15,000 Websites That Spread Terror and Hate

AP
Image of Osama bin Laden posted with an audio recording on a militant website in March 2008

This is the VOA Special English Technology Report.

Hate groups and terrorists are increasingly using the Internet to spread their beliefs. The Simon Wiesenthal Center in California says the problem is getting worse.

The center has released its latest "Digital Terror and Hate" report. Rick Eaton is a researcher with the group. He says the internet offers a lot of information for would-be terrorists.

RICK EATON: "Different explosives, manuals and lessons in remote detonation, cell phone detonators, rockets."

There is also guidance in kidnapping and guerrilla warfare.

RICK EATON: "And many times these are spiced with the political philosophy on not only how to do it, but where you should do it and what targets you should attack."

The Simon Wiesenthal Center is a Jewish human rights organization. This is its fourteenth year reporting on Internet terror and hate. The new report identified

about fifteen thousand websites considered problematic. They included news groups, social network pages, YouTube videos and games said to incite hatred. Officials say there was only one such website when the center first launched the project in nineteen ninety-five.

Rick Eaton says al-Qaida was one of the first terrorist groups to use digital technology. He says the group's online presence continues to grow.

Rabbi Abraham Cooper is associate dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center. He says hate websites increasingly target religious minorities.

Abraham Cooper: "Whether it's a hate crime in the United States or if you're looking at the targeting of Christians from Nigeria, the Coptic Christians in Egypt, what's happened in Iraq, right through to Afghanistan and Pakistan, you have the targeting of millions of people."

Rabbi Cooper says we must all take part in solving the problem of Internet terror and hate. He says people need to recognize when websites cross the line from free speech to targeting groups for discrimination and violence. He also says religious and ethnic leaders must work together to condemn all forms of hatred.

ABRAHAM COOPER: "We all have our own priorities. We have to stand up for our own rights and our own communities. But it's very, very important to take a look and see what the bad guys are doing because as far as they're concerned, they don't like Jews, they don't like Muslims, they don't like immigrants, they don't like gays."

He is especially concerned about websites that call for individual acts of violence by people without ties to terrorist organizations. He says such websites are even more worrying because they are harder for law enforcement officials to identify.

The new "Digital Terror and Hate" report is the first to be offered to officials through an online process that provides up-to-date listings.

And that's the VOA Special English Technology Report, written by June Simms. Transcripts, MP3s and podcasts of our reports are at voaspecialenglish.com. I'm Steve Ember.