

The Digital Battlefield: How Terrorists Use the Internet and Online Networks for Recruitment and Radicalization

by [Aaron Y. Zelin \(/experts/aaron-y-zelin\)](#)

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Aaron Y. Zelin \(/experts/aaron-y-zelin\)](#)

Aaron Y. Zelin is the Gloria and Ken Levy Senior Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy where his research focuses on Sunni Arab jihadi groups in North Africa and Syria as well as the trend of foreign fighting and online jihadism.



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A terrorism expert discusses what U.S. policymakers and tech companies can do to stem the proliferation of jihadist activity online, including greater attention to multilingual content moderation, cryptocurrency abuse, and other evolving factors.

The following is an excerpt from prepared remarks submitted to the House Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence. To read the full testimony, download the PDF on this page.

This is an important topic in light of the New Year's Eve attack in New Orleans. On that day, Shamsud-Din Jabbar was killed in a shootout with police after driving a Ford pickup truck with an Islamic State (IS) flag through a crowd on Bourbon Street, killing fourteen and injuring fifty-seven. During a prior October trip to New Orleans, he had recorded video of the French Quarter using smart glasses from Meta. He also expressed support for IS in videos posted to Facebook, researched the December 2016 car attack at a Christmas market in Germany online, and pledged allegiance to the group on social media shortly before the attack. The following week, IS wrote an editorial in its weekly newsletter *al-Naba* gloating over Jabbar's attack, highlighting its influence and incitement capabilities, and boasting that the perpetrator used American technology to conduct reconnaissance. The piece concluded by urging Muslims in Europe and the United States to carry out more terrorist attacks, highlighting how IS uses one attack to push for a new one and creates a "virtuous cycle"

from its perspective. This is why it is not surprising that Jabbar himself researched the December 2016 car ramming attack in Berlin that killed twelve and injured forty-eight. Jabbar's attack also falls in line with IS instructional attack planning. In mid-November 2016, in an English-language IS magazine called *Rumiyah*, the group released an article that provided guidance on the best way to kill as many enemies as possible... ❖

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