

Al-Qaida Web sites down ahead of 9/11 anniversary

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(AP) -- A U.S.-based group monitoring militant Web sites said Friday that jihadist forums have been experiencing technical problems on the eve of Sept. 11, finally going offline a day before the 8th anniversary of the al-Qaida attack on the U.S.

The SITE Intelligence Group said the same thing happened last year, promoting consternation in militant circles.

"As happened last year ... top jihadist forums affiliated with al-Qaida began experiencing technical problems, culminating in their ultimate closure on September 10, 2009," the group said in a statement.

According to SITE, members of other jihadist forums expressed annoyance and "confusion" at the inability to access the Web sites and forums where they share updates and messages.

Since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, al-Qaida has run sites on the Web that it has used to disseminate its messages.

The group over the years also has appeared to increasingly turn toward online forums, apparently so that it no longer had to rely on news stations to air video and audio messages.

Terror analysts have long seen al-Qaida's media arm as a powerful tool for rallying the network's followers and sympathizers, churning out videos and audiotapes even though the top leadership is mostly out of

touch, hiding in the mountainous border regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The videos have grown in technical sophistication, featuring computer animations and clips from international television media.

The Arabic-language sites also have an extensive online following of would-be jihadis who discuss various topics, including the best ways to carry out attacks and which techniques are religiously permissible.

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