

Proliferation of Terror Networks on Telegram

July 2021

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Overview:

- Telegram has recently become a preferred platform for terror networks to disseminate violent and extremist content.
- It has been monopolized by almost every major Terrorist network - while this platform was already prevalent in The Middle East, it has started to achieve growing popularity amongst South and Central Asian terror networks
- G5iO assessed the increasing prevalence of terror related channels, groups and the violent content being posted on Telegram.
- Telegram is enabling un-interrupted messages and extremist content propagated by terror networks due to its lax censorship and reporting mechanisms.
- Security features promoting anonymization have allowed terrorist/militant organizations to exploit encryption features for internal coordination.

Methodology:

- By undertaking a Critical discourse analysis of their digital behavior, we were able to gauge the extent to which these channels engage in propaganda and recruitment activities.
- We looked at telegram channels of terrorist networks such as TTP/ IS-KP, Al-Qaeda, and other regional terror groups.
- The period analyzed ranged from 1st Jan 2021 to 1st July 2021

How Telegram benefits Terror Groups:

- **Lax censorship** and reporting mechanisms
- **Ease of media sharing for recruitment purposes** - Channels are a primary source for uncensored videos, audio recordings and pdf documents – that are then easily spread via more popular platforms such as WhatsApp (becoming almost untraceable)
- Almost all press releases, Facebook and Twitter accounts affiliated with these networks have links to telegram channels where the bulk of their content is hosted

Extremist Content on Telegram:

Following Channels belong to various separatist and terror outfits that post extremist and violent content freely on Telegram on a regular basis.

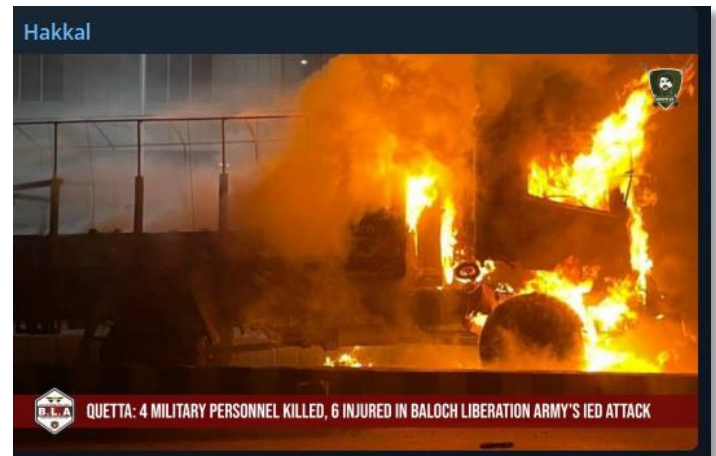
سحر پیغام:

- Al Qaeda affiliated channel w content in Urdu
- Focuses exclusively on anti – Pakistan and anti-Western content for recruitment purposes
- Serves as a repository of old speeches and videos of key AQ leaders



Hakkal:

- Channel affiliated with Baloch separatists (Hrbyar Marri Group)
- Content includes pictures of attacks and targeted military personnel (as terror propoganda) and posters of militants (for recruitment purposes)



Baloch Liberation Voice:

- Channel affiliated with Baloch separatists (Bugti Group)
- Content includes videos of attacks on military personnel and pictures of kidnap victims and destroyed infrastructure



Umar Media (Telegram Bots)

- Interactive pages that serve as a one stop source for propaganda related to Tehrik E Taliban Pakistan (TTP)
- Includes instruction manuals, ideological content on radicalization and justification of anti-state terror activities in English, Urdu, Pashto, Arabic and Farsi
- Focus is primarily on recruitment purposes – particularly of Pashtun youth

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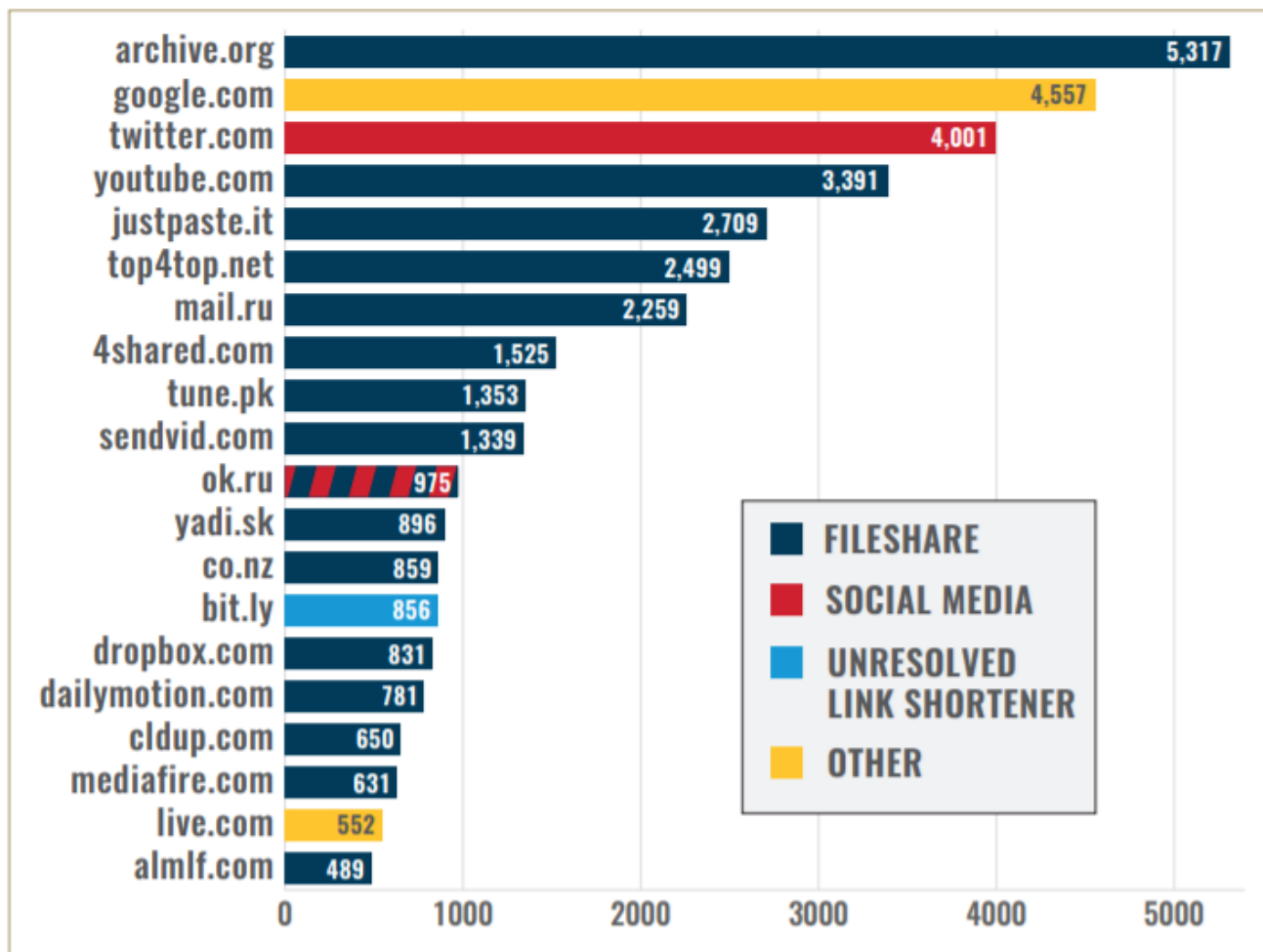
- ISKP affiliated channel translating ISIS related Arabic content from Middle East into Urdu and Pashto.
- Content includes training videos, nasheeds and jihadi ideology
- ISIS made videos showing youth fighting in styles resembling video games (PUBG etc)



Below chart shows the top 20 external online platforms used by extremists to push violent content through telegram.

While majority of these platforms have strict censorship and reporting mechanisms for violent terrorist related content, major file sharing and more open source platforms such as archive.org and ok.ru still remain problematic in terms of promoting safer digital spaces

Top 20 Base Domains



Source: Program on Extremism, the George Washington University (2017)