

Client: Kings College University
Source: Financial Times (Main)
Date: 18 January 2008
Page: 2
Circulation: 440730
Size: 149cm2
AVE: 4172

Smith vows to suppress terrorist websites

**By Stephen Fidler,
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The government is preparing action to take down websites that incite terrorism, the home secretary said yesterday.

In her first big speech on terrorism since taking office in June, Jacqui Smith described the internet as "a key tool for the propagandists for violent extremism".

"Let me be clear. The internet is not a no-go area for government," she told a conference marking the launch of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence at King's College London. She said the government was already "systematically disrupting the small group of key propagandists for terrorism in this country".

But she said the govern-

ment would go further with the internet, and drew parallels with action against paedophiles who use the web to find victims.

"I believe we should also take action against those who groom vulnerable people for the purposes of violent extremism," she said.

She did not say how this would be done but said talks would begin in the next few weeks with the communications industry and others. The talks would centre on how to go about that aim and how best to identify material that was drawing young people to violent extremism.

"Where there is illegal material on the internet, I want it removed," she said.

Ms Smith's statement

reflects growing official concern over the role of the internet in facilitating Islamist terrorism. Sir Richard Dearlove, chief of MI6 from 1999 to 2005, told the conference that the internet provided the means of binding together radical groups strategically while also promulgating their message.

Tackling the problem raised concerns about human rights and basic freedoms, he acknowledged, but he said: "I think, in dealing with this problem, there is no alternative to imposing significant controls over the internet."

Pauline Neville-Jones, the Conservative party security spokesman, welcomed Ms Smith's speech but asked: "Why has it taken so long for the government to organ-

ise its response to this serious issue?"

Ms Smith outlined a continuing shift in government counter-terrorism policy, which suggests the solutions lie not only in law enforcement but in acting against terrorist ideology, which she described as a "misreading of Islam", and in disrupting its ideologues.

Sir Richard said Ms Smith had described "a good strategy". But he added: "My question to her would be: 'How well is this resourced? How competent are we actually on a day-to-day basis at implementing that strategy on the ground?'"

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