

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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Wednesday, November 14, 2007 12:02 p.m.



Today's Video on WSJ.com: Bret Stephens interviews reformed jihadist [Tawfik Hamid](#).

Tenured 'Hacktivists'

Back in 1998, the New York Times carried a story on "hacktivism," which it defined as "computer hacking . . . as a means to a political end." Online vandals had broken into government computer systems in China, India, Indonesia, Serbia and Croatia, and inserted their own messages.

Another tactic was the denial-of-service attack, in which "an unusually large volume of requests will overwhelm the computer that is serving up the target's Web pages. This can cause legitimate visitors to see error messages instead of the pages they are seeking, and it can even crash the server computer." An outfit called Electronic Disturbance Theater had used denial-of-service attacks against America's defenses:

On Nov. 22 [1998], the group says, it plans to attack the Web site of the School of the Americas, a United States Army training center for foreign military personnel, some of whom have been accused of human rights abuses.

Recent targets have included the sites of Mexico's President, Ernesto Zedillo, and of the United States Defense Department.

This worried U.S. officials, even during the Clinton administration:

Security experts said the recent spate of digital vandalism underscores the risk to companies and governments that increasingly rely on the Internet for commerce and communication.

"What this demonstrates is the capacity of groups with political causes to hack into systems," said Michael A. Vatis, chief of the National Information Protection Center, a new Federal agency. "I wouldn't characterize vandalizing Web sites as cyberterrorism, but the only responsible assumption we can make is there's more going on that we don't know about."

Established by Attorney General Janet Reno this year, the center is in part a response to the perception that "political forces which could not take on the United States in conventional military terms stand a better chance on an electronic battlefield," said Mr. Vatis, deputy assistant director of the Federal Bureau of

Investigation.

A Forbes article at about the same time profiled Electronic Disturbance Theater's Ricardo Dominguez and Brett Stalbaum, and described EDT's "biggest event," a "simultaneous attack on Zedillo's web site (again), the Pentagon and the Frankfurt Stock Exchange":

But this time, the protestors were attacked in their own right. Stalbaum suspects that Pentagon programmers detoured FloodNet traffic into a hostile applet of its own, which caused browsers to crash. "They even called their applet 'hostile applet,' " says Stalbaum, who dissected it.

Dominguez loves the intrigue. "As a person of the theater, I couldn't have created a better script--the drama, the conflict."

Forbes called this an "art project" and quoted Dominguez describing his actions as "electronic civil disobedience."

You still hear about "hacktivism"--this summer, for instance, there was an attack on Estonian servers, presumably originating in Russia. But in the wake of Sept. 11, and amid concerns that al Qaeda may employ "cyber-terrorism" as well as the offline kind, this all seems a lot less cute than it did in the innocent days of 1998.

Yet Dominguez not only is unrepentant but actually complained, in a 2004 interview with the Gothamist, that when he attacked the Pentagon, *he* was the victim:

Take for example the Department of Defense. They attacked EDT during the September 9th, 1998 VR Sit-In we did during the Ars Electronica Festival, in Linz, Austria--the DOD used a counter-hostile Java applet against FloodNet, which is the first offensive use of information war by a government against a civilian server that we know of.

We believe we should be protected from such actions, that the government cannot attack civilians using any kind of software or hardware. What has become apparent is the kind of violence that these information war systems are now implementing against civilians to control whatever public space there is.

Dominguez is trying to have it both ways: When he attacks the government's computers, it is an act of nonviolent "civil disobedience"; when the government responds in kind, it is "violence . . . against civilians."

Real civil disobedience--think Gandhi or Dr. King or Rosa Parks--is in effect a dare: You defy an unjust law and, in doing so, defy the government to punish you for it, thereby underscoring its injustice. But there's nothing unjust about laws protecting government computer systems from electronic vandalism.

And how have Dominguez and Stalbaum been punished for their actions? With tenure. Dominguez is an assistant professor and Stalbaum a "lecturer with security of employment" on the visual arts faculty of the University of California, San Diego, a state institution. Real civil disobedience is a dangerous act of idealism; Dominguez and Stalbaum's "hacktivism" was a risk-free act of self-promotion.

Second Thoughts

On Feb. 9, 2003, the "antiwar" group United for Peace and Justice published a letter from musician Dave Matthews questioning the patriotism of Hillary Clinton, John Kerry, John Edwards and other supporters of the war in Iraq:

I want to speak my mind about this war with Iraq, or I will choke on my conscience. . . . What is the motivation? Regime change? Shouldn't that be up to the people of the region and the people of Iraq? The only real threat from Saddam Hussein is to his neighbors. . . .

Saddam Hussein is a genocidal maniac but he is not Al Qaeda. He is certainly more visible though. Is he our target because he is easier to identify than the illusive [sic] terrorist network? . . .

Bottom line: this war is wrong and this war is un-American.

So what is Matthews doing tonight? According to the Web site of the [Dave Matthews Band](#), he's performing the first of two concerts at the Eisenhower Hall Theater in West Point, N.Y., "to insure that all [U.S. Military Academy] cadets have the opportunity to attend a free DMB concert in their intimate theatre."

Has Dave Matthews come around and repudiated his prior opposition to a course of action that removed a "genocidal maniac" from power? Not necessarily, but let's hope.

Go Figure

From an Associated Press story on federal appropriations bills:

Huge procurement costs are driving the Pentagon budget ever upward. Once war costs are added in, the total defense budget will be significantly higher than during the typical Cold War year, even after adjusting for inflation.

So defense costs are high at a time when America is engaging in two major shooting wars? How could *that* have happened? And what does the AP consider to have been "the typical Cold War year"? 1945? 1953? 1967? 1976? 1988?

The South Will Rise Again

On [Monday](#) and again [yesterday](#), we noted that liberal commentators have been attacking Ronald Reagan, 27 years after the fact, for a speech he gave in Mississippi in August 1980. In their effort to discredit Reagan (and, by implication, anyone who espouses his principles today), they have distorted the significance of his speech as well as what he said.

It turns out that the man Reagan beat, Jimmy Carter, was the target of a similar distortion back in 1980--at the hands of Ronald Reagan. As the New York Times reported in a story datelined Sept. 2 of that year:

A remark by Ronald Reagan yesterday that President Carter had opened his Presidential campaign in the birthplace of the Ku Klux Klan set off another political dispute today and provoked some of Mr. Carter's sharpest criticism of his Republican rival.

Mr. Carter, displaying a combative campaign style reminiscent of Harry S. Truman, began a brief visit to the former President's hometown by accusing Mr. Reagan of "slurs and innuendo" in his remarks about the Klan.

Mr. Reagan made the comment yesterday in Detroit, telling a crowd at the Michigan State Fair: "I am happy to be here where you are dealing at first hand with economic policies that have been committed, and he's opening his campaign down in the city that gave birth to and is the parent body of the Ku Klux Klan."

In fact, Tuscumbia is the headquarters of one of several competing branches of the

Klan, but it is not the founding city. Pulaski, Tenn., is most frequently cited as the birthplace of the Klan.

Reagan apologized for the error, but also noted that "The issue of the Ku Klux Klan was first injected into this election season several weeks ago by Mr. Carter's former appointee, Andrew Young, when he criticized me for attending the Neshoba County Fair in Philadelphia, Miss., and by Carter's Secretary of Health and Human Services, Mrs. Patricia Harris, who referred to the Klan in an attack on my candidacy."

The Times article featured a cameo from a man who would later become a major figure in American politics:

Besides Governor [Fob] James of Alabama, other Southern Governors who denounced Mr. Reagan's comments as a "callous and opportunistic slap at the South" were William F. Winter of Mississippi, George D. Busbee of Georgia, James B. Hunt Jr. of North Carolina, Bob Graham of Florida, **Bill Clinton of Arkansas** and Richard W. Riley of South Carolina. All except Mr. James have endorsed the President for reelection.

In light of the left's renewed attacks on Reagan for speaking in Mississippi, maybe Clinton could weigh in again in defense of the South.

Wannabe Pundits

Fill in the blank in ESPN's Tim Keown's commentary on the NFL:

Last week I pointed out how many inexcusably awful teams are inflicting inferior football on the paying public, and one e-mailer seriously suggested this was "un-American." (Well, there's a _____.) The idea that a lot of people are watching the NFL with a critical eye, or at least not planning their entire Sunday around Raiders-Bears, apparently struck a nerve with those whose loyalty to the league leans a little toward the unnatural side.

The answer: a "vote for Giuliani." But wait. Are we sure the emailer wasn't Dave Matthews?

We Get Results

Our item yesterday seems to have prompted SpaceTrader.com, the Web site of the gift shop at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, to change the way it designates its "woman astronaut figure." The figure is now available in two hues, "Caucasian" and "African-American." What is now called "Caucasian" yesterday was simply "American."

Of course, this still discriminates against non-American blacks. Whereas white people are "Caucasian" whether they're from America, Europe or the Caucasus, blacks from Africa, the Caribbean, Europe and elsewhere are excluded from the "African-American" category.

Other Than That, the Story Was Accurate

"In a Nov. 13 story, The Associated Press incorrectly reported that Paris Hilton was praised by conservationists for highlighting the problem of binge-drinking elephants in northeastern India. Lori Berk, a publicist for Hilton, said she never made any comments about helping drunken elephants in India."--AP correction, Nov. 13

Don't Try This Unless You Have Nine Lives

"Man Dies After Getting Stuck in Girlfriend's Cat Door"--headline, FoxNews.com, Nov. 13

That's Why They Were Seeing Pink Elephants

"Police: Chocolate Bunnies Had Hallucinogenic Drugs"--headline, WGCL-TV Web site (Atlanta),

Nov. 11

Now the Music Can Free Her Whenever It Starts

"Turtle Stranding Season Begins"--headline, Cape Cod Times (Hyannis, Mass.), Nov. 13

'These Uppity Cattle, It's Time to Get Tough'

"Cows Rounded Up After Escaping Truck in McDonald's Parking Lot"--headline, FoxNews.com, Nov. 13

After the Raccoon Shot an Elephant in Its Pajamas

"Teacher Dispatches Raccoon With Nail Gun"--headline, Associated Press, Nov. 13

Someone Set Up Us the Bomb

"Conservationists Hail Hilton Drunk Elephants Appeal"--headline, Guardian (London), Nov. 13

News You Can Use

- "Don't Be Fooled: Winter Is on Its Way"--headline, [Topeka \(Kan.\) Capital-Journal](#), Nov. 13
- "So Many Good Years Can Roll By in a Blink"--headline, [St. Petersburg \(Fla.\) Times](#), Nov. 14
- "Goat Testicles Don't Taste Like Eggs"--headline, [ThatsFit.com](#), Nov. 13

Bottom Stories of the Day

- "City May Review What It Pays for Swing Sets"--headline, [El Paso Times](#), Nov. 14
- "Strike Halting Most French Train Traffic"--headline, [Associated Press](#), Nov. 13
- "Australian Couple's Son Not Missing, Just Busy"--headline, [Tampa Tribune](#), Nov. 14
- "Anti-Bush Sign Has Bridge World in an Uproar"--headline, [New York Times](#), Nov. 14

Stressed to the Nines

Nine-year-old Zach Bonner of Valrico, Fla., "will be walking on his 250-mile journey to Tallahassee and will have to do this on his birthday, Saturday, as well as Thanksgiving," reports the Gainesville Sun:

Zach started his walk on Nov. 3 from Seffner and will continue until he gets to Tallahassee on Nov. 26 to raise awareness about youth homelessness. . . .

Michael Gallant, director of operations for StandUp for Kids Florida, said he has been working with Zach and his family trying to make sure that they have a place to stay each night. . . .

"The reason why Zach is so important is because of his age, which is actually the exact age of the average homeless person in America," Gallant said. "He is the face of homelessness."

He's "the face of homelessness," except that he *isn't homeless*:

Zach is a **home**-schooler, who is taking classes online. He said he did extra work to be a month ahead on his assignments. He did this to make sure he didn't get behind

on his school work during the walk.

"After I am done with the walk, though, **I will probably go home**, lie down on the couch and sleep for like three days," Zach said. "I will then get up and start planning for the holiday party for the Hurricane Katrina victims."

Gallant's assertion that "the average homeless person in America" is 9 does not seem remotely plausible, unless "homeless" is defined so broadly as to include children who are "doubled up" with their parents.

Also, the story tells us Gallant is busy "working with Zach and his family trying to make sure that they have a place to stay each night." Wouldn't his time be better spent doing this for actual homeless kids?

(Carol Muller helps compile Best of the Web Today. Thanks to Dagny Billings, Andrew Pietila, Peter Farnham, James McAughey, Steve Lang, Steven Knerr, Bruce Opheim, Paul Dyck, Bryan Fischer, Michael Schick, Christine DiMuzio, Steve Draper, John Nernoff, Mike Stevens, Roger Denk, Thomas Mayer, Doug Black, Charles Guthy, Michael Throop, Ed Jordan, Christine Johnson, Michele Schiesser, Evan Slatiss and Ryan Zempel. If you have a tip, write us at opinionjournal@wsj.com, and please include the URL.)



Today on OpinionJournal:

- Review & Outlook: Mrs. Clinton tries to have it both ways--no, make that all ways--on trade.
- Peter Berkowitz: Intellectuals give in to hatred--and they're proud of it.
- Uriya Shavit (from Azure): What European Islamophobia and anti-Semitism have in common--and what they don't.

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