

## Jihadists appear caught offguard by release of Steven Sotloff video

Analyst for US private intelligence firm SITE discovered the video apparently before Islamic State was prepared to release it



An IS militant with US journalist Steven Sotloff, in a still from the group's video

By Raf Sanchez, Washington

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The video of Steven Sotloff's apparent murder appears to have been found by a private **US** intelligence firm before it could be released by the Islamic State.

News of Mr Sotloff's death was broken by the **SITE** Intelligence group, a private company that monitors jihadist activity and has close ties to the American intelligence community.

The group's analysts found the video on what a spokesman described as "a file-sharing site" and send it out to its subscriber list. SITE's subscribers include government officials, journalists and academics involved in analysing terrorism.

The news immediately spread across the world, and it appeared to catch some jihadists off guard when SITE began spreading the video and a transcript of the remarks by Mr Sotloff and

his killer.

The Twitter account @JihadWitness, which tweets in English in support of the IS and other jihadist groups, expressed surprise when the video began to appear online.

"How did this leak out to news before the publication?" one tweet read.

The apparent leak of the Sotloff video is in stark contrast to the carefully choreographed release of the video showing the killing of James Foley, another American journalist, on August 20.

That video, entitled "A Message to America", was posted on Youtube and then publicised by accounts linked to IS.

It is not the first time that SITE has released jihadist material before the jihadists themselves.

In 2007, the group published a video of Osama bin Laden a full day before it was released by al-Qaeda's official propagandists.

The video was especially significant because it was the first time the terror leader had been seen since 2004, and his absence had led to speculation that he may have died.

The SITE spokesman refused to give more details of where the Sotloff video was found.

SITE was originally formed in 2002 and is led by Rita Katz, an Israeli who was born to a Jewish family in Iraq in 1963.

Her family was expelled from the country after Saddam Hussein seized power, and resettled in Israel.