What is audio-visual jihadi propaganda?

An overview of the content of FFI's jihadi video database

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English summary

This report gives an overview of the content and organization of the database of jihadi propaganda videos compiled by FFI's Terrorism Research Group. This, in turn, gives an impression of the kind of audiovisual jihadi propaganda material that has been published by jihadi actors. The videos are issued by al-Qaida, al-Qaida-affiliated groups, or other groups adhering to the same global salafi-jihadi ideology. The oldest videos in the database date back to 2000, but most videos were released after 2003 as video format was increasingly used as a means of propaganda from that period onwards. The videos have several functions, including recruitment, seeking support for the jihadi cause, boosting the morale of fighters, deterrence of the enemy, and military instructions. The overall purpose of the videos seems to be propaganda, and only a relatively small portion of the videos serve military training purposes.

From the figures presented in this report, some points can be made about the types of videos that are most numerous in the FFI database. The majority of the videos are from (or about) Iraq, and many are also from (or about) Afghanistan. The media production company of al-Qaida – *al-Sahab*, and the various media companies of *al-Qaida in Mesopotamia* (Iraq) have produced the majority of the videos. Nearly half of the videos are categorized as operational videos – videos showing an attack. The most frequent types of attacks shown are IED/roadside bomb attacks on military vehicles and rocket attacks on military bases, but such films can also show suicide attacks and assaults on military bases or police stations. The second largest genre is promotion/ propaganda, which often consists of elaborate productions portraying the suffering of Muslims and arguing that armed jihad is the only viable solution. This genre is followed by ideology – which primarily consists of video speeches by al-Qaida leaders.

Although the videos in the FFI database do not represent a scientifically random sample of all available jihadi videos, the numbers nevertheless give an indication of the types and quantities of videos produced and distributed on jihadi web sites. A comparison with the Jihad Archive, a large Internet based collection of jihadi videos compiled by jihadi supporters, shows a correlation between the content of the FFI database and the content on that web site.

Whereas the report is first and foremost a presentation of the content of the FFI database, it is also useful for anyone seeking to acquire a general idea of the audio-visual jihadi propaganda material circulating on the Internet.

Sammendrag

Formålet med rapporten er å presentere innholdet i Terra-prosjektets database over jihadistiske propagandafilmer for dermed å gi et generelt inntrykk av det audio-visuelle jihadistiske propagandamaterialet som eksisterer. Dette innebærer å gi et overblikk over hvilke typer filmer som registreres i databasen og hvordan de kategoriseres. Filmene er utgitt av al-Qaida, grupper tilknyttet al-Qaida eller andre grupper med den samme globale salafi-jihadistiske ideologi. Databasens eldste filmer er fra 2000, men de fleste filmene er publisert etter 2003, ettersom bruken av film som propagandaverktøy økte fra dette tidspunktet. Filmene har flere funksjoner. De skal søke ideologisk støtte, rekruttere, styrke jihadisters moral, avskrekke fienden og tilby militærteknisk instruksjon. Filmenes overordnede formål er propaganda, og et relativt lite antall er viet militær opplæring og våpeninstruksjon.

Rapporten presenterer en oversikt over hvilke typer filmer som finnes i databasen og hvordan de fordeler seg utover forskjellige kategorier som gruppe, land, genre m.m. Den viser blant annet at et flertall av filmene i FFIs database er fra (eller om) Irak. En stor andel er også fra (eller om) Afghanistan. Al-Qaidas medieselskap *al-Sahab* og *al-Qaida i Mesopotamia* (Irak) sine mediebyråer har produsert flertallet av filmene i databasen. Når det gjelder genre, er nærmere halvparten av filmene karakterisert som operasjonelle, d.v.s. filmer som dokumenterer angrep. Dette er oftest veibombeangrep mot militærkjøretøyer og rakettangrep mot baser, men kan også være selvmordsangrep eller storming av baser og politistasjoner. Den nest største kategorien er filmer klassifisert som promotering/propaganda – ofte komplekse produksjoner som fremstiller muslimers lidelser og argumenterer for at væpnet jihad er den eneste løsningen. Denne genren er etterfulgt av ideologi – filmer som viser ideologiske taler av al-Qaida-ledere.

Filmene i databasen utgjør ikke et vitenskaplig representativt utvalg av all tilgjengelig jihadistisk videoproduksjon, men tallene gir likevel et generelt inntrykk av hva slags videoer som publiseres av al-Qaida og relaterte aktører. Dette kommer til syne i en sammenligning med et Internett-arkiv kalt Jihad Archive, som drives av jihad-sympatisører og som inneholder en svært stor samling jihadistiske propagandafilmer. Sammenligningen viser et betydelig samsvar i innholdet mellom FFIs database og Jihad Archive.

Rapporten er i første rekke en presentasjon av FFI-databasens innhold, men er også nyttig for den som ønsker å danne seg et generelt bilde av det audio-visuelle jihadistiske propaganda-materialet som sirkulerer på internett.

Contents

1   Introduction

A logo notating *al-Furqan Organization for Media Production* appears on the screen. Animated balls of fire clash in an explosion, followed by the serial title: "Hell of the Romans and Apostates in Mesopotamia". In the background a cappella singing is heard in Arabic: "We are moving in God's path and have declared jihad". Next, a camera shot of an Iraqi road is seen, with text at the bottom of the screen explaining the events in a way resembling news broadcasts: "Destruction of an American hummer in Baghdad Province". A Humvee is seen moving along the road, then being hit by a huge explosion. The scene is repeated in slow motion and the film ends. A final note to the viewer reads: "Do not forget us in your prayers – With regards your brethren in al-Furqan Organization for Media Production".

Figure 1.1   Video produced by al-Furqan, the media outlet of The Islamic State of Iraq, showing a roadside bomb exploding on an American Humvee in Baghdad Province.

This example is one of the most common types of jihadi propaganda video.[1] During the 2000s, and especially after 2003, videos have increasingly been used by jihadi groups in an organized manner as a means of propaganda. The jihadi videos have many purposes, ranging from recruitment and seeking support for the cause, to intimidation of the enemy. Religious symbolism and references and songs about jihad are important elements in the videos. They can be short clips documenting an attack or longer and more complex productions constructed like documentaries or news broadcasts presenting an ideological message. Some of the videos show speeches by leaders and ideologues such as Bin Laden and Zawahiri, some show "martyrdom testaments", and a few videos also show instruction in military skills, such as bomb making or the use of hand weapons.

Over the years FFI's Terrorism Research Group has gathered a large amount of videos, and in 2006 a database was created in order to organize the videos so that they could be used more easily for research purposes.[2] The videos are retrieved from a number of jihadi web sites and are produced by al-Qaida, al-Qaida-affiliated groups, and other groups pertaining to the same global salafi-jihadi ideology. The database facilitates research on both jihadi actors and media. Below, a presentation of the content of the video database will be given, including a description of the various categories and the number of videos it comprises according to various parameters.

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[1] The words "video" and "film" are used interchangeably in this report.
[2] The FFI Terrorism Research Group's web site: http://www.mil.no/felles/ffi/start/FFI-prosjekter/Alfover/_TERRA/

2 The content of the database

2.1 General

As of March 2010, FFI's jihadi video database contained 800 videos, and it is continually updated. The content of the database will change as more videos are added. This report, thus, presents a work in progress.

Jihadi video production increased significantly after the US invasion of Iraq in March 2003, and especially with the intensification of the insurgency in 2004. Therefore, a large part of the videos in the database originate from Iraq, and were produced in 2004 or later. Many videos also originate from Afghanistan.

The videos vary in length from short clips showing an operation to long documentary-like productions. The technological quality of the videos has seemingly improved in accordance with the general progress in the development of easily accessible technology, such as digital video cameras and editing software.

The videos in the database have been downloaded from jihadi web sites, and especially from the most important and authoritative jihadi message boards. The sites which are considered authoritative vary over time as they have a tendency to disappear and reappear, but a few sites have been fairly stable. Despite this instability, there is nevertheless stability in the video material published on these sites. This is due to the connection between the administrators of these web sites and the media distribution entity *Markaz al-Fajr li al-I'lam* which, since its creation in 2006, has consistently been used by al-Qaida for media distribution. Al-Fajr has become an important authenticator for material pertaining to al-Qaida, its branch groups, and other jihadi groups, that is distributed to jihadi web sites. Thus, although web sites vary, the distribution of videos and other material by al-Fajr is an indicator of the authenticity of the web sites and the material they publish. The authoritative jihadi web forums used by *al-Fajr* (and some other credible media entities, such as Global Islamic Media Front) are the main sources for videos in the database.[3] Other sources may be used to find particular films of interest, such as Taliban videos, which are usually distributed on the group's own web site. The videos in the database have been downloaded regularly over a period of several years.

The database was particularly created for qualitative use, as an archive where videos could be accessed according to subject of study. Particular measures have not been taken to avoid bias in the selection of videos registered in the database. For instance, factors such as our research focus, content of the film, and language or relevance of the group behind the film, can influence the decision of which videos are registered in the database. Since al-Qaida and al-Qaida affiliated groups are the main focus of FFI's Terrorism Research Group, films by such groups will more likely be downloaded and registered in the database than films by other jihadi actors. Some films

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[3] Before the creation of al-Fajr, the distribution of jihadi material was less centralized, but there were nevertheless certain main web sites that were used and trusted for distribution of material by jihadi groups.

also have a content that might be considered more relevant to our research than others, and may be prioritized in the process of registering films in the database. Furthermore, the videos are primarily retrieved from the most important Arabic and English language jihadi Internet message boards, and to a lesser extent group specific sites or sites in other languages.[4] All of this should be taken into consideration when evaluating the information in the database quantitatively. This being said, the database – with its large collection of jihadi audio-visual material, collected over a long period of time from authoritative jihadi web sites – is still a good indicator of the various types of videos that are distributed on the Internet, especially videos by al-Qaida and al-Qaida's branches. Therefore, while this report is first and foremost a description of the content of the database, it will also give a general picture of the audio-visual propaganda-material published by jihadi groups, particularly al-Qaida and its branch groups. This is especially so regarding the qualitative content, such as what types or genres of videos are produced, which groups and production companies have produced videos, which countries are represented, and so on.

It should perhaps also be mentioned that the information about the films in the database is extracted mainly from the films themselves. Therefore, words can sometimes be ideologically charged. For instance, if a suicide bomber is called a martyr in the film, that term is also used in the database (and, by extension, in this report). Furthermore, it can sometimes be difficult to assess whether the information in the video is correct or not, and such information is usually not checked against other sources. For example, if the video is presented as an attack on an American base near Baghdad, this information is registered, even if it is difficult to assess exactly what is seen in the film. Overall, the database is meant to give a neutral description of the original content of the videos rather than an analysis.

The purpose of the videos

The overall intention of the videos is propaganda. More specifically, they can be used to recruit, to seek moral and financial support for the jihadi cause, to boost the morale of fighters, and to intimidate or deter the enemies. The video format can also be used in a more direct instructional manner, for instance through videos explaining how to make or use weapons. However, the use of the video format strictly for instructional purposes seems much rarer than the use of videos for general propaganda purposes, at least on the most common open jihadi forums.

What is the intended audience of the videos?

As the videos can both function to gather support for the jihadi cause and to intimidate enemies, the videos can be addressed to Muslims or non-Muslims, to "the Muslim world" or "the West". Such dichotomies are typical of al-Qaida, and may tell us something about the intended audience rather than how the videos are perceived by an actual audience. Al-Qaida leaders often address the audience directly in their speeches. Whole speeches or parts of speeches can be addressed to "the Muslim Umma" (nation/community), "my Muslim brothers", "the mujahideen", or to "the people of the West", "the people of Europe", and "the American people" for instance.

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[4] The mentioned factors influencing the selection of videos for registration in the database may in part explain why some groups or countries have a smaller representation of videos in the database than the number of videos they have actually produced. This is particularly true for groups from Somalia, Chechnya and Bosnia.

The videos are intended for viewing by persons already adhering to the jihadi ideology, as well as potential new recruits and sympathizers, although one may assume that the message has the most resonance with people who are already susceptible to this ideology.

The enemy is often described in the videos as an alliance of crusaders and Zionists (USA/Western countries and Israel), their allied Muslim regimes – who are considered apostate by the jihadis – and anyone who supports this alliance.

In short, the intended audience of jihadi propaganda may range from group members and sympathizers to enemies (and anyone in between). Although speeches often address Muslims in general, Muslims may also be perceived as enemies if they do not act in accordance with the jihadi ideology or are perceived as supporting or abetting the enemy.

Arabic is the most common language in the videos, and can be said to be the lingua franca of jihadi videos. When other languages are spoken, Arabic subtitles are usually added. The videos have therefore mainly been directed to an Arab, or Arabic speaking audience. Nevertheless, there are also videos in other languages including Turkish, Urdu and Pashto. The Taliban has increased its production of video material in the last part of the 2000s, and these videos are usually in Pashto, and sometimes Urdu (especially the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan). Urdu has also become an increasingly relevant language in Sahab-productions, and at least two Sahab-videos of jihadi leaders in Pakistan published in the autumn of 2009 were originally published in Urdu without Arabic translations.[5] One reason for this is the recent focus on Pakistan, and the Pakistani regime's fight against the Taliban.

European languages such as German, French and English are also used in the videos, usually as subtitles translating the original text or speech. Videos of al-Qaida speeches from al-Sahab in particular are usually released with English subtitles. One reason for translating videos to English can be the desire to reach a non-Muslim (and one may add Western) audience, another can be to reach Muslims that do not speak Arabic. German has also become an important language in jihadi videos, and al-Qaida and Taliban productions have been issued with either spoken German or German subtitles.

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[5] Al-Sahab is al-Qaida's media production company.

2.2 Categorization

In the FFI database, the videos are categorized according to the following features:

1. Title
2. Group
3. Production company
4. Content
5. Genre
6. Duration
7. Year of production
8. Web site
9. Access date
10. Country
11. Characters
12. Tactics
13. Weapons

2.2.1 Title

Most jihadi videos are given a title by the producer, especially the larger productions. These are often short and informative and made out to be catchy, such as "*Hot Issues*", "*The Correct Equation*" and "*Why do we fight jihad*?"[6] Operational films are usually presented with a description of the attack as a title, for instance, "*Destruction of Hummer in Diyala*". In the database, the titles are usually translated into English (if a translation is not already provided by the producer).

2.2.2 Groups

At the time of writing, videos produced by 32 groups are registered in the database, as shown in Table 2.1.[7] Some groups have been registered with one video, whereas others have a much larger production and/or distribution. Many of the videos in the database have been produced by groups operating out of Iraq. The group *al-Tawhid wal-Jihad* headed by Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi became an important jihadi group in Iraq after the US invasion. The group changed its name to *Tanzim al-Qaida fi Bilad al-Rafidayn* after Zarqawi pledged his allegiance to Usama Bin Laden.[8] The group later formed a coalition with some smaller groups called *Mujahideen Shura Council*. In 2006, this alliance declared an Islamic State and took the name *The Islamic State of Iraq*. Although this group consists of various factions, the Iraqi wing of al-Qaida is considered to constitute its backbone. The videos by these four groups, which are basically the same entity, constitute a large

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[6] The former two are al-Sahab productions featuring Ayman al-Zawahiri, the latter is a Furqan production showing a speech by a member of *The Islamic State of Iraq*.

[7] A few of the groups are basically the same entity which has changed its name or operated under different names and these are registered under each name in the database. For instance, *Tanzim al-Qaida fi Bilad al-Rafidayn* and *Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn* are the same group, but were registered separately to show the change of name. Such groups should perhaps more correctly be counted as one.

[8] After the change of name it was for a while called *Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn* before the name was changed again to *Tanzim al-Qaida fi Bilad al-Rafidayn.*

part of the database (33%). Two of the other Iraqi groups, *Ansar al-Sunna* and *al-Jaysh al-Islami fi al-Iraq* (Islamic Army of Iraq), are less directly connected to al-Qaida, but have both operated as militant jihadi groups, and their videos have been published on the main jihadi web sites.[9] The Algerian group GSPC changed its name to *Al-Qaida in the Lands of Islamic Maghreb* in 2007 after its leaders pledged allegiance to al-Qaida. Its video production is not as large as some of the other groups, but still significant.

Not surprisingly, the database contains many videos of/by al-Qaida (central/leadership) and the Taliban. However, it is somewhat difficult to estimate the number of films by these groups in the database, partly because they sometimes appear together in the films, but also because they do not always identify themselves with these names. Al-Qaida sometimes refers to itself as *Qaidat al-Jihad*, and in one film in the database uses *Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad Khurasan* (Qaidat al-Jihad in Afghanistan). But usually no name is stated, and it is the appearance of famous al-Qaida characters, or the name of the production company – *al-Sahab* – that reveals that it is an al-Qaida video. The same is true for the Taliban. The group is sometimes referred to as "the students" in the videos, but this name is not used as an official name. Most of the *al-Sahab* videos showing jihadi operations in Afghanistan do not name the group seen in the film, but in many videos published after 2006 the name *The Islamic Emirate* appears, a name basically referring to the Taliban movement under the leadership of Mulla Muhammad Umar. These films may also include al-Qaida members or foreign fighters. In productions by the Afghan Taliban, the group usually calls itself *The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan*.

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[9] Although there have been some connections between members of the *Islamic Army of Iraq* and *Al-Qaida in Iraq* the two groups have been in conflict with each other since 2007, partly for ideological reasons, and material by *al-Jaysh al-Islami fi al-Iraq* seems no longer to be published on the main salafi-jihadi message boards.

Group	Films
Taliban/Al-Imara al-Islamiyya	133
al-Qaida (Central)	107
Tanzim al-Qaida fi Bilad al-Rafidayn	99
Jaysh Ansar al-Sunna	72
The Islamic State of Iraq	70
Mujahideen Shura Council	53
Al-Jaysh al-Islami fi al-Iraq	46
al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad	21
Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn	15
Hamas in Iraq - Kata'ib al-Fath al-Islami	9
Jaysh al-Iraq al-Islami	8
Various[10]	8
Tanzim al-Qaida bi-Bilad al-Maghreb al-Islami	7
Tehrik-e-Taliban – Pakistan/Pakistani Taliban	7
Islamic Jihad Union	6
GSPC	5
Ansar al-Islam	4
Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan	3
Harakat Jehad Ahle Sonnat Iran	2
Abu Sayyaf	1
Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya (Egypt)	1
Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya al-Muqatila bi-Libya	1
Ansar al-Islam fi al-Sahra al-Muslima	1
Jaysh Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama'a	1
Jaysh al-Fatihin	1
Jaysh al-Mujahideen	1
Kata'ib al-Ghadab al-Islami	1
Kata'ib al-Tha'r	1
Kata'ib Thawrat al-Ashreen	1
Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad Khurasan	1
Tanzim al-Qaida fi Bilad al-Sham	1
Turkestan Islamic Party	1
Usud al-Islam fi Bilad al-Li'am	1
Unregistered	111

Table 2.1   Number of videos per group in the database.

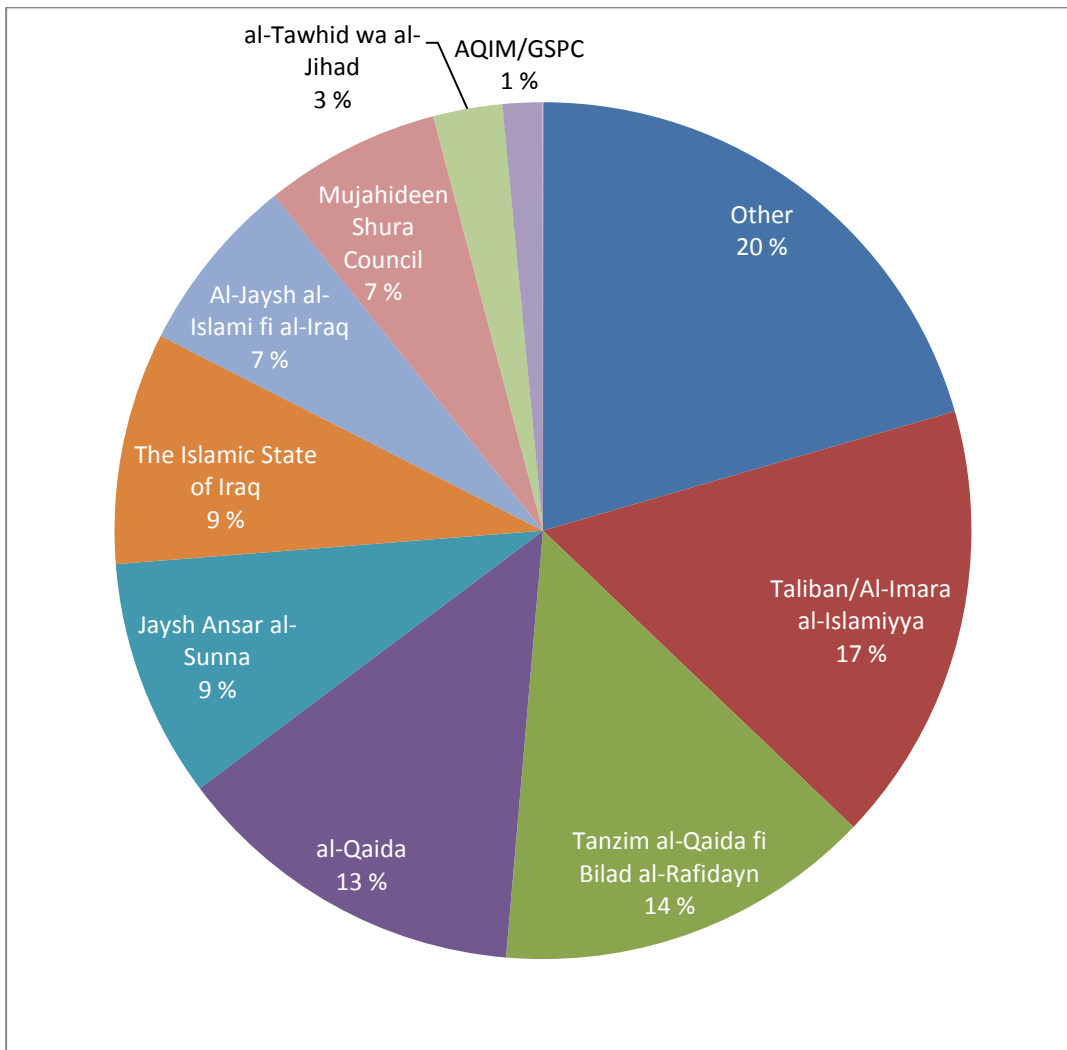[10] The category "Various" contains films showing more than one group.

Figure 2.1   Distribution of videos per group. The category "other" includes groups with less than ten films, and films where no particular group is registered.

2.2.3   Production companies

The following is a short introduction to the most important producers of jihadi videos and other material.[11] Most of the jihadi videos are issued by media production companies, each with their own style and logo. The companies are often the media wings of specific groups, or independent actors, publishing from various sources. Some of the companies produce or distribute other material in addition to films, and some operate more like news agencies. So far, 49 production companies are registered in the database.

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[11] For a more thorough presentation of the production companies, see Hanna Rogan, *Al-Qaeda's online media strategies: From Abu Reuter to Irhabi 007*, FFI-report 2007/02729, available at http://rapporter.ffi.no/rapporter/2007/02729.pdf

Production company	Films
Al-Sahab	176
Media Division of Tanzim al-Qaida fi Bilad al-Rafidayn	96
Al-Furqan	68
The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan	55
Mujahideen Shura Council Media Committee	53
Media Division of Jaysh Ansar al-Sunna	42
Minbar Ansar al-Sunna al-I'lami	27
Mu'assasat al-Shura li al-Intaj al-Ilami	23
Global Islamic Media Front	16
Manba' al-Jihad	12
Media Division of Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn	12
Labbayk	11
Media Division of al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad	10
Markaz Nida al-Jihad	9
Media Committee of Tanzim al-Qaida bi Bilad al-Maghreb al-Islami	7
Media Division of al-Jaysh al-Islami	6
Badr al-Tawhid	6
Media Committee of GSPC	5
Ummat	3
Al-Hijrat	3
Sawt al-Qawqas	2
Al-Tanzim li al-Intaj al-Ilami	2
Rehbar Jihadi Studio	2
Jund Allah	2
Al-Ghazi	2
Qadesiyoon Media Brigade	2
Registered with one film	40
Unregistered	108

Table 2.2   Number of films per production company.

Below is a short overview of some of the most important salafi-jihadi media production companies.

Al-Sahab Media

As the source of most if not all video speeches by al-Qaida's leadership, *al-Sahab* can be considered al-Qaida's own media production company. It mainly produces videos, the first dating back to 2001. Many *al-Sahab* videos are lengthier, advanced productions containing a variety of clips from both jihadi and mainstream media, and a narrator presenting the video's ideological message. These lengthy productions somewhat resemble documentaries. Most videos from *al-Sahab* are translated into English and sometimes also Urdu and German. Most either show speeches by important leaders and ideologues like Usama Bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Abu Yahya al-Libi and others, or attacks on American or NATO forces by the Taliban and/or al-Qaida fighters in Afghanistan. The speeches are either audio files with a photograph of the speaker, or

video recorded speeches. Videos in Urdu and interviews or speeches of Taliban leaders in Afghanistan and Pakistan have recently become more frequent. The operational videos usually show rocket attacks against American military bases, or roadside bomb attacks against military convoys. Some *al-Sahab* videos praise martyrs, either fighters fallen in combat in Afghanistan, or suicide bombers. *Al-Sahab* has produced martyr videos of perpetrators of major attacks against Western targets, such as the 2008 bombing of the Danish Embassy in Pakistan, and the attacks in London on 7 July 2005. It has also issued videotaped "martyrdom testaments" of several of the 9/11 hijackers. In such videos, the testaments are usually part of a larger narrative explaining the reasons for the attack.

Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF)

This media company seems to be far more autonomous than *al-Sahab*, and its link to the al-Qaida leadership is unclear. However, it is dedicated to al-Qaida's cause, and is considered to be an important producer and distributor of jihadi material on the Internet. GIMF has distributed books, films, statements and news from various groups, translated material, and it has also run an Internet TV channel, and web sites in English and German. *The Global Islamic Media Front* does not appear to be directly connected to any particular group, and functions more as a distributor than a producer of jihadi material. Most of its video production is based on previously released films by other groups, edited with added effects and comments, but it also has its own productions, like the video recordings of its now defunct Internet TV channel – *Caliphate Voice Channel*. Such videos usually have the appearance of a news broadcast with a masked newsreader.

Al-Furqan (Mu'assasat al-Furqan li al-Intaj al-I'lami)

Al-Furqan is the production company of *The Islamic State of Iraq*. It mainly produces videos, and its productions are usually of high quality. Most of the *al-Furqan* videos show operations by the group, but some show speeches by its leaders, and some are martyr videos and documentary style propaganda videos about the situation in Iraq. *Al-Furqan* was created in 2006, shortly after the declaration of the establishment of *The Islamic State of Iraq*.

Labbayk

Labbayk is a production company that may have ties to both Taliban and al-Qaida operatives. It appeared in 2006, and has released videos in both Pashto and Arabic, which all seem to be from Afghanistan, or the border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The significant al-Qaida ideologue Abu Yahya al-Libi appears in some of the videos, including one where he is lecturing a group of jihadis during a training session. Another *Labbayk* production tells the story of how he and three other men escaped from Bagram prison. One of the videos shows hostages, claimed to be from Waziristan in Pakistan. *Labbayk* may not have a large production, only 11 videos are registered in the database, but the company is nevertheless important because of its ties to the Taliban and al-Qaida.

Al-Fajr (Markaz al-Fajr li al-I'lam)

Al-Fajr has some productions of its own, including a handful of videos. It has also re-released a book by Ayman al-Zawahiri, and published statements and articles by other jihadi leaders and ideologues. *Al-Fajr* primarily operates like a news agency and an authenticator for jihadi messages on the Internet. There is so far only one video by *al-Fajr* in the database, but this media company is worth mentioning because of its central position as a distributor for other jihadi media companies.

Al-Andalus/Al-Qaida in Islamic Maghreb

Al-Qaida in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM/al-Qaida bi Bilad al-Maghreb al-Islami) – formerly known as GSPC – has released videos since at least 2004. Most of its films show operations of the group (including preparations) or speeches by leaders and ideologues. The videos are usually of a high technical quality. In 2009, the media company of AQIM adopted the name *Al-Andalus*.

Other media companies

Many jihadi groups run their own media companies, or media wings that mainly produce films documenting their operations, and sometimes other productions. They are often simply called *Media Division of* [group name]. Examples from the database of such companies include the media divisions of *Ansar al-Sunna*, *al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*, *al-Qaida fi Bilad al-Rafidayn*, *Mujahideen Shura Council*, *al-Jaysh al-Islami fi al-Iraq* and others. Some production companies are listed in the database with only one film, and some of the companies are more or less unknown. From time to time Internet message boards release videos that are mainly re-productions of previously released films. In the database such message boards are listed as producers although they are not production companies per se.

2.2.4   Content

In the space marked "content" in the database a short resume is given of the basic content of the film. Any important information that does not pertain to other posts in the database is registered here, for instance names, dates, URL of the web site where the video was found, and information about languages and translation.

2.2.5   Genres

The videos have been categorized in ten different genres. To make searches simple, we have chosen to designate only one genre to each film, although in reality, almost every film belongs to more than one of the genres. Therefore, the genres overlap, and the films are categorized according to what is considered to be its main genre. Even though one of the ten genres is called "promotion/propaganda", all of the jihadi films function as some form of propaganda.

Genre	Films
Operational	382
Promotion/Propaganda	135
Ideology	96
Deterrence/Intimidation	65
Martyr	40
Instructional	28
Praising	24
Training	12
Humiliation	10
Recruitment	8

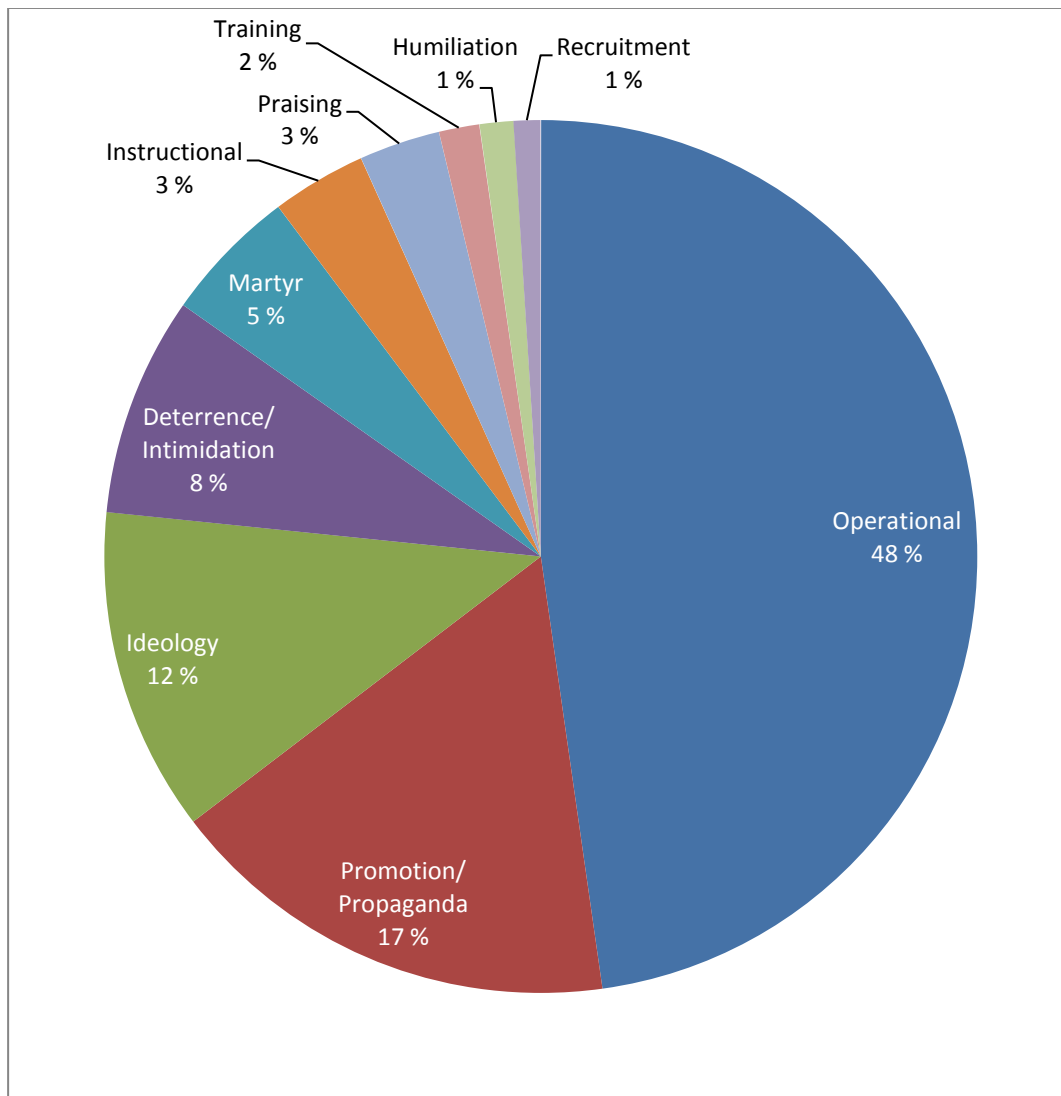*Table 2.3   Number of films per genre.*

Figure 2.2   Videos per genre in the database.

Below is a description of the most common types of films in each genre.

Operational

Films that have been categorized as "operational" constitute the largest proportion of the videos in the database (48%). The main function of these films is to document attacks on the enemy, usually showing one specific attack. Such films are typically short, between 30 seconds and 5 minutes (sometimes longer). Most operational films originate from Iraq. The second largest sub-group is from Afghanistan. A few operational films also originate from Algeria, Chechnya, Pakistan and Iran (the latter with only two videos). The typical operational film shows an explosion of a moving military vehicle by means of a remotely controlled IED/roadside bomb. Some of the films also show the firing of missiles and mortars, or coordinated assaults on military bases, police stations or control posts, and they may also show suicide attacks. Such films are usually introduced with the name of the group and/or production company that presents the film. Then the attack is shown, and information about the attack – usually the location and target – is written on the bottom part of the screen, with the logo of the group in the top corner of the screen. A cappella songs, called *anashid*, with lyrics about fighting jihad are important in operational videos. If the film shows an explosion, it is often shown in a slow motion re run, and sometimes the producer has circled what appear to be body parts. Usually, only the operation is shown, but certain operational films show the preparation for the operation and its result, including dead bodies, destroyed vehicles, and captured weapons and other material.

Country	Films
Iraq	253
Afghanistan	114
Algeria	5
Pakistan	4
Chechnya/Caucasus	4
Iran	2

Table 2.4   Number of operational films per country.

Figure 2.3   An al-Sahab video shows the firing of rockets on an American base in Afghanistan. See also Figure 1.1 for an example of the most common type of operational video.

Promotion/Propaganda

As previously stated, most jihadi films function as some sort of propaganda. The films in this category basically have the two main goals of promoting and glorifying the jihadis, and discrediting their enemy by revealing the enemy's oppression of Muslims, thus gaining sympathy and showing strength.

The propaganda films often resemble documentaries or news reports with a historical timeline, a narrator, and footage complementing the narration. This is especially true for many *al-Sahab* productions. Such films may deal with the establishment of Israel, and the subsequent war, and European and American invasions and involvement in the Muslim world, the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington, the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, and other major events. The intention is to show the larger context of what is seen as a war between Islam and the "Zionist-Crusader West", and to explain why armed jihad is necessary.

Images or film clips showing the enemies' abuse or maltreatment of Muslims are frequently shown in propaganda videos, and they are often collected from mainstream media news broadcasts and documentaries. Images of dead bodies of civilians and ruined houses as a result of air raids are an important aspect of the propaganda videos. Torture of Muslim prisoners at the hands of the enemy in Guantanamo and other prisons is another recurring subject, and the infamous pictures of prisoner abuse in Abu Ghraib prison have frequently been used in jihadi propaganda videos. Clips of tortured bodies can also serve the same purpose (this is sometimes the case in films from Iraq where abductions, torture and killings have been widespread). Another clip that appears in several such films is the footage of a Palestinian boy called Muhammad al-Durrah who was shot and killed when Israeli soldiers fired at Palestinians during the second intifada, a clip that has become a symbol in the Arab world of Israel's suppression of Palestinians.

The defiling of religious symbols such as the Koran, the prophet and mosques, are often referred to, and the corruption of Muslim leaders and economic exploitation in the region by Western countries are also recurrent subjects in the propaganda videos. For instance, a video released by *al-Sahab* on the fifth anniversary of 9/11, mentions Iraqi oil as a reason for the Bush Administration's decision to invade Iraq, and Dick Cheney's role as former CEO of Halliburton. The various subjects of military, economic, political and religious attacks against Muslims are often portrayed as all part of the same campaign.

صوت الشيخ ابو مصعب الزرقاوي [رحمه الله]

Figure 2.4   A soldier steps on an arrested Iraqi man, the image is from the al-Furqan production "Attack Release the Captives" issued in 2006.

Al-Sahab has produced a number of documentary style propaganda videos, including one of the media company's earliest productions, a two-part series called "The Destruction of the American Destroyer USS Cole" from 2001. The video presents the problem: Muslim suffering all over the world at the hands of the Zionist-Crusader alliance; the cause of the problem: "love for the world and hatred for death"; and the solution which is "emigration and jihad". Scenes of dead and wounded children, women and men in Bosnia, Chechnya, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and other Muslim countries and regions, are presented. This is followed by ideological speeches by Usama Bin Laden, Abdallah Azzam, and Umar Abd al-Rahman, where they strongly urge Muslims to fight jihad for the Muslim Umma. The last part shows images of training in al-Qaida camps in Afghanistan. Many of the now well known images of al-Qaida training camps frequently used in documentaries and news reports, have been taken from this video. The video ends with images of the bombed US warship.

Figure 2.5   Scenes from the al-Sahab video "The Destruction of the American Destroyer USS Cole" from 2001. Left: The Palestinian boy Muhammad al-Durrah with his father moments before he is shot and killed. Right: Palestinian women beaten by security forces.

Another example is the two-part film issued on the fifth anniversary of 9/11, named "Knowledge is for acting upon: The Manhattan Raid". This film deals with the establishment of Israel and American troops entering Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War, and presents these events as a background for the attacks. The bombing of the American Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the outbreak of the second intifada, the bombing of the USS Cole, and the 2000 US election, are some of the historical events dealt with, all leading up to the preparation and execution of the attacks on New York and Washington, images of which end the video. The film also includes martyr testaments of some of the hijackers, and a Q&A session where the al-Qaida leadership answers critical questions about the attack from a religious point of view. Both of these two-part productions have been published with English subtitles.

Some propaganda videos can also consist of clips of several operational films from one or more jihadi groups, often accompanied by jihadi *anashid* and excerpts of speeches by important leaders and ideologues. Another variation intends to show that the militants take care not to harm civilians. These videos are similar in appearance to operational films, but instead of showing an operation, nothing happens, and a text explains that the attack has been cancelled because of the presence of "Muslims".[12] This type of propaganda film is not that common, but does occur from time to time.

The propaganda films are usually aimed at a Muslim audience, but there are examples of films that are aimed at non-Muslim Westerners. An example is the 38 minute long production by *al-Jaysh al-Islami fi al-Iraq*, allegedly showing the content of a Flash Disc belonging to an American soldier doing service in Iraq. Pictures and identification papers of the soldier are shown, and a letter is read out in an American accent, with Arabic subtitles. The letter, written to the soldier's parents, was supposedly stored on the disc. The content is very critical of the US war in Iraq, and the soldier reveals his grievances, the loosing of morale amongst the American soldiers, and the crimes they commit against Iraqis. As the letter is read out, corresponding pictures are shown, some seemingly recorded by American soldiers. Afterwards, an interview is shown by a representative from the Islamic Army of Iraq with a man by the name John Smith, allegedly an American peace activist. The arguments presented in the film can be similar to the discourse of Western anti-war activism, and, except for a few inconsistencies, it is a relatively advanced attempt at propaganda primarily directed at non-Muslim Westerners.

Ideology

The most common film of this type is the video message. This is recordings of messages by important jihadi leaders and ideologues like Bin Laden, Zawahiri, Abu Yahya al-Libi, Mustafa Abu al-Yazid and others, and can either take the form of audio recordings with added photos of the speakers, or video recordings of the person speaking. Sometimes they also contain various clips from other jihadi films, from mainstream TV channels and other sources. The speeches are often commenting on specific political matters, and the arguments are backed by the quoting of religious sources. The main recurring subject is that armed jihad against the enemy is under current circumstances an individual duty (*fard 'ayn*) for every Muslim, because the Muslim

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[12] The word *Muslim* in this context denotes innocent bystanders.

Umma (nation, community) is under direct and indirect attack. The enemy is often described as Crusaders, Zionists and apostates – mainly referring to America, Israel and its allied regimes in the Middle East and elsewhere. Guns and religious books are often displayed on the scene of the video speech to underpin the message of armed jihad in Allah's path (*jihad fi sabil Allah*). The length of this type of film can vary from around five minutes to 1.5 hours, and most are more than 20 minutes long. The ideology video somewhat overlaps with the propaganda video because ideology can of course be presented as propaganda. The video speeches sometimes contain various clips portraying, for instance, the suffering of Muslims under the oppression of the enemy, which is also an element characteristic of the propaganda genre as it is defined here.

Figure 2.6   From the video: "The Solution – A Message from Shaykh Usama bin Laden to the American People" issued by al-Sahab in September 2007.

Deterrence/Intimidation

This genre contains films with the specific intention of creating fear in the enemies, and deterring them from engaging in operations or work against the jihadis. Many of the deterrence videos in the database show abductions and executions. Some of them show beheadings. Most of the beheading videos in the database are from Iraq, 2004-2005, and are committed by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's groups *al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad* and *al-Qaida fi Bilad al-Rafidayn*, and by *Ansar al-Sunna*. The victims were often foreign contractors working for the coalition forces in Iraq. This type of video became uncommon after 2005, and instead the execution videos more often showed mass executions by gunshot to the head, and the targets were more frequently Iraqis employed in the Interior Ministry, National Guard or other regime affiliated institutions. The reason for the switch from beheadings to shootings might have been the negative attention these videos received from the Muslim public. For this reason they were criticized by Ayman al-Zawahiri in a letter presumed to be written by him to Zarqawi.[13]

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[13] "Zawahiri's letter to Zarqawi", *CTC's Harmony Document Database*, http://www.ctc.usma.edu/harmony/pdf/CTC-Zawahiri-Letter-Arabic-10-05.pdf (accessed 20 November 2009).

The videos of abductions and executions usually show identification papers and forced confessions by the abductees. Implicitly or explicitly stated, the message is that this will happen to everyone who joins the military, National Guard or other occupations supporting the enemy or what is considered a puppet regime.

Another type of deterrence/intimidation video is that which threatens or warns states from being involved in military campaigns against Muslim countries. For instance, in an al-Qaida video issued in September 2009, the German al-Qaida member Bekkay Harrach, aka Abu Talha al-Almani, threatened Germany with attacks if people did not vote for a withdrawal from Afghanistan in the upcoming parliamentary elections.

Figure 2.7   German Al-Qaida member Bekkay Harrach threatens Germany in a video distributed on jihadi web sites in September 2009.

Martyr videos

The martyr videos are films honoring and glorifying martyrs.[14] Their main purpose is to convey how important it is to sacrifice one's life for Islam and Muslims, and thus to encourage others to do the same. Such films can therefore be said to function as a form of recruitment. The films may show persons killed in battle, or persons preparing for suicide missions. The films are dedicated to one or more martyrs, and contain footage of the person(s) often both alive and dead, and biographical information. The images of living martyrs show them in battles, but also in everyday situations, eating meals or singing with their jihadi companions. The clips often show a smiling and laughing person and are run in slow motion for an additional effect. In case of suicide operations, the martyr videos usually show the "martyr testament", a speech read by the soon to be martyr in which he explains his motivations for committing a suicide attack, recites the Koran, sends regards to family and others, and encourages other Muslims to become martyrs. The suicide operation is often shown, and is sometimes preceded by clips showing explosives loaded into a car, and the martyr sitting down behind the wheel, saying his last words to the camera. The images of the martyrs are often accompanied by those of beautiful landscapes alluding to the

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[14] In Arabic: *Shahid*, which in this context means "person killed while fighting jihad".

paradise, in addition to *anashid*, the reciting of certain Koranic verses and excerpts of speeches by jihadi ideologues encouraging Muslims to sacrifice themselves for God's sake.

Figure 2.8   Pictures from the al-Sahab video "The Word is the Word of the Swords 1: The Raid of the Muezzin Abu Ghareeb al-Makki". The video shows the martyr testament of the suicide bomber who attacked the Danish Embassy in Islamabad in June 2008.

Instructional

This genre contains films that instruct the viewer in the manufacturing of explosives, the use of weapons, or other preparation and training for jihad. There are so far relatively few such films posted on the Internet, at least on the open general jihadi forums. According to an article by Anne Stenersen, there were 27 instructional videos produced or modified by militant Islamists or their supporters found on jihadi web sites by January 2007.[15] In addition, a 25-part series of instructions in the manufacturing of explosives was issued later that year. Stenersen concludes that al-Qaida is not making an organized effort to train its followers online, and that the Internet functions more like a resource bank for self-radicalized and autonomous cells alongside traditional training methods. Other studies also indicate that Internet training is not enough to become a skillful militant, and that training in training camps is still preferable among jihadis.[16]

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[15] Anne Stenersen, "The Internet: A Virtual Training Camp?", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Volume 20, Issue 2, April 2008, pp. 215–233.

[16] See Petter Nesser, "How did Europe's Global Jihadis Obtain Training for their Militant Causes?" *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Volume 20, Issue 2, April 2008, pp. 234–256, and Thomas Hegghammer, "Al-Qaidas rekruttskoler: Hva gjorde Afghanistan-veteranene så farlige?", *Norsk Militært Tidsskrift*, nr. 2, 2008, pp. 14–20.

Figure 2.9 Picture from the series on the manufacturing of explosives called: "Lessons in How to Destroy the Cross", published by Mu'assasat al-Shura li al-Intaj al-Ilami (Shura Foundation for Media Production).

Praising

The videos in this genre usually portray important jihadi figures, often, but not always, after their death (thus somewhat resembling the martyr videos). Such films contain photos and film clips of the person, sometimes biographical information, excerpts of speeches by them, and praising poems or songs.

Training

Videos in this category show jihadi training, either physical or weapons training, and sometimes include religious lessons. Such films are mainly used for propaganda purposes, to show the strength and abilities of the fighters, that they are constantly preparing for battle, and to emphasize the importance of preparation, which is seen as a prerequisite of what is presented as the Islamic duty of jihad. The training videos do not seem to be intended for direct instruction, as they consist of various clips, not always showing details, and songs or excerpts of audio speeches are often added, masking any spoken instructions from the trainer to the trainees. Rather than teaching a sympathizer how to train "at home", training videos may encourage them to travel to a training camp. Many jihadi films contain clips of training, but only a few have training as a main subject.

Figure 2.10 Scene from an al-Qaida training camp, taken from the al-Sahab video "The Destruction of the American Destroyer USS Cole" from 2001.

Humiliation

This genre can be said to be a sub-category of the propaganda genre, and contains films that specifically mock the enemy. These films are often operational in character, but include comments about the foolish or cowardice behavior of enemy soldiers. One example is a film by *al-Qaida in Mesopotamia* called "The American Ignorance" which shows three military vehicles running over three different explosive charges on the same spot. Another example by the *Global Islamic Media Front* shows attacks on American soldiers with added humorous sound effects.

Recruitment

The videos in this category have as their main purpose to recruit "passive Muslims" to join the struggle. Many jihadi videos contain calls for Muslims to join the jihad, especially ideological videos and martyr videos, and most of the videos have some elements that may have a recruiting function. The only reason so few of the films have been classified in this genre is that they usually pertain mainly to another category. The low number in this category is therefore somewhat misleading, and it should be pointed out that most of the videos could be used for recruitment purposes.

2.2.6 Duration

The videos last between 30 seconds to 1.5 hours depending on genre. Operational films are usually quite short whereas films with a more ideological content can be rather long.

2.2.7 Year of production

The year of production is sometimes stated in the video. If not, the access date or the stored web page where links to the video were first published can indicate what year the video was produced, because the videos are usually published soon after being produced.

Year	Films
2000	3
2001	4
2002	3
2003	11
2004	49
2005	180
2006	216
2007	186
2008	49
2009	97
Unregistered	2

Table 2.5   Number of films per year. Note that the numbers are not necessarily indicative of the overall production per year as there are videos that have not yet been registered in the database, especially since 2008.

2.2.8 Web site

The videos are preferably downloaded from one of the more important and authoritative jihadi web sites. These can be considered a more reliable source for jihadi material than, for instance, You Tube, where there is little information about the producer and distributor of the video and no routine for authentication as there is on Jihadi massage boards where administrators control the material that is published. What can be considered to be the most authoritative web sites varies over time, but the following have, for periods, been important sources: al-Faloja, al-Hesba, al-Firdaws, al-Ekhlaas, al-Hikmah, Bayanat and World News Network.

2.2.9 Access date

Access date is the date the video was downloaded from the Internet. This may indicate when the video was produced, but this depends on how often the web is browsed for new videos and whether the video has been previously released or not.

2.2.10 Country

This shows the country or area the film is about or originates from. Sometimes the films contain clips from more than one country, and are then registered under all of them. If a video, for instance a recorded speech, specifically addresses the situation of a particular country or in other ways is connected to a country, this may also be registered here, even if the film itself does not originate from this country. For instance the videos registered under the USA and Great Britain are about the terror attacks of 9/11 and 7/7, or direct addresses to these countries. The vast majority of the videos are from Iraq, the second largest group is from Afghanistan.

Country	Films
Iraq	435
Afghanistan	205
Pakistan	30
Algeria	15
Chechnya/Caucasus	13
Israel/Palestine	12
Saudi Arabia	12
USA	7
Somalia	6
Egypt	4
Great Britain	3
Iran	3
Lebanon	3
Libya	2
Sudan	2
China/East Turkestan	2
Jordan	2
Yemen	1
Philippines	1
Tajikistan	1
Turkey	1
Western Sahara	1
Unregistered	94

Table 2.6   Number of films per country, including films that originate from or are about a particular country. One film can be registered for more than one country.
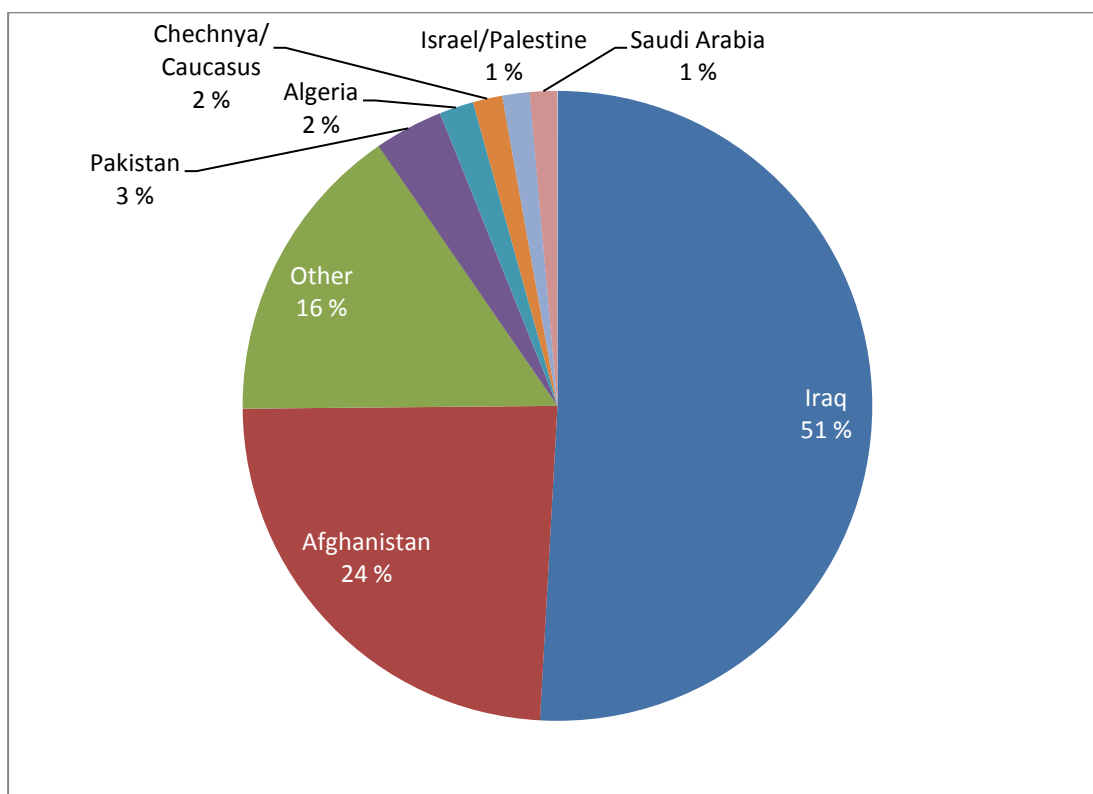
Figure 2.11 Distribution of videos per country. The category "other" contains countries with less than ten films, and films not pertaining to a particular country.

2.2.11 Characters

If the film shows important characters like Bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Abu Yahya al-Libi, Mustafa Abu al-Yazid and other significant jihadi leaders and ideologues, it is registered here. Other names are registered in the content section.

2.2.12 Tactic[17]

Many films show operations, and the tactics used are registered in the database. As shown in Table 2.7, the database uses nine different tactics. One film can be registered with more than one tactic.

Roadside bomb attacks and the firing of mortars or rockets/missiles are usually registered as "ambush", and this is the most prevalent tactic seen in the films. Nearly half of the ambush videos are roadside bomb attacks. The third most used tactic is suicide bombing, usually by VBIEDs (vehicle borne improvised explosive devices). Many of the films also show abductions, and in some of these films, the abductee is killed. The database has a separate category for decapitation in addition to execution because decapitations are thought to have been used as a strategy to

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[17] One of the main intentions behind creating the database was to use it in research on jihadi media production, therefore the focus has not been on weapons and tactics. These categories are used to give a general idea, but not necessarily exact information about the types of tactics and weapons used.

create more intimidation and receive more attention than other methods of execution, for instance by shooting. The filming of these decapitations can therefore be said to be a form of media strategy (although this strategy received internal criticism, as mentioned in chapter 2.2.5).

"Coordinated" means that the attack is carried out by a group using several tactics and weapons at once. Such films often show attacks on buildings or compounds such as military bases and police stations, and are usually also registered under "assault". The planning of the attack is sometimes shown in such films. Weapons used in such attacks are usually small arms, RPGs and sometimes IEDs (suicide bombers).

There are only eight films in the database that are registered as sabotage. One could argue that all attacks on military vehicles and bases are a form of sabotage, but such attacks are normally not registered as such. The films filed under this tactic more explicitly show attacks meant to do material damage to both civil and military installations to obstruct and cause material losses to the enemy. Films of this kind can show burning oil pipes, explosions damaging election centers, or buildings claimed to be used as enemy headquarters.

The shooting of American or coalition forces by sniper rifle is also a tactic shown in a few films. Although only eight such films are registered, some of these films include clips from many sniper attacks, such as the two films called "Juba – Baghdad Sniper" (pt.1 and 2), made by *al-Jaysh al-Islami fi al-Iraq*.

Tactic	Films
Ambush	343
RSB (roadside bomb)	142
Suicide Bombing	64
Assault	42
Abduction	39
Coordinated	37
Execution	23
Decapitation	21
Sabotage	9
Sniper	8
Unregistered	319

Table 2.7   Number of films per tactic. One film can be registered with more than one tactic.

2.2.13 Weapon

The IED is the weapon most often used in the videos (usually in the form of a roadside bomb), in addition to small arms, RPGs, mortars and various types of missile. One film can be registered with more than one weapon.

Weapon	Films
IED (improvised explosive device)	250
Small arms	164
Rocket/Missile	93
RPG (rocket-propelled grenade)	84
mortar	43
Heavy machine gun	12
Mine	6
Anti aircraft gun	3
Hand grenade	2
Unregistered	371

Table 2.8   Number of films per weapon. One film can be registered with more than one weapon.

3   A comparison with the Jihad Archive

To see if there is a correlation in content between the FFI database and other collections of jihadi videos, the database was compared with the web site Jihad Archive (www.jarchive.info). This web site was chosen because it contains one of the largest organized Internet collections of jihadi propaganda material, including written texts, videos, pictures and audios from at least the 1980s until today. At the time of retrieval, there were 4,138 videos and audios in this archive.[18] Such a large and comprehensive collection may, to a certain extent, be indicative of the overall amount of jihadi videos in circulation. It also shows how jihadi actors find it useful to categorize such material for easy access by supporters. According to an announcement on the Faloja forum in January 2009, the web site is not affiliated with any particular group, but run by jihadi supporters.[19] The site has also been promoted on the main militant Islamist message boards and seems to be dedicated to a jihadi cause through collecting and making accessible such a large amount of videos. As such it should be considered an important source for jihadi propaganda, and therefore a good basis for comparison with the FFI database.

To make the total number of videos in the Jihad Archive more comparable to the FFI database, audio files, TV productions and Internet supporter productions could have been subtracted as such material has not to any considerable extent been included in the FFI database. This would

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[18] http://www.jarchive.info/index.php and http://www.jarchive.info/english/, (accessed 17 November 2009). The web site was not functioning when this report went to print.
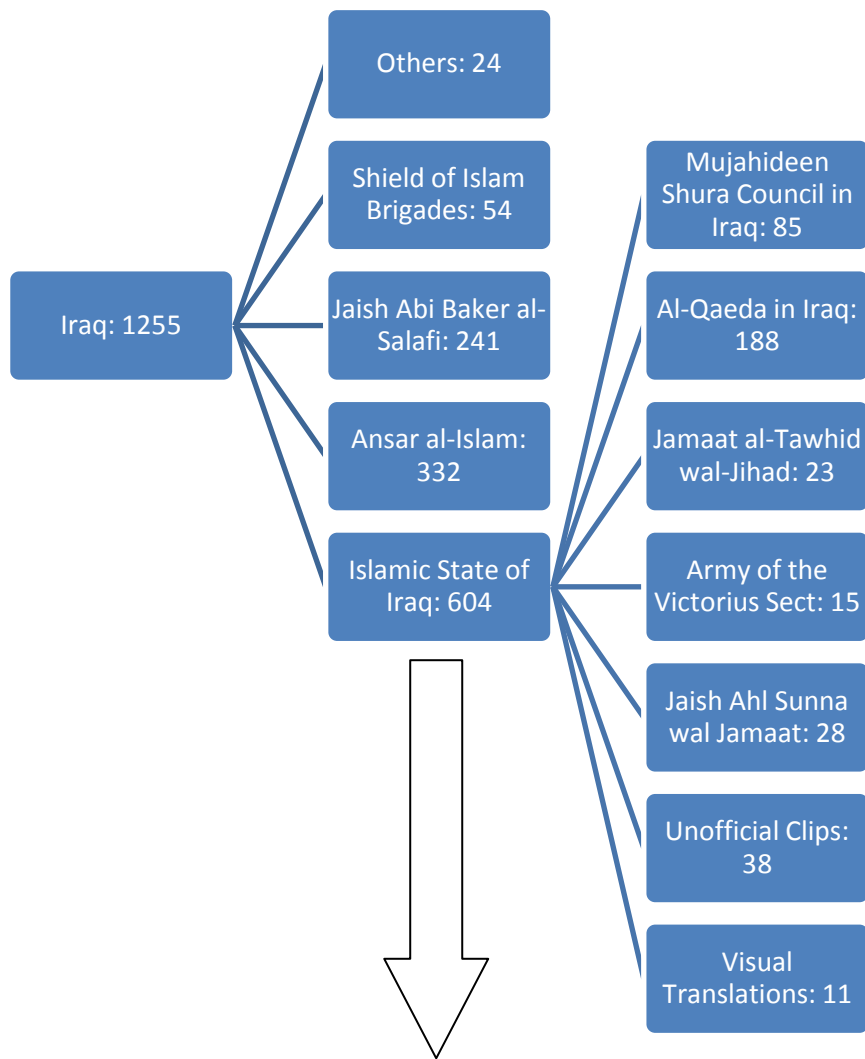[19] http://al-faloja1.com/vb/showthread.php?t=44799 (accessed 16 December 2009).

produce a total number of more than 2100 official videos of jihadi groups and individuals in the Jihad Archive. However, as the audio files have not been separated from the videos in the Jihad Archive, but distributed in the various categories and sub-categories, this would be a somewhat complicated operation. Therefore the total number of videos and audios – 4,138 – has been used as the basis for the comparison.

Category	Films
Scholars and Leaders	1513
Afghanistan	229
Somalia	30
Caucasus	94
Arabian Peninsula	76
Levant	28
Pakistan	52
Bosnia	16
Iraq	1255
Islamic Maghreb	45
Turkestan	14
Other Areas	43
9/11 Attacks	8
International	21
Ansar [supporters]	527
Media and Press	187

Table 3.1   Categorization of videos and audios in the Jihad Archive.

In the Jihad Archive, the material is organized into 16 main categories (see table 3.1). These are again divided into sub-categories such as "group", "tactic", "main releases" and "leaders' speeches and statements" according to what grouping is useful in the different main categories. Figure 3.1 shows an example of how information is organized in the Jihad Archive, using the main category "Iraq".

Figure 3.1   The example shows how videos and audios are organized in the Jihad Archive.

The organization of the videos is somewhat different in the Jihad Archive, making it difficult to make exact comparisons based on numbers. The names of categories also differ, but one may find some of the same types of categories. For instance, a large part of the videos in the Jihad Archive are classified according to country/region. Under each country with a large production, the videos are categorized according to tactics (see Figure 3.1 for an example). The categories used are similar to those of "tactics" and "weapons" in the FFI database. Together, these videos can be counted as operational videos. There are at least 709 operational videos in the Jihad Archive, equaling roughly 17%.[20] Videos can be accessed by tactic directly from the front page of the Jihad Archive, indicating that operational videos have been emphasized by the administrators of the site. There is also a category of speeches by scholars and leaders corresponding to the ideology category of the database. Consisting of 1,513 items, this constitutes 36.5% of the videos.[21] There is also a sub-category called "main productions" which usually includes the more complex productions classified as propaganda in the FFI database. Furthermore, there are many martyr videos in the Jihad Archive, and two series of martyrdom videos can be directly accessed from the front page. The rest of the martyr videos are distributed in other categories. Videos often placed in the deterrence category in the FFI database have their own sub-category on the web site called "kidnapping and hostages" parallel to the other operational categories. Interestingly, a category for instructional videos is absent, and there seem to be few if any such videos on this web site.

It may be noted that the two largest groups of videos by country are Iraq (30.3 %) and Afghanistan (5.5 %). These are also, in that order, the two countries with the largest represent-ation in the FFI database (although the percentages are somewhat different).[22] Although the numbers vary for the rest of the countries/areas, there seems to be a fair amount of agreement between the database and the web site regarding the countries videos originate from.[23] Another similarity is that a large percentage of the videos are produced by *The Islamic State of Iraq* and all its predecessors and subdivisions (*Mujahideen Shura Council*, *Al-Qaida in Mesopotamia*, *al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad*, and others): 33 % in the FFI database and 13.7% in the Jihad Archive.[24] There are of course also a large amount of videos by al-Qaida and the Taliban, but they have not been categorized according to group, making it difficult to compare numbers.

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[20] The number of operational videos is quite large, but the percentage is smaller than in the FFI database, partly due to the many audio files, supporter productions, and ideological speeches in the Jihad Archive.

[21] One reason this category is bigger than the "Ideology" category in the database is that it consists of a large part of audio files. Furthermore, in the database, speeches by al-Qaida leaders have been prioritized, but not speeches by various scholars.

[22] Note that the percentage by country is smaller in the Jihad Archive than the FFI database because the amount of videos not registered per country is much larger in the Jihad Archive, especially when it comes to the "Scholars and Leaders" category which is separate from the country categories.

[23] One important exception is Bosnia, a country from which no videos have yet been registered in the FFI database. As these videos are important in the development of the jihadi media, they are likely to be added to the database in the future.

[24] Again, the smaller percentage may be due to the fact that much fewer videos are registered according to group in the Jihad Archive than the FFI database.

At the time of retrieval, the videos of eight production companies were accessible from the front page of the Jihad Archive by clicking on each company's logo (see Table 3.2).[25]

Production Company	Films (and audios)
Al-Sahab	444
Al-Furqan	253
Al-Ansar	75
Al-Malahim	21
Sawt al-Islam [Turkestan Islamic Party]	8
Al-Andalus	4
Al-Emarah	4
Al-Kata'ib	Not functioning

Table 3.2   Media production companies registered in the Jihad Archive.

A problem with comparing these numbers with those of the FFI database is that some of these production companies are fairly recent, and the database has not yet been updated to include them. On the other hand, the web site has not included older videos by the same groups to which the new production companies pertain. For instance, there are many videos of the Taliban/Islamic Emirate in the database, but none of those produced by *Mu'assasat al-Emarah li al-Intaj al-I'lami* (with its new logo), which was created some time in late 2009. Contrarily, there are four videos by this production company in the Jihad Archive accessible by clicking on the company's logo, whereas there are many more older videos by the Taliban placed in other categories. The same is true for some of the other companies, such as *Al-Andalus* and *Ansar al-Islam*. In the FFI database, there are four videos by *Ansar al-Islam* from 2002–3, and 69 by *Ansar al-Sunna*'s two media companies, but none from the group after it again took the name *Ansar al-Islam* in 2008, whereas the videos in the Jihad Archive all date to after this name change. *Al-Malahim* has also only recently released videos. Nevertheless, it is interesting that the two production companies with the most videos are *al-Sahab* and *al-Furqan*, respectively. *Al-Sahab* is also the production company with most videos in the FFI database, and *al-Furqan* is number three (number two is the media company of *al-Qaida in Mesopotamia*, whose videos are stored in the Jihad Archive, but not according to producer). Due to the different ways of categorizing videos, the production companies are difficult to compare, but *al-Sahab* and *al-Furqan* are some of the most significant, both in the FFI database and in the Jihad Archive. This is not surprising, as they are the media companies of al-Qaida (central) and al-Qaida's so far most active branch (Iraq).

The videos are not arranged according to year of production in the Jihad Archive, but although the web site contains both older and newer videos than the FFI database, it seems that the majority of the videos were produced in the 2000s, and especially the latter half of this decade.

One may also add that there are many of the same particular videos in the two collections, such as many of the major *al-Sahab* and *al-Furqan* productions, but a one-to-one comparison will be beyond the scope of this report.

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[25] http://www.jarchive.info/ (accessed 5 February 2010).

In sum, although there are more videos in the Jihad Archive in general, and in the category of speeches by scholars and leaders in particular, there is nevertheless a significant overlap in the content of that web site and the FFI database.

4   Conclusion

The FFI database contains 800 videos issued by al-Qaida, al-Qaida affiliated groups or other groups sharing its global salafi-jihadi ideology. The videos date back to 2000, with the majority produced after 2003. The videos have several purposes: recruitment, seeking moral and financial support for the jihadi cause, boosting the morale of fighters, deterrence of the enemy and military instruction. The overall purpose of the videos seems to be propaganda, and only a relatively small portion of the videos are used for direct instruction.

From the figures presented in this report, some points can be made on the types of videos that are most frequent in the database. A majority of the videos – 51% – are from (or about) Iraq while 24% are from (or about) Afghanistan. The groups represented with most videos are the Taliban, al-Qaida (main/leadership) and *al-Qaida in Mesopotamia*/*Islamic State of Iraq*. The media production company of al-Qaida – *al-Sahab*, and the various media companies of *al-Qaida in Mesopotamia* (Iraq) have produced the majority of the videos. Of the total of 800 videos, 176 are produced by *al-Sahab*, and 229 are produced by the three companies connected to al-Qaida in Iraq: *Media Division of Tanzim al-Qaida fi Bilad al-Rafidayn*, *Mujahideen Shura Council Media Committee*, and *al-Furqan*.

Of the ten genre categories, the largest by far is the operational videos, with 48% of the films registered in the database. This is followed by promotion/propaganda (17%), ideology (12%) deterrence/intimidation (8%), and martyr (5%). These five categories may be considered the most important. The remaining categories – instructional, praising, training, humiliation and recruitment – have a somewhat smaller representation, either because they are less prevalent or because they overlap with the other categories. Many videos contain elements of several of these genres. The categories of tactics and weapons are mainly used for operational videos. The most frequent types of attacks shown in operational videos are IED/roadside bomb attacks on military vehicles and rocket attacks on military bases, but such films can also show suicide attacks and assaults on military bases or police stations. The most frequently used weapons are IEDs and small arms, alongside rockets/missiles, RPGs and mortars.

A comparison with one of the largest web archives of jihadi material shows similarities in content, for instance in the types of videos, which countries and groups have the largest production, and also concerning the particular videos registered. This indicates that while the FFI database is not meant to be a scientifically random sample of jihadi video production, it does to some extent offer a representative image of the overall audiovisual jihadi propaganda material published on the Internet. While this report first and foremost has described the content of the FFI database, it also gives a general impression of what kinds of jihadi videos – and particularly videos by al-Qaida and its branch groups – are in circulation on the World Wide Web.

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