, attacks claimed in these statements span a period that began before March 1 and ended before March 31.</p> <p>**Proclaimed in October 2006, the Islamic State of Iraq is the latest iteration of Al-Qaeda in Iraq (see Section 4.1.1, Islamic State of Iraq). The group is referred to in this report as ISI/Al-Qaeda. Other insurgent groups tend to refer to ISI/Al-Qaeda as Al-Qaeda in Iraq. The terms are used interchangeably.</p>	

Figure 7. The “statements” section of the Mohajroon Internet forum

A side-by-side comparison of an April 12 press release from the U.S. military and a “news report” issued by **ISI/Al-Qaeda** the same day and posted to **World News Network** illustrates the extent to which insurgents attempt to reproduce the form of official press releases while adjusting content to serve their own purposes (see Figure 8).

The genre divisions are fluid. An operational press release announcing an attack may also express a political position on a topical issue, or it may contain a link to a video record of the attack. Moreover, not all operations are easily classified. An insurgent group may carry out an attack on a U.S. convoy or a mixed convoy of U.S. and Iraqi government forces. Targets are not always indicated. Nevertheless, most statements fall into a number of general categories. The breakdown of insurgent group

AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE
NEWS ARTICLES

Two Terrorists Killed in Iraq, 17 Detained

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, April 12, 2007 — Coalition forces killed two suspected terrorists, detained 17 others, and seized weapons and documents owned by terrorists during operations in Iraq over the past two days.

— Coalition forces killed two terrorists and detained four others while targeting an al Qaeda in Iraq cell south of Haditha this morning. During the operation, ground forces engaged and killed two armed terrorists when they entered a targeted building.

— In operations northwest of Kamah this morning, coalition forces captured four suspected terrorists with alleged involvement in car-bomb attacks.

— In several operations overnight in Baghdad, coalition forces captured nine suspected terrorists with alleged ties to al Qaeda in Iraq, military officials said.

"Coalition forces will continue deliberate and methodical operations in order to hunt down and capture or kill terrorists trying to prevent a peaceful and stable Iraq," said Army Lt. Col. Christopher Garver, a Multinational Force Iraq spokesman.

In Dimsiyah yesterday, Iraqi security forces cordoned off and searched a suspected insurgent's office. This raid was based on intelligence gathered by military officials and targeted a known terrorist believed to be in the office that belongs to the Organization of the Martyr Sadr, an affiliation tied to radical cleric Moqtada al Sadr.

Coalition soldiers provided security outside the office as Iraqi troops entered the office and searched for the terrorist suspect and weapons. Once inside, the Iraqi troops found hand grenades, multiple identification cards, improvised explosive device-making materials, anti-government propaganda, photos of wounded soldiers and battle-damaged vehicles, and a low-power transmitting station.

In accordance with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki's recent directive, any buildings used for criminal or illegal purposes may be entered and searched, including those used by political parties, U.S. officials said. Additionally, Maliki's directive states that when sites are used for criminal or terrorist activities, they lose any protection they may have under international law.

(Compiled from Multinational Force Iraq and Multinational Corps Iraq news releases.)

12.4 دولة العراق الإسلامية / التحرير الإسلامي / الخطب والرسائل / باب الفرح من ولاية بغداد

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
الحمد لله رب العالمين والصلوة والسلام على نبينا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين
أما بعد:

فإنكم التقارير الإخبارية وحصاد بعض العمليات العسكرية التي قام بها مجاهدو دولة العراق الإسلامية "أعزها الله" في مناطق شمال جاتب الكرخ من ولاية بغداد للفترة من 17 ولغاية 23 ربيع الأول 1428 هـ الموافق 4 ولغاية 10 / 2007 م، والله الحمد والمئة، والله الحمد والمئة.

1. تصفية شايطي في وزارة الدفاع المزعمومة وسط منطقة العامرية، وذلك في يوم السبت 20 ربيع الأول 1428 هـ الموافق 4 / 17 / 2007 م، والله الحمد والمئة.

2. مقتل جندي من الحرس الوطني قصفاً في منطقة العامرية، وبعد توقف مجموعة من الثورات التابعة لهم لانتشار "م" بفرقة الله " الهجوم عليهم بسلاح الأحادية، مما أدى إلى إصابتهم بآلة نارية، ومقتل وجرح من كان فيها، وذلك في يوم الأحد 21 ربيع الأول 1428 هـ الموافق 4 / 18 / 2007 م، والله الحمد والمئة.

3. تفجير سيارة مفخخة بقودها أحد المقاتلين ببلد الفجر " بدر " ضد سيطرة لجنس الوثني بالقرب من منطقة العامرية " أعنت كشمين لهم "، مما أسفر عن هلاكه ومقتل وجرح جميع جنود السيطرة، وذلك في يوم الأحد 21 ربيع الأول 1428 هـ الموافق 4 / 18 / 2007 م، والله الحمد والمئة.

4. القضاء على أحد جنود الحرس الوطني قصفاً قرب منطقة تلبي الشرطة، وذلك في يوم الخميس 18 ربيع الأول 1428 هـ الموافق 4 / 15 / 2007 م، والله الحمد والمئة.

5. تصفد مركز الشرطة في الخضراء الذي يضم عناصر الشرطة المردة وقوات الجيش الصليبي مجتمعين؛ بمجموعة من قذائر الهاون وبمختلف الأسلحة النارية، وكانت الإصابتة ميّانة وموتيرة، وذلك في يوم الخميس 18 ربيع الأول 1428 هـ الموافق 4 / 15 / 2007 م، والله الحمد والمئة.

6. القضاء على اثنين من عناصر جيش النجاش على الطريق المؤدي إلى حي العتل، وذلك في يوم الأحد 21 ربيع الأول 1428 هـ الموافق 4 / 18 / 2007 م، والله الحمد والمئة.

7. الهجوم بالأسلحة الثقيلة على آلية نوع هير تابعة للجنس الوثني، مما أدى إلى إصابتها؛ ومقتل وجرح من كان فيها، وذلك في يوم الأحد 21 ربيع الأول 1428 هـ الموافق 4 / 18 / 2007 م، والله الحمد والمئة.

8. مقتل جندي أمريكي في حي الجامعة قصفاً، وذلك في يوم الأحد 21 ربيع الأول 1428 هـ الموافق 4 / 18 / 2007 م، والله الحمد والمئة.

9. القضاء على جندي من الحرس الوطني قصفاً على شارع العمل الشعبي، وذلك في يوم الأحد 21 ربيع الأول 1428 هـ الموافق 4 / 18 / 2007 م، والله الحمد والمئة.

10. تفجير سيارة ناسفة على دورية تنجيش الأمريكي في منطقة العامرية، مما أسفر عن مقتل إحدى الآليات، ومقتل وجرح من كان فيها، وذلك في يوم الأربعاء 17 ربيع الأول 1428 هـ الموافق 4 / 14 / 2007 م، والله الحمد والمئة.

11. مقتل جندي أمريكي قصفاً في منطقة العامرية، وذلك في يوم الخميس 18 ربيع الأول 1428 هـ الموافق 4 / 15 / 2007 م، والله الحمد والمئة.

12. هلاك جندي من الحرس الوطني قصفاً في منطقة العامرية، وذلك في يوم السبت 20 ربيع الأول 1428 هـ الموافق 4 / 17 / 2007 م، والله الحمد والمئة.

13. إصابت أحد عناصر جيش النجاش وسط منطقة العامرية، وذلك في يوم السبت 20 ربيع الأول 1428 هـ الموافق 4 / 17 / 2007 م، والله الحمد والمئة.

14. مقتل جندي وثني في حي العتل قصفاً، وذلك في يوم الخميس 18 ربيع الأول 1428 هـ الموافق 4 / 15 / 2007 م، والله الحمد والمئة.

15. قصف أحد مقرات الجيش الأمريكي الصليبي قرب منطقة حي العتل بمجموعة من قذائر الهاون وبمختلف الأسلحة النارية، وكانت الإصابتة ميّانة وموتيرة، وذلك في يوم السبت 20 ربيع الأول 1428 هـ الموافق 4 / 17 / 2007 م، والله الحمد والمئة.

16. إصابت أحد عناصر جيش النجاش في منطقة الفرائية، وذلك في يوم الثلاثاء 23 ربيع الأول 1428 هـ الموافق 4 / 10 / 2007 م، والله الحمد والمئة.

وإنّ هذه العمليات ضمن " خطة الفرامة - غزوة الفجر للعرض "، والتي أمر بها الشيخ أبو عبد الله محمد باقر الخميني " حفظه الله " - أمير المؤمنين في دولة العراق الإسلامية -

والله أكبر
{ والله العزّاء وتوسّله وتلجّنه وتكفّر الشكّين لا يتكفّر }

دولة العراق الإسلامية / وزارة الإعلام
المصدر: (مركز التحرير للإعلام)

Figure 8. A side-by-side comparison of a U.S. Defense Department press release and a press release from ISI/Al-Qaeda

statements in March 2007 on page 10 provides an overview of how insurgent groups present their activities.

The fluid nature of the insurgent media network renders definitive conclusions problematic. In the absence of a centralized system for collecting and distributing insurgent press releases, we cannot be sure that the monthly totals are anything more than approximate. Evaluating the veracity of the information contained in press releases is even more problematic (see Section 6.2, Accuracy and Coherence). Nevertheless, a number of preliminary conclusions emerge.

What the press releases represent is the image of themselves that insurgent groups would like to present—who, why, how, and how often they attack, and what results they claim to achieve. The resulting picture may not correspond to reality on the ground, but it is the picture the Sunni Iraqi insurgency paints of itself in its own words.

Against this backdrop, it is noteworthy that an insurgency that emerged to combat a foreign occupying force now claims to direct the majority of its attacks against fellow Iraqis.

While the largest single group of March 2007 press releases (357) detail attacks on U.S. and coalition forces, statements describing attacks on Iraqi government forces (296) and Shi'ite militias (143) come to 439, or more than half of the total number of single-attack statements (see Figure 9).

Press releases in an ongoing insurgency generally do not provide explicit reasons for carrying out attacks. But the rhetoric employed by virtually all Sunni insurgent groups suggests an implicit reason. Unlike the rhetoric of nationalist insurgencies, the Sunni insurgency in Iraq is surprisingly uniform in its use of religious rhetoric to describe its enemies.

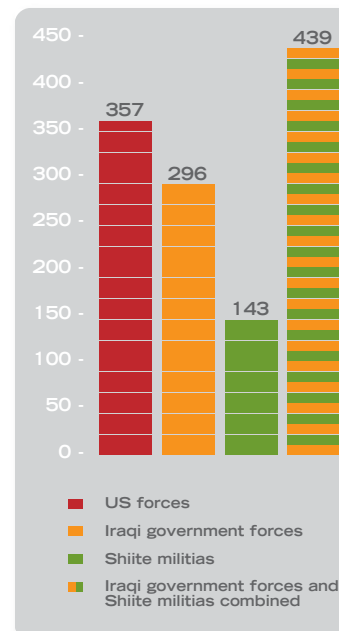


Figure 9. In March, 2007, insurgent statements that claimed a single "operation," attacks against Iraqis outnumbered attacks against U.S. forces

Breakdown of statements issued by Iraqi insurgent groups in March 2007 on World News Network and Mohajroon*

Group	Operations against U.S. forces	Operations against Iraqi government forces	Operations against Shi'ite groups and militias	Operations against Kurdish targets	Mixed operations	Composite operational statements**	Publication announcements (audio, video, and text)	Topical statements	Totals
IAI	80	105	47	0	9	6	1	1	249
Mujahidin Army	132	4	0	0	0	2	2	1	141
1920 Revolution Brigades***	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
ISI/Al-Qaeda	13	40	3	6	9	74	0	15	161
Jihadist Brigades of Iraq	8	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
Ansar al-Sunnah	44	90	37	6	3	2	5	4	192
JAMI	13	0	0	0	1	0	13	1	14
Jaysh al-Rashidin	26	0	0	0	1	0	4	1	32
Just Recompense Brigades	0	15	11	0	0	0	0	0	26
Shield of Islam	20	37	30	0	0	0	0	0	87
Jaysh al-Fatihin	21	0	15	0	2	0	0	1	39
Totals	357	296	143	12	25	83	25	28	

*It should be stressed that the breakdown tells us about the media impression insurgent groups created in March 2007 with their statements rather than the actual activities they may have carried out during the month. Moreover, a lag of several days sometimes occurs between the date of a claimed operation and the date of a press release. As a result, statements issued in March 2007 described operations carried out roughly from late February through late March.

**Operations described in composite statements were not included in the breakdown of operations provided in the first three columns of this table, which is intended to convey the overall impression statements would make on a visitor to the forum(s) where they were posted, rather than provide an exhaustive analysis of all claimed operations.

***The 1920 Revolution Brigades posts fewer statements than other insurgent groups. While the lack of statements by the group in the above chart reflects information available on the two websites used to collect the sample, statements by the group are available on other websites.

U.S. and coalition forces are called “crusaders” and “worshippers of the cross.” Iraqi police are “apostates” and Iraq’s National Guard is the “Idolatrous Guard.”

The vast majority of the statements issued in March 2007 use religion-based, pejorative code words for the targets of attacks.

U.S. and coalition forces are called “crusaders” and “worshippers of the cross.” Iraqi police are “apostates.” Iraq’s National Guard is the “Idolatrous Guard.” The Shi’ite **Imam Al-Mahdi Army**—named after the Mahdi, or redeemer, whose coming is supposed to herald the end of the world—is referred to as the “Army of the Antichrist.” Shi’a are termed “rejectionists” for their supposed rejection of true Islam. Thus, insurgents’ rhetoric implies that they fight U.S. and coalition forces because they seek to impose Christianity on Iraq, government forces because they have turned their backs on Islam, and Shi’a because they are heretics.

This explicitly religious framing of the conflict in Iraq renders insurgent rhetoric virtually indistinguishable from the rhetoric of the global jihadist movement.³ Foreign jihadists have

3 The global jihadist movement is defined here as the constellation of groups that espouse the ideology promoted by **Al-Qaeda**. In its barest outlines, this ideology posits a worldwide

flocked to Iraq, but it should be recalled that Iraq has never had a robust domestic Islamist, let alone jihadist, movement. Moreover, there is no evidence that jihadist ideas hold any great appeal for Iraq’s Sunni population, which provides the bulk of the insurgency’s rank-and-file fighters. Nevertheless, jihadist rhetoric is the rule, not the exception, in most of the statements issued by Sunni insurgent groups, whatever their declared ideological beliefs may be.⁴

It is perhaps no accident, then, that the most media-savvy and politically vocal insurgent group is also the most openly jihadist. **ISI/Al-Qaeda**⁵ is the latest iteration of an organization founded by Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi and

struggle between faith and unbelief, the need to return to the ways of the “righteous ancestors” (“al-salaf al-salih”), the legitimacy of violence to achieve political aims (jihad), the permissibility of killing Muslims who have knowingly strayed from the faith (takfir), and the necessity of targeting the United States and Israel as the leaders of a global movement to destroy Muslim identity and subjugate Muslim lands.

4 The use of religious rhetoric to justify a cause is not new to Iraq. Beginning with the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq war, and again following the 1991 Gulf War, Saddam Hussein employed Islamic rhetoric as a means of justifying state policy and unifying the population against outside enemies. For more see Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, second edition, Westview Press, 2004, p. 297.

5 See RFE/RL Newsline, October 16, 2006.

Finally, in keeping with its openly jihadist profile, **ISI/AI-Qaeda** was the only insurgent group to make frequent and consistent references to “martyrdom-seeking operations,” or suicide attacks. In March statements, **ISI/AI-Qaeda** claimed responsibility for four suicide attacks against Kurdish targets, two against Shi’ite militias, 25 against Iraqi forces, six against mixed targets, and six against U.S. forces, for a total of 43 suicide attacks.

As befits the group's self-aggrandizing appellation, **ISI/Al-Qaeda** also employed the most sweeping rhetoric. **ISI/Al-Qaeda** purports to control the governorates of Al-Anbar, Baghdad, Ninawah (Mosul), Diwala, Salah Al-Din, Kirkuk,

Topical statements differ from operational statements in that they speak to issues broader than military operations (see Figure 11). Most





Figure 11. Topical statements by the IAI, ISI/Al-Qaeda, and Mujahidin Army

topical statements are political, addressing issues within the Iraqi polity, although an important subgroup details changes within individual insurgent groups and relations between insurgent groups. Longer topical statements provide an analytical perspective on current events or important issues. We present below an overview of the major topical statements issued by insurgent groups in March 2007.

- The **1920 Revolution Brigades** issued three topical statements. One statement, released on March 26, rejected media reports that “jihadist groups” might engage in dialogue with the “so-called Iraqi government.” Another mourned the death of a military leader. A third detailed condolences offered by the **IAI**, the

Mujahidin Army, the **Jihadist Brigades**, and **Jaysh Muhammad al-Fatih** on the death of the **1920 Revolution Brigades** military leader.

- **Ansar al-Sunnah** issued four topical statements. A long statement on March 29 warned that the “crusader and Safavid⁶ enemies” have reached a “dead end” and are using various ruses, such as the Baghdad conference in early March,⁷ to

⁶ “Safavid” refers to the Safavid dynasty in Iran, which ruled from 1502 to 1722 and established Shi’ism as the state religion of Iran. In radical Sunni usage, “Safavid” is a disparaging term for Shi’a, implying that their true allegiance is to Iran.

⁷ Representatives from Iraq’s neighboring states, the permanent five members of the UN Security Council, the Arab League, and the Organization of the Islamic Conference met in Baghdad on March 10 to discuss Iraq’s security. See *RFE/RL Newsline*, March 12, 2007 and *Iraq: Views Of Security Conference Reflect Sectarian Divide*, Kathleen Ridolfo, RFE/RL, May 13, 2007 (<http://www.rferl.org/features/article/2007/3/48A73746-F04A-40FC-9A63-94EC071111B5.html>).

Insurgent groups issue frequent long, topical statements that provide analytical perspective on current events or important issues.

dissuade Iraqis from their duty to fight a jihad. Another statement denied reports that several insurgent groups, including **Ansar al-Sunnah**, had joined forces. Another chastised two members of **Ansar al-Sunnah** for participating in talks with other insurgent groups without obtaining formal permission to do so. A fourth statement, billed as a “special report” on March 12, condemned U.S. efforts to engage insurgent groups in negotiations.

- **Jaysh al-Rashidin** issued one topical statement. The group’s March 7 “political analysis” discussed a meeting between Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and a group of former Iraqi Army officers, condemning it as a U.S.-sponsored attempt to garner support for the Iraqi government.
- **Jaysh al-Fatihin** issued one statement, signed by the group’s “official spokesman,” Abu al-Hasan al-Basri, and posted to **Mohajroon** on March 22. It hailed Russian President Vladimir Putin’s address at a security conference in Munich on February 10 as a sign of declining U.S. influence and warned “the mujahidin”⁸ not to allow others to reap the fruits of their coming victory in Iraq as took place, in the writer’s view, in the aftermath of the successful jihad against Soviet occupiers in Afghanistan.
- **JAMI** issued a single statement on March 5 on the upcoming security conference in Baghdad, condemning it as an attempt to drum up support for the U.S. occupation on the part of the “so-called Iraqi government.” The statement dismissed the Iraqi government as an Iranian-influenced Shi’ite clique dominated by “racist, sectarian parties and militias.”
- **ISI/Al-Qaeda** issued 15 topical statements in March, more than all other insurgent

groups combined. The titles indicate not only the general tenor of the group’s political pronouncements, but also the group’s attention to its image in the media, with numerous denials of news agency reports and Iraqi government statements:

- March 1: *The Collapse Of The Al-Maliki Plan*
- March 1: *Ministry Of War Announces The Beginning Of The Raid To Avenge Honor*
- March 2: *The Islamic State Of Iraq Denies The [Reported] Arrest Of 30 Of Its Sons In Al-Saqlawiyah*
- March 5: *On Al-Maliki’s Meeting With Officers Of The Former Iraqi Army*
- March 6: *The Islamic State Of Iraq Denies The Truth Of A Report On The Arrest Of One Of Its Leaders*
- March 9: *Denial Of The Killing Of 12 Soldiers Of The Islamic State Of Iraq*
- March 9: *Denial Of News Agency Reports On The Return Of Some Of Those Who Were Liberated*
- March 9: *A Gathering Of Hypocrites⁹ And Quislings*
- March 10: *Continuing Lies Of The Safavid Government*
- March 11: *On The Conferences Of The Enemies of God*
- March 15: *The Islamic State Of Iraq: Program And Fundamentals*
- March 19: *Denial Of A Report On The Arrest Of One Of The State’s Commanders*
- March 22: *Clarification On The Latest Events In Amiriyat Al-Fallujah*
- March 22: *Denial Of A Report On The Arrest Of The Ministers Of War And Oil*
- March 28: *Details On The Raid In The City Of Mosques [Al-Fallujah] Today*

It is important to note that at the level of topical statements, insurgent media products become intermingled with statements by sympathizers who are not themselves directly connected with

⁸ Lit., “those who fight the jihad” (sing., “mujahid”). A rough English translation of the term as it is used here would be “holy warriors.”

⁹ The term “munafiqun,” generally translated as “hypocrites,” refers to individuals who converted to Islam at the time of the Prophet Muhammad (570–632) but did not profess true Islam. Radical Sunnis use the term today to describe Muslims they do not accept as Muslims. In context, the term refers to Sunnis who recognize the Iraqi government.

An April 5 statement by the IAI illustrates both the intermingling of insurgent and jihadist media, and a sharp polemic between two leading insurgent groups.

the insurgency. This takes place for two reasons: 1) the Internet forums that serve as the major distribution channel for insurgent statements (see Section 5.1.3, Forums and Message Boards) are primarily jihadist in outlook and post a wide variety of materials, including statements by prominent figures in the jihadist community, and 2) many of those figures address issues related to the Iraqi insurgency, and often respond to specific statements by insurgent groups.

More importantly, topical statements also reflect divisions within the insurgency. An April 5 statement by the IAI illustrates both the intermingling of insurgent and jihadist media, and a sharp polemic between two leading insurgent groups.¹⁰



Figure 12. The first page of the IAI's 4,500-word statement on April 5, 2007, criticizing ISI/AI-Qaeda

The IAI statement (see Figure 12), which ran to nine pages and 4,500 words, criticized ISI/AI-Qaeda for inflexible extremism, outright banditry against civilians, and attacks on insurgent groups that refuse to swear allegiance to the putative state. The Kuwait-based radical cleric

Hamid al-Ali, who is sympathetic to the jihadist wing of the Sunni insurgency but not directly affiliated with any specific group, had issued a fatwa on April 4 that was similarly critical of ISI/AI-Qaeda, questioning the wisdom of proclaiming a "state" in the absence of recognized prerequisites for statehood. Participants on jihadist forums treated both statements as part of the same debate, with some seeing the appearance of two closely timed statements criticizing ISI/AI-Qaeda as evidence of possible cooperation between Hamid al-Ali and the IAI.

The subsequent course of the debate sparked by the IAI statement presented more examples of intermingling between insurgent group statements and contributions from representatives of the larger global jihadist movement. We list below some of the responses that appeared on major jihadist Internet forums to show the interchange between insurgent groups and jihadist thinkers, the rapid unfolding of polemics in the Internet, and the differences between insurgent groups revealed by the debate (see Section 6.3.2, Ideology and Section 6.4.3, Rift Between Nationalists and Jihadists) (see Figure 13):

- April 4: Hamid al-Ali issues a fatwa criticizing **AI-Qaeda in Iraq** for announcing the establishment of the **Islamic State of Iraq** in October 2006.
- April 5: The **IAI** releases a statement lambasting **ISI/AI-Qaeda** for extremism and violent methods in dealing with other insurgent groups. The statement specifically rebutted points made by **ISI/AI-Qaeda** leader Abu Umar al-Baghdadi in a March 13 audio statement.
- April 5: Jihadist writer Lewis Atallah posts an article criticizing the **IAI** for its statement.
- April 6: Jihadist thinker Atiya Allah posts a detailed, critical commentary on the **IAI** statement. Atiya Allah's commentary is released by the **Al-Fajr Media Center**, which is affiliated with **ISI/AI-Qaeda**.
- April 6: The administration of the **Al-Borag** jihadist forum posts its position on the **IAI** statement, coming out on the side of **ISI/AI-Qaeda**.

10 For more, see *Al-Qaeda Tactics Lead To Splits Among Insurgents*, Kathleen Ridolfo, RFE/RL, April 17, 2007 (<http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/04/ca95fafe-1e70-450a-a4bf-9417b05caa3c.html>).



Figure 13. Statements issued by insurgent groups and global jihadists on April 5–7, 2007, in the course of a dispute between the IAI and ISI/AI-Qaeda

- April 6: The **Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF)**, an **AI-Qaeda**-affiliated organization, posts a statement on Hamid al-Ali's fatwa.
- April 7: The administration of the **Mohajroon** jihadist forum posts its position on the **IAI** statement, expressing support for **ISI/AI-Qaeda**.
- April 7: Hamid al-Ali issues a new statement clarifying and reinforcing the points he made in his April 4 fatwa.
- April 7: The **Call for Global Islamic Resistance Center** posts a statement to forums calling for unity in the dispute between the **IAI** and **ISI/AI-Qaeda**.
- April 8: **GIMF** issues a statement responding both to Hamid al-Ali and the **IAI**; the statement also promises a response from **ISI/AI-Qaeda**.
- April 11: **Al-Jazeera** interviews **IAI** spokesman Ibrahim al-Shammari, who reiterates the **IAI**'s criticisms of **AI-Qaeda** in Iraq.
- April 12: **Ansar al-Sunnah** releases a statement on the "current situation."
- April 15: **GIMF** posts a statement on the danger of "fitna."¹¹
- April 16: Abu Umar al-Baghdadi, leader of **ISI/AI-Qaeda**, issues a statement on the gains and losses of four years of "jihad" in Iraq, rebutting the **IAI**'s criticisms.

11 "Fitna" refers to strife within the community of Muslims.

3.1.1.3 Programmatic Texts

Insurgent groups also produce programmatic texts outlining their basic aims and beliefs. Groups that maintain dedicated websites usually post these under the heading “our creed” or “our program” (see Figure 14). For example, the **IAI** has a section titled *Our Program* on its site; the **Mujahidin Army**’s site has a page titled *Meet Us*; and **JAMI**’s site and the **Jihadist Brigades**’ site have sections titled *Who We Are*. Other programmatic statements are posted periodically to sympathetic sites. **ISI/Al-Qaeda**, for example, issued a written summary of a March 13, 2007 audio statement by its leader, Abu Umar

al-Baghdadi, that was posted to jihadist forums on March 13 under the title *Program and Fundamentals*.

3.1.1.4 Inspirational Texts

Inspirational texts pursue the dual purpose of attracting new supporters and further motivating existing supporters. Given the fluidity of genre boundaries within the myriad products emanating from the insurgency, virtually all products perform an inspirational function. Two specifically inspirational genres can be isolated from the general mass of insurgent media products. They are martyr biographies and poetry.

3.1.1.4.1 Martyr Biographies

A long-established fixture of jihadist literature, the biographies of martyrs present the lives of ideal, and usually idealized, holy warriors for emulation by others. The most common subjects of martyr biographies are either well-known fighters who have perished for the cause



Figure 14. The political programs of the IAI and JAMI

or lesser luminaries whose lives illustrate the dedication, piety, and courage that martyrs are supposed to possess.

Biographies of the best-known martyrs are sometimes lavish affairs. Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, the most famous jihadist to have died in Iraq, was the subject of a downloadable “encyclopedia” that includes not only numerous materials on the Jordanian militant's life, but also a complete collection of his statements, essays on his beliefs and influence, and statements on the jihad in Iraq by Osama bin Laden. Formatted as a 7.7-megabyte self-contained mini-browser, the “encyclopedia” provides users with a table of contents and convenient graphics interface.

The development of martyr biographies illustrates the growing professionalism of the insurgent media network. In May 2005, a participant in a jihadist Internet forum posted a collection of 430 biographies of martyrs in Iraq culled from newspaper accounts, forum posts, and transcribed “wills” recorded by suicide bombers before their final attacks.¹² Formatted simply as a Microsoft Word document, the biographies are uneven in length and tone, and the overall impression of the collection is somewhat chaotic (see Figure 15).

A collection titled *Stories Of The Martyrs Of Mesopotamia*, though undated, appears to have been published later. Produced by the **Mujahidin Shura Council**, it is formatted more elaborately, with a full-color cover, graphic logos, and a background for each page (see Figure 16). Moreover, some of the martyrs who appeared in the collection in May 2005 as single-line entries, such as Abu Ahmad al-Karbali, are the subjects of multi-page texts in the **Mujahidin Shura Council** collection (see Figure 17).

The development of “martyr biographies” demonstrates not only a trend toward increasing professionalism, but also a greater desire to



Figure 15. A 2005 collection of “martyr biographies” culled from newspaper accounts, forum posts, and transcribed statements by suicide bombers



Figure 16. The cover of a book with “martyr biographies” issued by the Mujahidin Shura Council

In 2005 one jihadist forum participant posted a collection of 430 biographies of martyrs in Iraq culled from newspaper accounts, forum posts, and transcribed “wills” recorded by suicide bombers.

¹² See *Suicidology: the online bios of Iraq's 'martyrs'*, Husain Haqqani and Daniel Kimmage, *The New Republic*, October 3, 2005.



Figure 17. The evolution of the biography of Abu Ahmad al-Karbuly, from a single-line entry in a 2005 collection of "martyr biographies" (left) to a two-page text in what appears to be a later compilation (right)

exert message control. If early collections used materials from various sources, or simply provided lists of names, more recent compilations feature longer texts composed specifically by and for insurgent groups. The **Al-Furqan Institute for Media Production's** periodical series of martyr biographies illustrates this tendency (see Section, 3.1.2 Periodicals).

3.1.1.4.2 Poetry

A number of insurgent websites contain poetry lamenting Iraq's sufferings under occupation and urging resistance. Poetry is rarely presented in textual form, however, although the website of the **Jihadist Brigades** contains a number of poetic texts (see Figure 18). Most poems serve as the words for songs, and this study examines them in Section 3.2.4, Songs.

The online Salafi library created by Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, a Jordanian-Palestinian cleric famed as the mentor of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi and currently jailed in Jordan, contains 29 poems about the occupation of Iraq (see Figure 19). The website, titled *Minbar al-Tawhid wa-l-Jihad* [Pulpit of Monotheism and Jihad] is no longer functional, but its contents can be downloaded from a number of other sites for installation at home with full functionality.

Hamid al-Ali, a Kuwait-based radical cleric who is sympathetic to the insurgent cause and frequently addresses related issues, has at times made topical statements in poetic form. After *Al-Jazeera* aired an interview with a Sunni woman identified as Sabrin al-Janabi,¹³ who

¹³ According to an investigation ordered by Sunni-Arab Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi, Sabrin al-Janabi, by her own admission, is a Shi'ite. This was published on the Sunni-led Iraqi Islamic Party's website. Despite this, Sunni-Arab insurgents have carried out attacks to avenge the "Sunni" woman's honor, including the killing of innocent Shi'ite civilians. See *RFE/RL Newsline*, February 26, 2007. For the original statement by the Iraqi Islamic Party in Arabic, see: <http://www.iiraqiparty.com/statements/statement148.htm>.



Figure 18. A poem featured on the website of the Jihadist Brigades



Figure 19. Poems about Iraq on the Minbar al-Tawhid wa-l-Jihad website



Figure 20. A poem by the Kuwait-based radical cleric Hamid al-Ali about the alleged rape of a Sunni woman by Shi'ite police officers

claimed to have been raped by Iraqi police, Al-Ali posted a poem on his website (see Figure 20) casting the issue in harshly sectarian terms. He asked, “Who has given the filth power over our Iraq so that the Magi¹⁴ should be raised high and made rulers?” (see Section 7.2, The Sabrin al-Janabi Case).

3.1.2 Periodicals

A number of insurgent groups and sympathetic media units produce monthly and weekly publications. These are usually posted to forums through free upload/download services¹⁵ as both Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat documents. The more sophisticated periodicals are professionally laid out and feature lavishly formatted covers, full-color photographs, and charts and graphs. We present below an overview of the major periodicals produced by Iraqi insurgent groups and sympathizers.

3.1.2.1 Al-Fursan

The IAI has produced 12 issues of *Al-Fursan* [The Knights] (see Figure 21). The magazine, which appears on a more or less bimonthly basis, is in full color with numerous photographs. Issue No. 11, which appeared in January 2007, consisted of 39 pages and boldly announced on its cover, “In 2006, the Mujahidin of the Islamic Army Harvest 6,064 Americans.” Issue No. 10 ran to 64 pages and opened with six pages of graphs breaking down the results of the group’s military operations over the previous six months (see Figure 22).

A number of insurgent groups and sympathetic media units produce weekly and monthly publications that are posted to forums in downloadable formats.



Figure 21. The cover of *Al-Fursan*, a magazine published electronically by the IAI

¹⁴ A derogatory reference to Iranians, implying that they are still Zoroastrian fire-worshippers and not true Muslims.

¹⁵ These services allow Internet users to upload large files to share with other users, who can then download the files. Examples include sendspace.com and archive.org, two sites frequently used to distribute insurgent (and jihadist) materials.

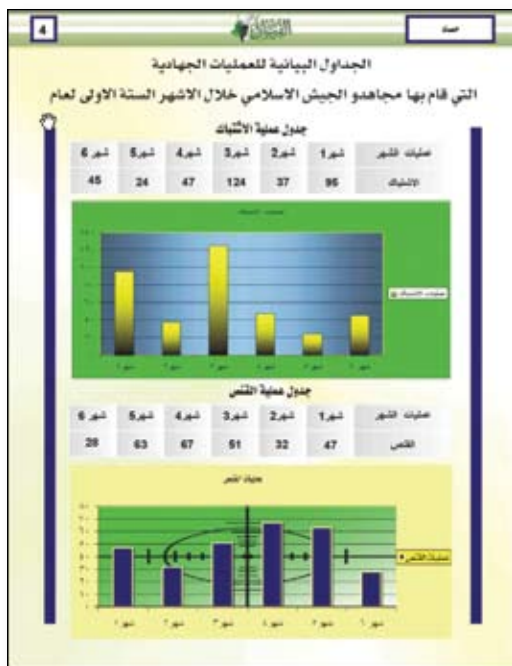


Figure 22. A graph detailing IAI military operations in the first half of 2006; taken from the December 2006 issue of *Al-Fursan*

We present below an overview of the contents of issue No. 10, which is dated Ramadan 1427 (corresponding to September 22, 2006):

Article Title	Notes
Victories of Ramadan and the Program of Empowerment	One-page editorial
Statement 11 of 2006	By the military leadership of the IAI
Statement 12 of 2006	By the military leadership of the IAI
Overview of Military Operations in the First Half of 2006	Charts and graphs
Thousands of American Soldiers Flee to Canada	Article on the collapsing morale of the American home front
Groups of the Afghan Jihad: the development of their tactics as inspired by the Iraqi example	
American Spokesman: Losses at Camp Al-Saqr Reached Millions of Dollars	A U.S. spokesman confirms losses from an attack on a forward operating base in Iraq
Woodward: American Forces Face Four Attacks an Hour	Arabic translation of a statement by American journalist Bob Woodward

Article Title	Notes
Meeting of the Issue: Interview with the official spokesman of the IAI	Includes questions from participants in the Al-Boraq Internet forum
Memoirs of a Mujahid: The Tough Test...and Strength from God	Story of a "mujahid" who escaped from detention at Camp Bucca
Belief: Strength in the Face of Adversity	Religious inspiration on the problems of Iraq
Islamic Law: Sincerity and Dedication	
Poetry: O, You Who Have Blamed Our Youth For Their Jihad	
Strategic Analysis: Leading Men toward Becoming Heroic Leaders	By Ahmad al-Shaybani, a field commander of the IAI
Media: Jihadist Media in Iraq...a New Victory	Article on the importance of media to insurgent operations
Islamic Studies: the Life of Martyrs	
Islamic Studies: Ibn Taymiyyah on Takfir	Article on takfir, the act of pronouncing a Muslim an unbeliever (kafir), as seen by the medieval scholar Ibn Taymiyyah.
Islamic Studies: Islamic Groups Between Praiseworthy Perfection and Condemnable Extremism	
Islamic Studies: Excerpts from the Jihadist Program	
Military Studies: Military Doctrine and Principles of War in Islam	
Story of a Martyr: Sniper on the Road of Death	Experiences of a sniper who killed U.S. forces
The Oasis	Inspirational vignettes and thoughts
Images from the Jihad of the Prophet's Companions: Military Instructions from Caliph Umar bin Al-Khattab	
Political Analysis: Implementation of the New Middle East project in Iraq	On the purported U.S. project to dominate the Middle East
Hot Topics: Jewish-Kurdish Relations	
Scholarship and Jihad	

3.1.2.2 Hasad al-Mujahidin

Ansar al-Sunnah has produced 41 issues of *Hasad al-Mujahidin* [Mujahidin Roundup], a more or less monthly publication (see Figure 23). *Hasad al-Mujahidin* is a relatively simple affair consisting primarily of summaries of **Ansar al-Sunnah's** operational press releases on military operations. It occasionally reproduces documents, such as the ID cards of executed “spies” and other “enemies” (see Figure 24) but has virtually no photographs. Issue No. 39 was 25 pages long, and issue No. 38 was 32 pages long. The following are the contents of issue No. 39, dated February 2007:

Article Title	Notes
Editorial: Excerpts from Address by Shaykh Abu Abdullah al-Hasan Ibn Mahmud	Address by the head of Ansar al-Sunnah
Overview of Previous Operations	Brief descriptions of military operations, primarily from December 2006
Attacks, Ambushes, and Assaults on Command Posts	
Bombardments	
Executions of Spies and Apostates	
Sniper Operations	
The Courage of a Boy or the Bravery of a Man	Story of a young warrior
Summary of the Harvest	Statistics on enemies killed and equipment destroyed

3.1.2.3 Sada al-Rafidayn

The **Global Islamic Media Front** has produced 33 issues of *Sada al-Rafidayn* [Echo of the Two Rivers, a reference to the Tigris and Euphrates], which bills itself as a “weekly bulletin on the news and affairs of jihad and the mujahidin in the Islamic world” (see Figure 25). The bulletin is simple in format, consisting primarily of operational press releases from various insurgent groups. It does not have pictures. Issue No. 29 contained 35 pages, while issue No. 30 contained 34 pages. Both appeared in



Figure 23. The cover of *Hasad al-Mujahidin*, a magazine published electronically by Ansar al-Sunnah



Figure 24. The ID cards of an “employee of the crusaders” and a member of the Imam al-Mahdi Army, a Shi’ite militia; Ansar al-Sunnah claimed in issue No. 39 of *Hasad al-Mujahidin* to have killed both

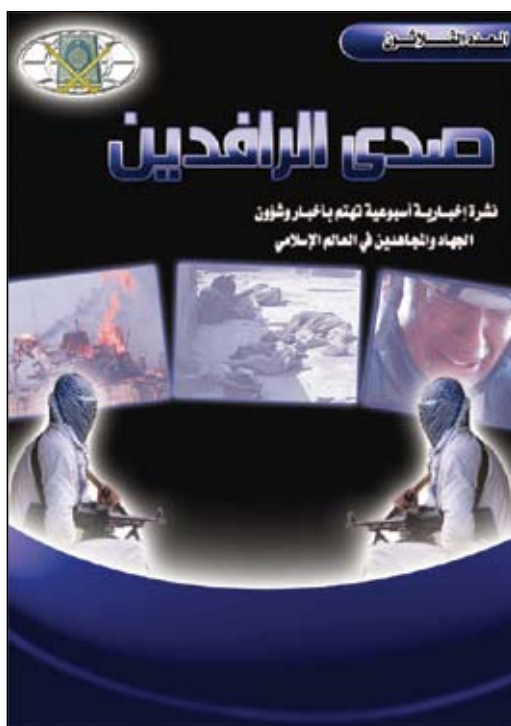


Figure 25. The cover of *Sada al-Rafidayn*, a magazine published electronically by the Global Islamic Media Front.

March 2007. The following are the contents of issue No. 30:

Article Title	Notes
Statements Released on Saturday, March 24, 2007	Statements from ISI/Al-Qaeda, the IAI, Shield of Islam, Just Vengeance Brigades, and Jihadist Brigades
Statements Released on Sunday, March 25, 2007	
Statements Released on Monday, March 26	
Statements Released on Tuesday, March 27	
Statements Released on Wednesday, March 28	
Statements Released on Thursday, March 29	
Statements Released on Friday, March 30	

Article Title	Notes
Some of the Operations Videotaped This Week	Internet addresses for downloading three videotaped attacks
Quotes in the Media	Quote by Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi: "One must beware of those who become involved in these quisling agencies. For them, we have nothing but the sharp sword. Between us are nothing but nights and events that turn the heads of boys gray."

3.1.2.4 Biographies of Notable Martyrs

The **Al-Furqan Institute for Media Production** has produced 34 issues in the series *Biographies Of Notable Martyrs*. The format is simple, with an illustrated cover followed by bare text. Issues vary in length, with some consisting of the biography of a single individual who died fighting in Iraq and others featuring more than one biography. Two recent issues—Nos. 30 and 31—bore the logos of both **Al-Furqan** and **ISI/Al-Qaeda** on the cover (see Figure 26).



Figure 26. The cover of *Biographies of Notable Martyrs*, a periodical published electronically by the Al-Furqan Institute for Media Production

Issue No. 31, released in early April, 2007, is 13 pages long and contains the biographies of four Egyptians who were among “the first delegations of martyrdom-seekers to Iraq.” Issue No. 30, titled *The Devoted Son*, presents a father’s narrative of his son, identified as an Egyptian named Aqil, who was one of the first foreign “martyrdom-seekers” to go to Iraq. The highly personalized account tells the story of an educated young man who gains access to jihadist circles through the Internet, travels to Mosul in Iraq, works in **Al-Qaeda’s** media unit in Al-Fallujah under the direction of Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi, and finally blows himself up near a group of American soldiers. Like other narratives in the series, the portrait is didactic and idealized, depicting foreign suicide bombers in Iraq as paragons of virtue and examples for imitation.

3.1.2.5 Related Jihadist Periodicals

3.1.2.5.1 Sawt al-Jihad

Sawt al-Jihad [Voice of the Jihad] first appeared in September 2003 as Al-Qaeda’s premier online magazine dedicated to “affairs of jihad and the mujahidin in the Arabian peninsula.” Since then, 30 issues have appeared, although the magazine went on a two-year hiatus before the appearance of issue No. 30 in February 2007 (see Figure 27). *Sawt al-Jihad* focuses on **Al-Qaeda’s** efforts in Saudi Arabia, but it occasionally touches on issues related to the jihadist wing of the Iraqi insurgency.

An apparent shift in the magazine’s position on the insurgency in Iraq reflects the increasing importance of Iraq to the global jihadist movement, of which *Sawt al-Jihad* is a prominent mouthpiece. For example, *Do Not Go To Iraq* by Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Salim (No. 7, December 2003) urged Saudis not to go fight in Iraq but rather to fight the Americans in Saudi Arabia first. The most recent issue (No. 30, January 2007), however, contained an eight-page article titled *Iraq, Yesterday and Today*, which lauded the efforts of foreign fighters in the cause of the Iraqi insurgency.



Figure 27. The cover of *Sawt al-Jihad*, an electronically published global jihadist magazine

3.1.2.5.2 Sada al-Jihad

The **Global Islamic Media Front** has published 14 issues of *Sada al-Jihad* [Echo of Jihad], which is described as a “monthly jihadist journal” (see Figure 28). The most recent issue appeared in March 2007. It contained a brief report on the online television channel *Sawt al-Khilafah* [Voice of the Caliphate], operated by **ISI/Al-Qaeda**. The previous issue (No. 13, February 2007), featured a lead editorial on the reported rape of a Sunni Iraqi woman by Shi’ite police officers (see Section 7.2, The Sabrin al-Janabi Case).



Figure 28. The cover of *Sada al-Jihad*, a “monthly jihadist journal” published electronically by the Global Islamic Media Front

Title	Author	Publisher	Pages	Date	Notes
<i>Media Jihad: a reading of jihadist media in Iraq</i>	Abd al-Rahman Sallum al-Rawashidi	Wikalat Haq	221	Spring 2007	A detailed, sympathetic study of jihadist media in Iraq
<i>Advice and Instructions for the Mujahidin in Mesopotamia</i>	Anonymous	Center for Islamic Studies and Research (Al-Qaeda)	68	1424 (March 2003-February 2004)	
<i>The Destructive Programs in Iraq and Their Important Role in the Modern Crusader War</i>	Abd al-Muhsin al-Rafi'i	Minbar al-Tawhid wa-l-Jihad	43	August 2005	
<i>Iraq from Occupation to Liberation: reality of the crisis and prospects for a solution</i>	Sayf al-Din al-Ansari, Abu Ubayd al-Qarshi, Abu Ayman al-Hilali, Abu Sa'd al-Amili	Al-Ansar	73	June 2003	Collection of essays; the same authors contributed essays to an earlier collection on the September 11 attacks
<i>The Future of Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula after the Fall of Baghdad</i>	Yusuf al-Ayiri	Center for Islamic Studies and Research (Al-Qaeda)	68	July 2003	Author is a noted Saudi jihadist writer; he was killed in a shootout with Saudi security forces in May 2003
<i>Statements by Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia, Part One: from April 19, 2005, to August 11, 2005</i>	Anonymous	Unknown	502	2005	Collection of nearly 1,000 statements by Al-Qaeda in Iraq
<i>Iraq and the Crusader Invasion: lessons and observations</i>	Abu Umar Muhammad bin Abdallah al-Sayf (Head of the Supreme Court in Chechnya)	Center for Islamic Studies and Research (Al-Qaeda)	52	Unknown	
<i>Announcement to the People of the Birth of the Islamic State</i>	Uthman bin Abd al-Rahman al-Tamimi	Al-Furqan (ISI/Al-Qaeda)	91	October 2006	Provides Islamic legal justification for Al-Qaeda's establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq in October 2006
<i>Examination of the Lessons of the War on Iraq</i>	Muhammad Abu Abdallah	Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat	39	July 2005	
<i>Martyrs of Mesopotamia</i>	Abu Abd al-Rahman, former administrator of the jihad section of the Al-Arab Internet forum	Unknown	176	2005	Biographical sketches of 431 "martyrs" in Iraq gathered from newspapers and the Internet
<i>Response to the Doubts of Rumor-Mongers on the Mujahidin in Iraq</i>	Al-Shihab al-Thaqib	Unknown	56	April 2007	
<i>Signs of the American Defeat and the Challenges of the Post-American Period</i>	Dr. Abd al-Aziz bin Mustafa Kamil	Internet site Sayd al-Fawa'id	39	Unknown	
<i>Stories of the Martyrs of Mesopotamia, Part One</i>	Abu al-Barra' al-Sharqi, Abu Abd-al-Malik al-Maqdisi, Abu Ayyub al-Najdi	Mujahidin Shura Council	98	Unknown	Biographical sketches of "martyrs"

3.1.3 Books

Iraqi insurgents, who find themselves pitted against a professional foreign army and a variety of domestic opponents, have authored few books. Others, however, have compiled existing materials by and about the insurgency to create book-length texts. And leading thinkers in the global jihadist movement, which intersects with the insurgency at a number of key junctures, have dedicated lengthy works to the war in Iraq and its aftermath. Taken together, these works

are part of a growing library of books that fall under the general rubric of insurgent media (see Figure 29).

The shortest of these works are perhaps more accurately classified as long essays, while the longest run to hundreds of pages. In general, books are under 100 pages. All are electronic publications, made available for downloading in Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat formats on websites sympathetic to the insurgency. We present in the table above a number of representative examples.

3.2 Audiovisual

Iraqi insurgent groups and sympathetic organizations and individuals produce a wide variety of audiovisual products to trumpet the insurgency's achievements and advance its goals. These range from short video clips of attacks on U.S. forces and other targets in Iraq to recorded addresses by insurgent leaders to longer films on various topics of relevance to the insurgency. We present here an overview of the main categories of audiovisual products created by the insurgency and its supporters.

3.2.1 Videotaped Attacks

Just as the operational press release is the basic unit of insurgent textual production, visual records of attacks are the basic units of insurgent video production. The two genres are closely related, and insurgent groups sometimes issue operational press releases along with links to download a video record of the attack (see Figure 30).

Iraqi insurgent groups and sympathetic organizations and individuals produce a wide variety of audiovisual products to trumpet the insurgency's achievements and advance its goals.



Figure 30. Stills from recent videos showing insurgent attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq



Figure 29. Electronically published books on Iraq by insurgent supporters



Figure 31. Screenshot reads: "I seek refuge in God from Satan the rejected," a phrase commonly recited by Muslims throughout the world before they begin to read a sura (chapter) of the Koran



Figure 32. Screenshot reads: "Media Office for the Mujahidin Army, Video-Production Section, presents..."



Figure 33. Screenshot reads: "By the grace of God, the destruction of a Humvee belonging to American forces and the killing and wounding of those inside it with an explosive device in West Baghdad"

Hundreds of videotaped attacks are available on the websites that serve as the primary distribution network for insurgent and pro-insurgency materials (see Section 5.1, The Internet). Generally ranging in length from a few seconds to 1–2 minutes, and in size from a few hundred kilobytes to 10 megabytes, attack videos follow a standard format. Opening credits identify the group responsible for the attack and provide brief information about the operation. A religious message is often included as well, either in the form of a quote from the Koran or an utterance of the Prophet, usually at the very beginning of the video clip. For example, a 52-second-long **Mujahidin Army** video begins with three captions (see Figures 31–33).

Most insurgent groups take care to "brand" themselves, placing their logos in a corner of the screen for the duration of the video (see Figure 34). Video-production units affiliated with a particular insurgent group, such as **Al-Furqan**, which produces videos of attacks by **ISI/Al-Qaeda**, also place their logos on the video clips they produce (see Figure 35). Captions in some videos, such as an **Ansar al-Sunnah** recording of an IED attack on a U.S. truck, are modeled on the captions that accompany news footage on cable news channels like **CNN** and **Al-Jazeera** (see Figure 36).



Figure 34. Insurgent group logos



Figure 35. Global video-production group logos



Figure 36. Still from an Ansar al-Sunnah video using "cable news" captions

At the heart of each video clip is the filmed record of an actual insurgent operation. The most commonly recorded operation is an IED attack on U.S. forces, usually in a Humvee or Bradley fighting vehicle. In these video clips, a stationary camera films a stretch of road and captures the moment when an IED destroys a passing vehicle. Other frequently recorded operations include sniper and mortar attacks. The most prized videos, judging by download statistics, are the downing of U.S. helicopters and sniper attacks in which a U.S. soldier is seen falling to the ground.

When insurgents appear in videos, as they do in mortar attacks, they are masked. One can also find videos—particularly ones where an insurgent is reading a press statement—where the insurgent's face is blurred so as not to reveal his identity. Voices are sometimes audible, with numerous cries of “Allahu akbar” usually serving as the audio backdrop to pictures of insurgents firing mortars, detonating IEDs, or engaging in other military operations. Most videos, however, use jihadist songs as a soundtrack (see Section 3.2.4, Songs).

Most attack videos are filmed from a single angle with a stationary camera and present images of middling quality, although some videos are of extremely high quality and considerably more sophisticated. A three-minute video of a suicide car-bomb attack by **Al-Qaeda in Iraq** against a U.S. military installation featured multiple camera angles (see Figure 37), a voiceover providing details about the operation, and a closing dedication to Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri. Some videos contain sardonic captions, such as an IED attack against U.S. troops by **Al-Qaeda in Iraq** in which a subtitle announces “their last moments” as the video shows a group of U.S. soldiers in a truck seconds before the attack (see Figure 38).



Figure 37. Al-Qaeda in Iraq video showing a single attack from three camera angles



Figure 38. This caption from an Al-Qaeda in Iraq video reads “their last moments;” the video goes on to show an IED attack against the soldiers seen here

One three-minute video of a suicide car-bomb attack by Al-Qaeda in Iraq against U.S. troops featured multiple camera angles and a voiceover providing details of the operation.



3.2.2 Films

Major insurgent groups and affiliated media-production units also release longer films to convey messages that are broader than attack videos allow and more direct than written statements. Perhaps the best-known insurgent films are the two titles in the Juba series, produced by **Al-Boraq** for the **IAI**. The two films detail the exploits of a legendary **IAI** sniper, known as “the sniper of Baghdad,” who purportedly killed hundreds of U.S. soldiers. The second film is available for downloading in a variety of formats on a dedicated website in English and Arabic (www.jubaonline.org) (see Figure 39).

Like attack videos, longer films generally begin with a title sequence identifying the media unit and/or insurgent group that produced the film. Title sequences generally include a religious quotation. Jihadist songs make up the soundtrack in most films, while voiceovers and captions comprise the narrative.

Films are announced and distributed on the same websites that make other insurgent materials available, with banner advertisements to publicize the release and provide a link for downloading (see Figure 40). The video files are normally distributed through free upload-download services in a variety of formats (Windows, RealPlayer, DivX) and four file sizes, ranging from high-quality (up to 500 megabytes) to mobile-phone quality (less than 10 megabytes) (see Figure 41).

Films cover a variety of subjects but break down into a number of established genres. The most common of these are:

- Compilations of attack videos, frequently organized as a “greatest hits” collection. Examples include **Ansar al-Sunnah’s** *Top 20* (7:16 minutes) and the Al-Hanein Internet forum’s *God’s Victory Is Near* (24 minutes), a compilation of March 2007 operations by various insurgent groups. **Ansar al-Sunnah’s**

Figure 39. The website of Juba, the “Sniper of Baghdad”



Figure 40. Banners advertising new films; each banner advertisement links to locations where the films can be downloaded



Figure 41. A typical page with download addresses for a film showing the various file-size options: high-quality, medium-quality, low-quality, and mobile-phone quality

Top 20 is organized as a “competition” between brigades within the insurgent group to determine who can carry out the most visually impressive attack against U.S. forces. The video’s stated intent is to create a spirit of “healthy competition” within and between insurgent groups (see Figure 42).



Figure 42. The title of Ansar al-Sunnah's *Top 20*, a compilation of videotaped attacks organized as a competition between brigades within the insurgent group to determine who can carry out the most impressive action against U.S. forces

- Profiles of martyrs and insurgents. Examples include the **Monotheism and Jihad Group's** 54-minute profile of the Palestinian militant and top aide to Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, Abu Anas al-Shami, who was killed in Iraq in 2004; the **Mujahidin Shura Council's** six-minute interview with Saudi fighters in Iraq; **JAMI's** *Wedding of the Martyrs* (see below); and **Jaysh al-Fatihin's** 69-minute *Abu al-Walid, Lion of Al-Khalidiyah* (see Figure 43).
- Detailed overviews of individual operations and campaigns. These videos follow a single operation from planning to execution, with video footage of all stages, and strive to underscore insurgents' professionalism and effectiveness. Examples include **Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia's** 34-minute *Raid of the Emigrants And Supporters* and the **Mujahidin Army's** 36-minute *Drawn Sword Raid* (see below). The 25-minute *Hunters Of Minesweepers*, produced by **Al-Furqan** for **ISI/Al-Qaeda**, is a variant of this genre, detailing insurgent efforts to overcome hi-tech U.S. methods to fight IEDs (see below).

- Motivational films on the outrages and excesses committed by insurgents' enemies. While these initially concentrated on the actions of U.S. forces, the tone has become increasingly sectarian in recent years. Examples include **Ansar al-Sunnah's** 28-minute *Just Vengeance*, detailing the capture and execution of Shi'ite police officers (see below) and **Ansar al-Sunnah's** 16-minute



Figure 43. The titles of the Mujahidin Shura Council's biographical documentary about a former Al-Qaeda military commander in Iraq (top), *Drawn Sword Raid* (middle), and *Hunters of Minesweepers* (bottom)

Top 20 is organized as a “competition” between brigades within the insurgent group to determine who can carry out the most visually impressive attack against U.S. forces.

Assaults On Sunni Homes, showing the destruction of Sunni residences in Baghdad by U.S. and Iraqi National Guard forces.

Films generally lack release dates, although they can usually be dated by the announcements posted to the sites where they are distributed. The representative films below are all recent, released in 2006 and 2007, shown in the table below.

3.2.3 Recorded Statements

Insurgent groups sometimes package statements by leaders and prominent figures as audio or video recordings. **ISI/Al-Qaeda** does this more frequently than other groups, a likely reflection of the parent organization's penchant for presenting its leaders' statements in audio and video form.

Recorded statements are similar in form to attack videos and longer films, beginning with a title sequence and then proceeding to the actual statement. Some recorded statements stress major points by interposing key quotations between the title sequence and the body of the address. For example, a videotaped statement by the "judge" of **ISI/Al-Qaeda** released in April 2007 begins with sound bites against a backdrop of **ISI/Al-Qaeda** fighters in action. Some statements are read by a moderator posed behind a desk. A "commentary" on the establishment of the **Islamic State of Iraq** in October 2006 even showed a spokesman seated in a computer-generated "newsroom" with a coffee cup on the desk behind him (see Figure 45).

The table above shows representative recent major statements produced by insurgent groups.

Just Vengeance is a 28-minute film produced by the Ansar al-Sunnah group that details the capture and executions of Shi'ite police officers in Diyala Governorate.

Title	Production	Length and Size (highest quality)	Notes
<i>Top 20</i>	Ansar al-Sunnah	7:16 / 108.6 mb	Top 20 recent attacks to "encourage rivalry among the mujahidin" and defeat the enemy
<i>Caravans of Martyrs</i>	Mujahidin Shura Council	59:52 / 610.6 mb	Lionizes "martyrs" in Iraq from an explicitly jihadist perspective, featuring statements by Osama bin Laden, interviews with fighters in Iraq, and images of training and attacks
<i>Hunters of Minesweepers</i>	Al-Furqan (for ISI/Al-Qaeda)	25:56 / 178.8 mb	A masked spokesman for ISI/Al-Qaeda describes how ISI/Al-Qaeda "specialists" have overcome U.S. forces' use of signal disruptors to fight IEDs. The video strives to show that ISI/Al-Qaeda is successfully combating hi-tech U.S. efforts to defend itself against IEDs.
<i>Drawn Sword Raid</i>	Mujahidin Army	36:03 / 125.5 mb	Documents an ambush from final planning to execution
<i>Knights of Martyrdom</i>	Al-Furqan	39:21 / 268 mb	Profiles of "martyrs" who carried out suicide bombings in Iraq
<i>Wedding of the Martyrs</i>	JAMI	30:11 / 194 mb	Story of a group of insurgents who were killed in a clash with U.S. forces. Begins as a "movie" with intercut footage of U.S. military patrol and insurgents setting up an ambush.
<i>Harvest of the Defeated in Mesopotamia</i>	Al-Furqan (for ISI/Al-Qaeda)	41:29 / 137.8 mb	Lambastes the participation of Iraqi Shi'ite leaders in the political process. Opens with a quote from Osama bin Laden condemning Shi'ite collaboration with Americans and calling for jihad.
<i>Just Vengeance</i>	Ansar al-Sunnah	28:33 / 238 mb	Billed as part of the series <i>The Throbbing Vein To Ward Off The Hatred Of The Rejectionists</i> , the film's full title is <i>Just Vengeance Against Those Who Violated The Honor Of Our Pure, Free Sisters</i> . It comes as an apparent response to the al-Janabi case (see Section 7.2, the Sabrin al-Janabi Case). It shows the capture, interrogation, and execution of Shi'ite police officers in Diyala Governorate (see Figure 44).



Figure 44. Three stills from Ansar al-Sunnah's film *Just Vengeance* showing the kidnapping, interrogation, and execution of a Shi'ite police officer by the Sunni insurgent group

3.2.4 Songs

Songs provide the soundtrack to many attack videos and virtually all longer films. In keeping with Salafi practice, male choirs perform songs without instrumental accompaniment. The tone is either martial, with gunfire and explosions audible in the background, or plaintive, with the former genre predominating.

The websites of some insurgent groups make available for downloading songs specifically

Title	Producer	Length and Size	Approximate Release Date	Notes
<i>The Mujahidin's Commitment To The Safety Of Muslims</i>	ISI/Al-Qaeda	2:04 / 21.8 mb	April 13, 2007	This short film shows fighters from ISI/Al-Qaeda calling off an attack on a U.S. convoy because a car with Iraqi civilians is in the vicinity. Although the format is highly unusual, it can be considered a statement, since it comes as an apparent response to the IAI's criticism of ISI/Al-Qaeda for spilling the blood of innocent Iraqis (see Section 6.4.3, Rift Between Nationalists and Jihadists).
<i>To The Mujahidin Brothers</i>	Ansar al-Sunnah	18:25 / 7.5 mb	April 13, 2007	This audio address is a statement from Ansar al-Sunnah's leadership to other insurgents. It comes as part of the debate within the insurgency over the conflict between the IAI and ISI/Al-Qaeda (see Section 6.4.3, Rift Between Nationalists and Jihadists).
<i>I Speak On A Sign From God</i>	ISI/Al-Qaeda	28:07 / 13.5 mb	March 13, 2007	Audio recording of an address by ISI/Al-Qaeda leader Abu Umar al-Baghdadi
<i>Statement On The Attack On Sabrin al-Janabi</i>	IAI	17:32 / 45.6 mb	February 22, 2007	Audio recording against a video backdrop of a statement from the leader of the IAI on the reported rape of Sabrin al-Janabi (see Section 7.2, The Sabrin al-Janabi Case). The statement is read by "one of the mujahidin."



Figure 45. A "commentary" on the establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq in October 2006; note the Mujahidin Shura Council logo on the wall, the Caliphate Voice Channel (CVC) logo in the upper right corner, and the computer-generated "newsroom"

focused on Iraq. The JAMI website, for example, offers a song in Iraqi dialect titled *Baghdad, You Are The Pride Of The Nation* (see Figure 46). Most songs, however, are sung in standard Arabic intelligible throughout the Arab world and convey a general message extolling the virtues of jihad, lauding martyrs for their sacrifices, and denigrating perceived enemies. In fact, the majority of the songs used in insurgent films come from the larger body of songs produced by the global jihadist enterprise and do not mention Iraq at all (see Figure 47).

Songs are much more than background music. With no musical accompaniment to obscure the clearly articulated lyrics, songs are the ideal conduit for an ideological message. The message is strikingly uniform and primarily jihadist.

Baghdad, You Are The Pride Of The Nation, sung in Iraqi dialect and available for downloading on the **JAMI** website, is an unusual example of nationalist text, a point underscored by the song's understated, yet audible, musical accompaniment, which marks a departure from Salafi precepts. The melody and cadence are reminiscent of nationalist songs produced by

the Saddam Hussein regime during the Iran-Iraq War. The song's chorus states:

Baghdad, you are the pride of the nation.
No harm or concern touches you.
We are your men, the people of zeal.
We redeem you with

our blood and our life.

The song enumerates key cities where Iraqis have fought American forces—Al-Qa'im, Al-Hadithah, Mosul, and Al-Fallujah. And while it

refers to the Americans as infidels—"In Al-Anbar we raised the banner, and not a single unbeliever is left in the province"—the tone is primarily nationalist, striving to show that a broad swath of Iraqis are resisting foreign occupation. The final verse is:

This is my Iraq, with all of its young people,
That has roared and exploded like a volcano,
With its old people, its children, and its women,
Terrifying every American soldier.

But most films, which are the most popular vehicle for songs, use jihadist, not nationalist, materials in their soundtracks. The following films use songs that are also employed in media products created by global jihadist groups:

Film	Songs Used
<i>Caravans Of Martyrs (Mujahidin Shura Council)</i>	<i>Every Day Caravans Of Martyrs Set Off For Paradise</i> <i>Destroy The Night's Dark Injustice</i>
<i>Hunters Of Minesweepers (Al-Furqan)</i>	<i>God Is Great</i>
<i>Drawn Sword Raid (Mujahidin Army)</i>	<i>The Swords Speak Advance, Hero</i> <i>The Lion-Cub Cried Out</i>
<i>Harvest Of The Defeated In Mesopotamia (Al-Furqan)</i>	<i>They Are Not A Part Of Ahmad's Nation</i>
<i>Top 20 (Ansar al-Sunnah)</i>	<i>Rise From Slumber</i>



Figure 46. Songs available for downloading on the JAMI website



The words to *Caravans of Martyrs* come from a poem dedicated to the memory of Abdallah Azzam, a Palestinian who was the teacher of Osama bin Laden and played a central role in bringing Arab volunteers to fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan. The song begins:

Every day caravans of martyrs set off for
paradise with the approval of God,
What can I say to describe their deeds—
rhetoric is powerless and pens run dry.
How great are the lions who filled the world
with their exploits.
Each of them scorned life to become a

Figure 47. The website of Abu Ali, a performer of jihadist songs, with audio files available for downloading

mujahid with faith and courage his
weapon.

Destroy Night's Dark Injustice urges listeners to
"raise up the faith of Muhammad" and reminds
them that they are the "army of Muhammad."
It closes:

For Islam is power,
Jihad and courage,
Unity and brotherhood,
And the path of Muhammad.

God Is Great, O Heroes makes specific mention of
Al-Aqsa,¹⁶ but only as a symbol of a larger struggle
between the forces of Islam and unbelief:

Stand strong, Aqsa,
The time of pride is coming.
We will smash the thrones of tyranny,
And will go to the battlefield like lions.

Cannon shots ring out on the battlefield
Along with the melodies of song.
For the houris¹⁷ are calling you to the
battlefield,
Rush to paradise, O brave one.

Swords Speak decries the current plight of the
Muslim world and recalls past glories soon to be
restored:

They would not have desecrated our holy
places had lions ringed them,
Vice and oppression have attacked, but
where is the age of swords?
They forgot that we are proud and will
defend ourselves like lions.

For it is we who trampled on horseback the
thrones of foreigners.
It is we who built our palaces from skulls.
With whips we drove away the wives of
Khosroe as booty.

Advance, O Hero employs a device much
favored in jihadist rhetoric, combining imagery
from the distant past and the immediate
present. In this case, the blade of a sword is
mentioned alongside the masks that cover the
faces of militants in videos:

Above the heads of the enemies,
Raise the poisoned blade.
Fill the universe with roars.
My motto is 'I will not be defeated.'
Artificial nations of the Christians,
The masked lion-cub has come.
I will crush you all,
For I swear by God.

Arise From Slumber, a jihadist song used in
the soundtrack to *Ansar al-Sunnah's Top 20*
compilation of attack videos, heralds the violent
awakening of a new generation of holy warriors:

Rise from your slumber for Islam has
returned.
We have marched in God's path and declared
jihad.
We have returned with the machine gun and
today we are leaders.
As individuals and as one, we have
proceeded, an awakened generation,
Knowing no life other than battle and strife.

Finally, *Strike The Long-Awaited Blow*, another
popular jihadist song used in a number of films
about the Iraqi insurgency, makes specific
reference to **Al-Qaeda's** September 11 attack on
the United States:

Strike the long-awaited blow
And kill as many infidels as you wish.
Strike the long-awaited blow
And kill as many infidels as you wish.
Turn my lands into a grave

Advance, O Hero
employs a device
much favored in
jihadist rhetoric,
combining
imagery from the
distant past and
the immediate
present.

¹⁶ The Al-Aqsa Mosque is part of Al-Haram al-Sharif, or the Noble Sanctuary, located in Jerusalem's Old City. The mosque, with its black dome, is one of the three holiest sites in Islam. The Mosque serves as a center for study and prayer. It is in this building that Friday prayers are held each week. The Noble Sanctuary also houses the golden-domed Dome of the Rock, which was constructed as a mosque to commemorate the Prophet Muhammad's Night Journey.

¹⁷ The houris are the virgins supposedly promised to martyrs in paradise.

The impressive array of products Sunni-Iraqi insurgents and their supporters create suggests the existence of a veritable multimedia empire. But this impression is misleading.

For the defeated armies of unbelief.
How great is the longing for Hattin¹⁸
And the repair of the world and the faith.
How great is the longing for Hattin
And the repair of the world and the faith.
All of Palestine will be liberated
By the long-awaited black banners.
Destroy, destroy, do not make peace,
Repeat the glories of the raid on
Manhattan...

3.3 Conclusions

The impressive array of products Sunni-Iraqi insurgents and their supporters create suggests the existence of a veritable multimedia empire. But this impression is misleading. The insurgent-media network has no identifiable brick-and-mortar presence, no headquarters, and no bureaucracy. It relies instead on a decentralized, collaborative production model that utilizes the skills of a community of like-minded individuals.

In its adoption of this production model, the insurgent-media enterprise resembles the global jihadist media endeavor that was already in existence when a U.S.-led military operation toppled the regime of Saddam Hussein in 2003. Global jihadist media provided a blueprint for the creation of insurgent media, and the foreign jihadists who flocked to Iraq to fight in the wake of the invasion spearheaded the drive to create a media presence for the insurgency. While a jihadist agenda is by no means common to all or even most Iraqi insurgent groups, insurgent media overlap with jihadist media at numerous junctures, and, as we shall see, reinforce their message.

¹⁸ Muslim forces commanded by Salah al-Din (Saladin) defeated the Christian crusaders at Hattin in 1187, paving the way for the Muslim recapture of Jerusalem later that year.

3.3.1 The Decentralized, 'Do-It-Yourself' Media Factory

An insurgency, and particularly an insurgency consisting of numerous groups with often competing agendas, can hardly maintain a geographically fixed, identifiable, centralized brick-and-mortar infrastructure for media production. Iraq's insurgents and their supporters have overcome this obstacle through the active use of communications technology, the development of a do-it-yourself building-block method of media production, and the acceptance of a certain amount of message diffusion.

The use of communications technology is in and of itself the least remarkable aspect of the insurgent media endeavor. The Internet is a ubiquitous and familiar feature of the modern world, and insurgents' active use of Internet technology to create and disseminate their media products is as unremarkable as their use of explosives to make bombs or the telephone to communicate with each other. For the purposes of media production, it is sufficient to note that Internet communications allow insurgents and their sympathizers to transmit whatever materials they need, from video footage to texts, to wherever they need, to as many people as necessary to produce anything from a press release to an hour-long film. At the same time, the use of Internet technology allows insurgents freedom of movement and anonymity that other media platforms do not.

More noteworthy is the fact that insurgents' willingness to forego a centralized brick-and-mortar production infrastructure and their reliance on the Internet as the primary distribution channel for their media products have led to the emergence of a decentralized, building-block production model in which

virtually any individual or group can design a media product to serve insurgent aims and goals.

As the preceding overview of insurgent media products shows, both text and audiovisual products begin with simple units and proceed to more complex creations. For text products, the basic building blocks are operational press releases and topical statements; for audiovisual products, footage of insurgent activities and statements recorded by prominent insurgents and sympathizers (see Figure 48). Of these building blocks, only the footage of insurgent activities and statements by insurgent leaders need be recorded on location in Iraq. One or more individuals working anywhere in the world can create everything else.¹⁹

An individual with a link to an insurgent group can compose an operational press release anywhere. If the press release is based on fact, the individual need only receive a communication with the necessary information about the time, place, and specifics of an attack or event to write the press release and then post it to a dedicated insurgent website or sympathetic forum. If the press release is fiction, as is surely the case with the insurgency's more extravagant claims, the task is even easier.²⁰ The same holds true for written topical statements.

In the case of short attack videos, only the footage of the actual attack need come from Iraq. Once an affiliated individual has received that footage and basic accompanying

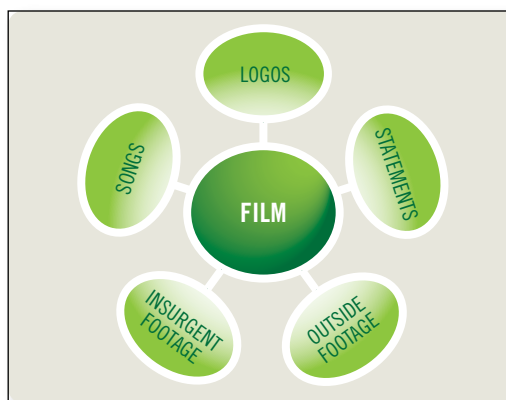


Figure 48. Most of the elements needed to produce a film are already available on the Internet

information, which can be transferred over the Internet or by mobile phone, he has only to add the insurgent group's logo, a short title sequence, and perhaps a soundtrack with a motivational song. He then uploads the resulting video product to a free upload-download site and posts an announcement to a forum. The video-editing software required to produce such a video is cheap and readily available. More importantly, the only material needed from Iraq is the actual footage of the attack. All of the additional elements required to create a video clip—insurgent group logo, songs, etc.—are readily available on the Internet (although insurgency-affiliated individuals producing videos are likely to keep such materials in a personal archive).

The production of a longer film represents a somewhat expanded variant of the same process used to create an attack video (see Figure 49). *The Wedding of Martyrs*, a 30-minute film produced by **JAMI**, depicts an insurgent ambush of a U.S. patrol and the subsequent “martyrdom” of a group of insurgents in an engagement with U.S. helicopter gunships. The film's producers ingeniously interweave footage of insurgents with footage of a U.S. patrol, the latter evidently recorded by U.S. forces and obtained by insurgents, perhaps from a televised documentary or Internet source such as youtube.com. The alternating

The only material needed from Iraq is the actual footage of the attack. All of the additional elements required to create a video clip—insurgent group logo, songs, etc.—are readily available on the Internet.

¹⁹ U.S. forces have on occasion reported seizures during raids of equipment that could be related to insurgent media production. For example, in a March 24, 2007, press release, MNF-Iraq reported the arrest of four individuals after soldiers discovered “a video camera and videotape in the vehicle's glove compartment showing the convicted individuals making improv[ised] explosive devices.”

²⁰ It should be noted that insurgent groups maintain an organized system of spokespeople who are known to be responsible for issuing statements. While there is nothing to preclude other individuals from issuing statements using these spokespeople's names, those statements would almost certainly be disavowed by the group in question. Previous experience shows that insurgent groups regularly monitor forum websites and are aware of the material being posted by sympathetic users. They are also acutely aware of user public opinion and political and theological debates on forums. This was most recently apparent in the polemic that ensued in the wake of the **IAI's** criticism of **ISI/Al-Qaeda**.

The global jihadist movement exemplified by Al-Qaeda and its offshoots had a well-established media presence long before the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime and the emergence of Iraq's Sunni insurgency.

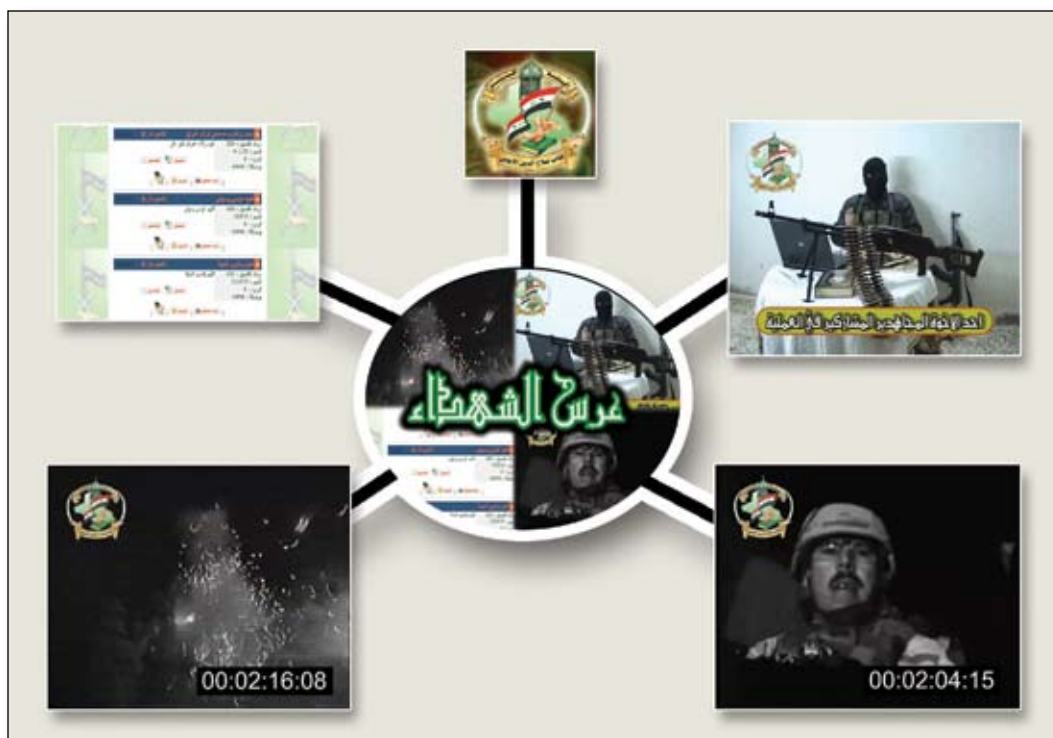


Figure 49. Elements used in the production of the JAMI film *Wedding of Martyrs*: the group's logo, footage of U.S. soldiers, downloadable songs, an address by an insurgent group commander, and footage of insurgents in action

clips of U.S. forces on patrol and insurgents mounting an attack, which likely document two separate incidents, create the cinematic impression of a single event viewed from multiple perspectives. The remainder of the film draws on downloadable elements of insurgent propaganda, from logos to footage of the “martyrs” funeral to hagiographic biographies presented in text form with accompanying still and moving images.

Larger text products can be produced using the same do-it-yourself, building-block approach. A magazine, for example, can easily be fashioned from existing press releases augmented with a vividly formatted cover featuring available photographs and graphic designs. Both *Hasad al-Mujahidin* and *Sada al-Rafidayn* employ this model. More complex magazines, such as the IAI's *Al-Fursan*, simply include a wider range of materials, such as topical statements and articles specially written for the magazine, as well as

statistics gleaned from operational statements. Books, such as a 500-page compilation of **Al-Qaeda in Iraq** press releases from 2006, can be produced in the same fashion.

3.3.2 Intersections with Global Jihadist Media

The global jihadist movement exemplified by **Al-Qaeda** and its offshoots had a well-established media presence long before the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime and the emergence of Iraq's Sunni insurgency. The best-known examples of jihadist media are videotaped addresses by Osama bin Laden and his deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, but the jihadist product array encompassed numerous written statements, magazines, books, and video films. Internet forums were, and remain, the primary distribution channel for these products.

The Iraqi insurgency adopted these genres of media production wholesale, as the preceding overview of insurgent products indicates. It also augmented them with products specifically suited to the dynamics of an ongoing insurgency such as daily press releases and short video clips of attacks.

The Iraqi insurgency's adoption of global jihadist media techniques resulted from a symbiotic process. Foreign jihadists, primarily linked to **Al-Qaeda's** various iterations in Iraq, brought with them the media methods and practices already in the global jihadist arsenal. At the same time, new elements appeared in the context of the insurgency, such as daily press releases, which as noted earlier, appeared as a counter to Coalition Provisional Authority and U.S. military press releases and statements. Existing distribution channels took steps to accommodate these innovations. For example, jihadist Internet forums added sections specifically to post insurgent statements and press releases (see Figure 50).

Global jihadist groups like **Al-Qaeda**, which already had a backlog of media experience, brought their ideology and experience with them to Iraq and imbued their new Iraq-focused media products with it. As Iraq's indigenous insurgents adopted the existing forms of global jihadist media in order to establish their own media presence, they also absorbed some of the content of jihadist media, although many Iraqi groups espoused ideological platforms closer to the traditional outlook of a national-liberation movement fighting to evict foreign occupiers.

The songs that make up the soundtrack to most insurgent video productions are a telling example of how this process works. While some specifically Iraqi “songs of resistance” exist, they are not as numerous, accessible, or effectively²¹ produced as the many jihadist

21 The most popular collections of jihadist songs are available in high-quality mp3 format on numerous websites.



Figure 50. Constantly updated statements from insurgent groups posted to the World News Network; note logos

While Iraqi insurgent media have benefited from jihadist media experience, global jihadists have reaped a propaganda windfall from the media material emerging from Iraq.

songs available online. This, it would seem, is why the bulk of insurgent video materials use jihadist, and not specifically Iraqi, songs in their soundtracks.²² Thanks to the lyrics of the jihadist songs, the videos serve as a conduit for jihadist ideology.

In sum, virtually all insurgent media products, whether created by **Al-Qaeda in Iraq** or other groups, are extremely similar to global jihadist media products in form²³ and somewhat similar to them in content.

On the jihadist side, the symbiotic relationship with Iraqi insurgent media has a somewhat different significance. If insurgent media have benefited from the templates provided by pre-existing jihadist media, global jihadists have reaped a propaganda windfall from the media products emerging from Iraq's Sunni insurgency. There are two reasons for this. First, the general context of the conflict in Iraq fits in perfectly with jihadist ideology, which posits a titanic struggle between the forces of unbelief, led by the United States, and the forces of faith, led by the mujahidin. Second, the images produced on a daily basis by the insurgency in the form of attack videos are grist for the jihadist propaganda mill, which relishes any and all depictions of "crusader" soldiers targeted in the Arab world.

Interestingly, this is not a two-way street. With the notable exception of **ISI/Al-Qaeda**, Iraqi

insurgent groups avoid obvious association with the global jihadist movement. Even if their rhetoric overlaps with that of the global jihadist movement, insurgent groups generally do not display on their web pages images linked with **Al-Qaeda**, cite statements from Osama bin Laden or Ayman al-Zawahiri, or use media products created by **Al-Qaeda** and its offshoots. As the polemic between the **IAI** and **ISI/Al-Qaeda** in April 2007 showed, Iraqi insurgent groups such as the **IAI** and the **Mujahidin Army** hold a fair amount of animosity for **ISI/Al-Qaeda**, which they blame for hijacking and defaming the "honorable resistance" (see Section 6.4.3, Rift Between Nationalists and Jihadists).

Nevertheless, the core media products made available globally through the Internet by Iraqi insurgent groups, whatever their ideological orientation or stance on **Al-Qaeda**, are, it should be stressed, also effective propaganda for global jihadists and their sympathizers. This is especially true in light of Muslim views on **Al-Qaeda** attacks against civilians, which evoke strong disapproval.²⁴ Arab respondents to a recent poll overwhelmingly supported attacks against U.S. forces in Iraq, however.²⁵ Thus, insurgent media products showcasing attacks against U.S. forces in Iraq reinforce an aspect of the jihadist message that is viewed positively in the Arab world. In this light, it seems entirely logical that jihadist forums, which are ideologically closer to **Al-Qaeda** than to most insurgent groups, are among the primary distribution channels for the text, audio, and video products created by virtually all insurgent groups across the ideological spectrum.

22 Iraqi nationalist songs tend to evoke a memory of a specific historical period, whether it be the Ba'athist era or the monarchy. Songs written during the Ba'athist era would not be used by the insurgent groups studied herein, because they refer to an Iraq few would like to return to. Although Sunni Arab insurgents fight for a return to power, they do not advocate a return to Iraq as it existed under Saddam Hussein. Other nationalist songs are hard to come by, even in Iraq, and particularly difficult to find and use in an electronic format. One telling example of the use of Iraqi songs is the **Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi Brigades'** restyling of a Ba'athist era song (see Section 3.2.4, Songs). The melody is the same but the lyrics have been changed.

23 For an extensive overview of jihadist imagery, see the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point's *Islamic Imagery Project* (<http://www.ctc.usma.edu/imagery.asp>).

24 See *Muslim Public Opinion On US Policy, Attacks on Civilians and al Qaeda*, World Public Opinion.org (http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/apr07/START_Apr07_rpt.pdf).

25 Ibid., "Majorities in Egypt and Morocco expressed approval for attacks on US troops in Muslim countries. Egyptians were those most likely to support such actions. Nine out of ten Egyptians approved of attacks on US military troops in Iraq (91%) and in Afghanistan (91%). Four out of five Egyptians (83%) said they supported attacks on US forces based in Persian Gulf states. Substantial majorities of Moroccans were also in favor of attacks on US troops in Iraq (68%), in Afghanistan (61%) and slightly smaller majorities supported attacks on those based in Persian Gulf states (52%)."

In sum, **Al-Qaeda** and its supporters identify with the Iraqi insurgents' main purpose, which is to drive foreign forces from Iraq, and can use media materials stressing this point to garner support. But Iraqi insurgents, as already noted, do not necessarily identify with the tenets of **Al-Qaeda** and the global jihadist movement.

شريط عداد القتلى الأمريكان في العراق

لعرض شريط "عداد القتلى الأمريكان في العراق" في موقعك قم بنسخ الكود التالي وضعه في صفحتك

```
<iframe name="bar"
src="http://almokhtsar.com/k.php" width="600"
height="64">
</iframe>
```

قتلى الأمريكان لهذا اليوم: 2 ||| قتل الأمريكان منذ نهاية الحرب 35280

These instructions, taken from a pro-insurgent website, show how to add a “news crawl” giving the latest “death toll” for U.S. forces in Iraq according to insurgents. The example above, from spring 2007, puts the tally for U.S. forces in Iraq at 35,280, roughly ten times the official U.S. death toll.