

Did Osama bin Laden Confess to the 9/11 Attacks, and Did He Die, in 2001?

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Theme: [Terrorism](#)

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In 2009, I published a little book entitled *Osama bin Laden: Dead or Alive?*¹ Much evidence, I showed, suggested that Osama bin Laden had died on or about December 13, 2001. (Although this book was ignored by the US press, it received major reviews in British newspapers,² and it even provided the basis for a BBC special.³) Pointing out that the only evidence to the contrary consists of “messages from bin Laden” in the form of audiotapes and videotapes that have appeared since 2001, I devoted one chapter to an examination of the most important of these tapes, showing that none are demonstrably authentic and that some are almost certainly fakes.

In the chapter preceding that examination, I discussed two videotapes containing purported interviews of Osama bin Laden in the fall of 2001, when the issue was whether he had been responsible for the 9/11 attacks. I suggested that both of these tapes, in which bin Laden allegedly admitted his responsibility, were fakes. If they were, I pointed out, this fact would increase the likelihood that all of the “Osama bin Laden tapes” appearing in the following years – when the question of whether he was still alive was added to that of his responsibility for 9/11 – were also fakes.

The clearest example, I argued, was the most famous of the so-called bin Laden confession videos. Having allegedly been found in a private home in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, in late November 2001, it is sometimes called the “November 9 bin Laden video,” because this date was stamped on it, implying that this was when it was made. It is also called the “bin Laden video of December 13,” because that was the date on which it was released to the public by the Pentagon – which is perhaps significant, given the evidence that bin Laden may have died on that day. (If he had, he would have obviously, and perhaps conveniently, been unable to comment on whether the tape was authentic.) In any case, I provided several reasons for concluding that this video was almost certainly fabricated.

I also suggested, with greater tentativeness, that another pre-2002 video had been fabricated. This one had been described in a November 11, 2001, article in London’s *Telegraph* by David Bamber entitled “Bin Laden: Yes, I Did It.” According to Bamber, the *Telegraph* had on the previous day “obtained access” to a video in which “Osama bin Laden has for the first time admitted that his al-Qa’eda group carried out the [9/11] attacks.” Bamber added that this video, which would “form the centrepiece of Britain and America’s new evidence against bin Laden,” was going to be released to the public on November 14.⁴

When November 14 came, however, British Prime Minister Tony Blair said that his government did not actually have the video or even a complete transcript. But his government released quotations said to be “extracts” from it – quotations that were widely

regarded as confirming Bamber's assertion that bin Laden, when asked about 9/11, had in effect replied: "I did it."

Saying that it was "hard to know what to make of this episode," I argued that, if both the Telegraph and "intelligence sources" had copies of such a video, then Blair's government would surely also have a copy. And if it did have a video in which bin Laden had for the first time confessed his responsibility for the 9/11 attacks, Blair's government - which at the time was encountering much skepticism from the Muslim world about bin Laden's responsibility for those attacks - would surely have released it.

Or, I added, Blair's government would have done this "unless the video was a fake and the government decided, between November 11 and 14, that the fakery was so obvious that it should deny having a copy while merely releasing damning 'excerpts.'"⁵

Then, while pointing out that "[t]his explanation is . . . merely one possibility among many," I added two further factors supporting the "suspicion that a fake 'bin Laden confession video' had been made": Blair had recently tried but failed (as the BBC pointed out) to provide convincing evidence of bin Laden's responsibility for the 9/11 attacks; and Blair was getting ready to announce emergency powers to override human rights legislation in order to imprison suspected terrorists.⁶

There was only one problem with my argument: I had somehow missed news stories revealing that the reported video was a tape of an hour-long interview of bin Laden that, after being recorded on October 21 by Al Jazeera's Kabul correspondent, Tayseer Allouni, was not aired by Al Jazeera.⁷ This fact, not being generally known at the time, was not mentioned in news reports appearing during the following month. On December 12, however, the New York Times reported that Blair had been referring to an Al Jazeera interview.⁸ And then CNN, which had an affiliate agreement with Al Jazeera, aired several minutes of this interview on January 31, 2002, after which, on February 5, it posted the entire transcript online.⁹

My speculation that the tape reported by Blair might have been a fake was, therefore, baseless, reflecting research that was, to say the least, inadequate.

This fact was recently pointed out in a critique of my book by Maher Osseiran entitled "Osama bin Laden, Dead or Alive? An Irrelevant Question Asked by David Ray Griffin."¹⁰ Osseiran's article contained four criticisms:

1. Whether bin Laden is dead or alive is irrelevant.
2. It had long been known that the video to which Blair referred was an interview of bin Laden by Al Jazeera.
3. I should have known that the bin Laden video released on December 13, 2001, was also not a fake, because Osseiran had shown, in articles known to me, that it was an authentic video made during a sting operation.
4. There is no good evidence for my book's claim that bin Laden died in 2001.

Although I agree with Osseiran's second criticism, I disagree with the other three. I will discuss his four criticisms in the above order (which is the order in which he introduced them).

Criticism #1: The Question of Whether Bin Laden Died in 2001 Is Irrelevant

In explaining the claim that he considered important enough to put in the title of his critique – that it is irrelevant whether bin Laden is dead or alive – Osseiran said that my book was based on an “irrational rationale,” namely:

“In the world of David Ray Griffin and his cheerleaders, if it is possible to prove that bin Laden is dead, wars would immediately come to an end.”

Osseiran did not, however, quote any statement to show that I hold any such belief – which is understandable, because I have never made any such statement. Having no idea why Osseiran attributed such an absurd belief to me, I will simply move on to his reason for calling the question of bin Laden’s continued existence irrelevant:

“[I]t is irrelevant because the war policy makers in the U.S. government can easily deal with a bin Laden death and find ways to justify their never ending war on terror.”

I agree that civilian and military leaders would seek to justify their current war policies even if they had to admit that Osama bin Laden was dead. But Osseiran’s claim – that US policy makers could “easily” deal with convincing evidence of bin Laden’s death, so that such evidence would be irrelevant – is surely wrong, for several reasons.

First, it is widely recognized that a crusade against an allegedly evil government or movement can more easily garner support insofar as that government or movement has a leader who can be portrayed as extraordinarily evil.

Since 9/11, Osama bin Laden has been thus portrayed by American leaders. For example, after skeptics had questioned the authenticity of the video released December 13, 2001, in which the bin Laden figure clearly took responsibility for the 9/11 attacks, President Bush said that those who considered this video a fake were simply hoping for the best about “an incredibly evil man.”¹¹ Bush’s press secretary, Ari Fleischer, said: “Everybody knows how evil Osama bin Laden is.”¹² A Reuters article in 2002 said: “Bush constantly described the Saudi-born militant as an incarnation of evil.”¹³ In an essay entitled “Constructing an Evil Genius,” Samuel Winch, a professor of communications and the humanities, wrote: “Osama bin Laden was framed in news media reports from 1999 through 2002 as an evil genius . . . very similar to the fictional villain Dr. Fu-Manchu, a Victorian horror novel character.”¹⁴ The loss of such a figure would be far from insignificant.

In the second place, President Obama has greatly intensified the focus on bin Laden. Back in November 2008, when Barack Obama was still the president-elect, one of his advisers said of bin Laden: “This is our enemy, and he should be our principal target.”¹⁵ Shortly after he assumed the presidency, Obama himself, having been asked how important it was to apprehend bin Laden, said:

“My preference obviously would be to capture or kill him. But if we have so tightened the noose that he’s in a cave somewhere and can’t even communicate with his operatives, then we will meet our goal of protecting America.”¹⁶

In June 2009, a UPI story said:

“Finding al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden, believed still in hiding in Pakistan, remains a top priority for the United States, CIA Director Leon Panetta said.”¹⁷

Three months later, a news report based on statements from Obama’s senior counterterrorism advisor, John Brennan, was entitled: “US Says Hunt Still on for Bin Laden.”¹⁸ In December 2009, Obama’s military commander in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal, referred to bin Laden as an “iconic figure . . . whose survival emboldens al-Qaeda as a franchising organization across the world.”¹⁹

Because the Obama administration has said not only that the main reason we are in Afghanistan is to prevent al-Qaeda from attacking America again, but also that al-Qaeda will remain an especially dangerous threat as long as its “iconic” leader is still alive, the acknowledged death of that leader would surely undermine the administration’s public rationale for remaining in Afghanistan.

Moreover, bin Laden is relevant to the war rationale – to give a third reason why acknowledgment of his death could not be easily absorbed – not only because of his presumed survival but also because of his presumed location. The Afghan war has increasingly become the “Af-Pak” war, because of increased US military operations inside of Pakistan, and these operations have been largely justified on the basis of “intelligence” that bin Laden, along with other al-Qaeda leaders, is there. In President Obama’s March 2009 speech in which he laid out a “new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan,” he said:

“[A]l Qaeda and its extremist allies have moved across the border to the remote areas of the Pakistani frontier. This almost certainly includes al Qaeda’s leadership: Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri. They have used this mountainous terrain as a safe-haven to hide, train terrorists, communicate with followers, plot attacks, and send fighters to support the insurgency in Afghanistan. For the American people, this border region has become the most dangerous place in the world.”²⁰

In light of such assertions, a widespread agreement that bin Laden was no longer with us would severely undermine the Obama administration’s professed rationale for the expansion of the war into Pakistan, thereby further increasing opposition to the Af-Pak war among the press and the public.

Whereas these first three points are more than sufficient to refute the claim that the question posed by my book is irrelevant, the most decisive reason is a fourth: The book’s argument, to recall, was not merely that bin Laden is probably dead but also that he has probably been in this state since mid-December 2001. If this is true and were to become publicly acknowledged, the dozens of “messages from Osama bin Laden” that have appeared since 2001 would be exposed as fakes. People in America and around the world would, therefore, realize that some organization had been fabricating these tapes for the purpose of deceiving them into thinking that bin Laden was still alive.

If it were to be learned, moreover, that these tapes had been fabricated by the Pentagon, as part of its “psyops” (psychological operations), then the military leaders who had authorized

their creation would be exposed as guilty of breaking the law prohibiting the US military from directing propaganda at the American people. Questions as to why they did this – questions that would likely lead to answers involving the “military-industrial complex” – would probably follow. A lot of people would not like such questions to be raised.

In light of these considerations, Osseiran’s first criticism is clearly false. I turn now to his second.

Criticism #2: The Video Mentioned by Tony Blair in November 2001 Is Authentic

As I have already indicated, I agree with this criticism, along with Osseiran’s further point that I should have known that the bin Laden interview to which Blair referred was one that had been videotaped by Al Jazeera but then not aired.²¹ Now that I am aware of these stories, I am mystified as to how I could have missed them.²²

The fact that the video was authentic does not, however, undermine my contention, argued in other writings, that there is no good evidence that bin Laden had planned or even specifically authorized the 9/11 attacks.²³ Osseiran’s contrary view may be based in part on the assumption that bin Laden confessed responsibility for these attacks during the Al Jazeera interview.

This assumption was, in any case, widely expressed when the tape was first reported. As pointed out above, Telegraph writer David Bamber, in speaking of the importance of this video, said: “Osama bin Laden has for the first time admitted that his al-Qa’eda group carried out the [9/11] attacks.” The Telegraph itself supported this view with the title it put on the article: “Bin Laden: Yes, I Did It.”²⁴ Prime Minister Tony Blair then endorsed this interpretation a few days later by claiming that bin Laden had, during the interview, said that he had “instigated” the 9/11 attacks.²⁵ It was, in fact, these descriptions of the tape’s content that made me suspect it to be a fabrication.

The idea that bin Laden had in this interview admitted responsibility for the 9/11 attacks was, in any case, also promoted by CNN on January 31, 2002, when it aired a portion of the interview. After bin Laden was shown saying – in response to the American claim that he was responsible for 9/11 – that the description of him as a terrorist was unwarranted, CNN commentator Wolf Blitzer said: “That may sound like a denial but listen to what he says only moments later.” CNN then showed footage of bin Laden saying: “If inciting people to do that is terrorism and if killing those who kill our sons is terrorism, then let history be witness that we are terrorists.”²⁶

After the entire transcript was published, Sarah Sullivan of Turner Broadcasting System gave the same interpretation, writing: “The transcript of the interview makes bin Laden’s defense of Sept. 11 and implicit acknowledgement of responsibility even clearer than the excerpts broadcast by CNN.”²⁷

Not all journalists, however, described this interview as one in which bin Laden had acknowledged responsibility, even implicitly, for the 9/11 attacks. Guardian writer Oliver Burkeman, for example, said that bin Laden “dodges questions about his responsibility for the September 11 attacks, but says they were justified.”²⁸

A close examination of the transcript shows, moreover, that bin Laden did not even dodge the question. Rather, he simply made the same twofold point about the attacks that he had

previously articulated – namely, that he rejoiced in the attacks but had not been responsible for them or even known about them in advance.

On September 12, for example, this twofold point was made on bin Laden’s behalf by one of his aides, who told Al Jazeera that bin Laden had had “no information or knowledge about the attack” but that he had “thanked Almighty Allah and bowed before him when he heard this news.”²⁹ Continuing to deny responsibility in the following days, bin Laden himself told Al Jazeera on September 16: “I stress that I have not carried out this act, which appears to have been carried out by individuals with their own motivation.”³⁰ On October 7, he praised the “vanguards of Islam . . . [who] destroyed America,” but he did not withdraw his earlier statements denying involvement.³¹

During the Al Jazeera interview of October 21, bin Laden made this same twofold point. On the one hand, he expressed his approval of the attacks in New York and Washington, calling them “great on all levels” and saying, in particular, that “the collapse of the twin towers is huge.” On the other hand, he denied responsibility. After saying that the designation of him as a terrorist was unwarranted, he responded to the American government’s claim that it had convincing evidence of his complicity in the attacks by stating: “We never heard in our lives a court decision to convict someone based on a ‘secret’ proof it has. The logical thing to do is to present a proof to a court of law.”³²

At this point, however, bin Laden did – contrary to Al Jazeera’s statement that there was nothing new in this interview – go beyond what he had previously said in public statements: Having denied direct responsibility for the attacks, he suggested that he might have been indirectly responsible. Speaking of “the brave guys who took the battle to the heart of America and destroyed its most famous economic and military landmarks,” bin Laden said:

“They did this, as we understand it, and this is something we have agitated for before, as a matter of self-defense, in defense of our brothers and sons in Palestine, and to liberate our sacred religious sites/things.”³³

His point was that he had encouraged (“agitated for”) Muslims to strike back at Americans and Israelis, as an act of self-defense against their attacks on Muslim holy places and people. This striking back was self-defense, he argued, because Americans and Israelis would quit killing Muslims only if Muslims killed enough of them in return to make them stop: Having spoken of the killing of Muslims in Palestine and Iraq, where “more than 1 million children died . . . and others are still dying,” bin Laden said: “If they kill our women and our innocent people, we will kill their women and their innocent people until they stop.”

Making still clearer the sense in which he might be given some credit for 9/11, he said: “We have agitated for this [an attack on America] for years and we have issued statements and fatwas to that effect.” He then referred to an event in Saudi Arabia in which four young men, who had been “influenced by some of the fatwas and statements that we issued,” had destroyed “an American center.” Bin Laden then commented: “If they mean . . . that there is a link as a result of our incitement, then it is true. . . . We have incited battle against Americans and Jews. This is true.”³⁴

In other words, just as bin Laden was not involved in planning the attack on the American center in Saudi Arabia, but was indirectly responsible for it in the sense that the four young attackers were “incited” by his fatwas against America, he may also have been indirectly

responsible for the 9/11 attacks. It is in this sense that we should understand the passage of his interview quoted by Blitzer:

“If inciting people to do that [namely, attacking America in self-defense] is terrorism, and if killing those who kill our sons is terrorism, then let history be witness that we are terrorists.”³⁵

To summarize: Having denied that he was a “terrorist” in the sense of having planned or specifically authorized the 9/11 attacks, Osama bin Laden added that, if the word “terrorist” is used (unreasonably) for Muslims who strike back at America in self-defense, or who encourage fellow Muslims to do so, then he and the “brave guys” who attacked America on 9/11 are indeed terrorists.

I am grateful to Osseiran for pointing out the existence of the Al Jazeera interview, thereby giving me the opportunity to provide this analysis of it. By showing the falsity of the widespread assumption that bin Laden confessed direct responsibility for the 9/11 attacks in this interview, this analysis strengthens the case against the authenticity of the tape released December 13, in which the bin Laden figure claimed to have been directly involved in planning the 9/11 attacks.

To explain: If bin Laden during his Al Jazeera interview had expressed direct responsibility for those attacks, then it would not be surprising if he had also done so in a private interview with a visiting sheikh (see the discussion below). But because bin Laden in the Al Jazeera interview once again denied responsibility for the attacks – except possibly in the indirect sense that his fatwas against America may have influenced the attackers – then the video released December 13, 2001, would, if authentic, be the one and only recording we have in which bin Laden claimed direct responsibility.³⁶

I turn now, in any case, to Osseiran’s critique of my book’s treatment of this video.

Criticism #3: The Video Released December 13 Is Authentic

On December 13, 2001, the Pentagon released a video that was dated November 9, 2001, claiming that it had been found by US forces in a private home in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, in late November (after anti-Taliban forces had taken over the city). As I wrote in my book:

“The tape purportedly shows Osama bin Laden, in a private home, talking about the 9/11 attacks with a visiting Sheikh. During the course of the conversation, in which the bin Laden figure is seen and heard gloating about the success of the attacks, he states that he not only knew about them several days in advance but had also, in fact, planned them.”³⁷

After showing that the tape had been widely used to confirm the US-British position that bin Laden had been responsible for the 9/11 attacks, I discussed several features of the tape that support the widespread view that it was a fake – that the bin Laden figure in it was not Osama bin Laden himself.

By calling this video a fake, Osseiran complained, I had “disregarded the truth” about it, which had been “pointed out to [me] on numerous occasions” – by which he meant that he had sent me several papers in which he had given an alternative theory of its creation.³⁸

According to Osseiran's theory, the video was made during a CIA-arranged sting operation that took place on September 26, 2001, ten days before the US attack on Afghanistan. The operation was based around Khaled al-Harbi, a wheelchair-bound Saudi sheikh whom bin Laden trusted. Al-Harbi had traveled from Saudi Arabia to a small village in Afghanistan's Ghazni Province with two CIA operatives in order to have a conversation with bin Laden. The conversation between the two men was videotaped, but bin Laden did not know this. When he spoke of his responsibility for the 9/11 attacks, therefore, he did not realize that he would be confessing to the world.³⁹

The videotaping of Osama bin Laden's confession was, according to Osseiran, the first part of a two-part sting operation. The second part was to kill or capture bin Laden. This could have been done right after the confession was taped, but the United States chose to postpone that part of the operation until later because, if bin Laden had been captured or killed at that time,

"there would have been diminished justification and therefore less support for military actions in Afghanistan. . . . [T]he Bush Administration would have met much greater resistance [by the American people] against its invasion of Afghanistan."⁴⁰

I am puzzled as to how Osseiran's believes this statement to be consistent with his claim that the question raised by the title of my book – namely, whether bin Laden is dead or alive – is irrelevant.

Be that as it may, the killing or capture of bin Laden, Osseiran suggested, was to be carried out when he came back to the village again, which turned out to be on November 2. The plan was for him to be killed or captured by US forces transported to the village in a helicopter. This plan was foiled, however, when the US helicopter, encountering bad weather, crashed, so that bin Laden remained free. Then on December 13, the US government, anxious to supply evidence of bin Laden's responsibility for 9/11, released the tape, thereby allowing him to realize that his security had been compromised. He hence went into hiding, never to be heard from again.

Even though this videotape provides the clearest evidence that bin Laden was directly involved in planning the 9/11 attacks, Osseiran says, and even though the US government could prove the tape's authenticity by explaining that it was produced during a CIA sting operation, it has refused to do this. Why? Because it does not want to admit that, although it could have killed or captured bin Laden on September 26, 2001, it did not, in order to retain its pretext for going to war. And to admit this would be to confess to treason.⁴¹

We can certainly admire Osseiran's passion to undermine the rationale for the Afghan war by getting his account accepted, and this account has an initial plausibility, partly because it provides an alternative explanation, as I will point out below, for some of the features of the videotape that have led many of us to consider it a fake.

But this appearance of plausibility disappears when one begins probing Osseiran's claim that the US operatives did not kill or capture bin Laden right after the tape was made because, had they done so, the American public would not have supported the invasion of Afghanistan. The problem with this claim is that the killing or capture of bin Laden would have undermined support for the invasion only if the American public knew about it, and his

death or capture could have been concealed. After bin Laden had left the village, for example, US operatives could have secretly killed him and then buried his body where it could have been “discovered” later, after the goals of the invasion had been achieved. Alternatively, bin Laden could have been captured and held in secret custody until those goals were achieved, after which his freshly killed body could have been produced for all to see, along with a dramatic story about heroic US forces tracking him down and killing him. This could have been done, for example, just before the 2008 elections, giving Republicans a big boost.

There is, moreover, another problem with Osseiran’s scenario: Although his hypothesis addresses some of the reasons I gave for believing the video to be a fake, it does not address all of them, including the most serious one. I will now summarize these reasons, pointing out in each case whether Osseiran’s hypothesis can neutralize it.

Bin Laden Would Not Have Confessed in That Situation

In my book – in which I was assuming, for the sake of argument, the US view that bin Laden had been aware of the camera – I argued that he would have been most unlikely to confess responsibility to the 9/11 attacks. Even if he had been involved in planning the attacks, he would not have admitted this while the camera was running, given the fact that, until then, he had always publicly denied any involvement. For example, having been asked on September 28 whether he had been involved, bin Laden replied:

“I have already said that I am not involved in the 11 September attacks in the United States. As a Muslim, I try my best to avoid telling a lie. I had no knowledge of these attacks.”

Having made that denial, bin Laden would not on November 9 – the date on which the US government claims this video was made – have confessed to the attacks with a camera running. To have done so would have been to show the world that his previous statement – in which he said that he, as a Muslim, tried to avoid lying – had itself been a lie.

Although this argument is not relevant to Osseiran’s scenario, because he claims that bin Laden was unaware of the camera, his scenario faces an analogous problem: Given the fact that bin Laden had repeatedly denied in his public statements that he had been involved with the attacks, he surely – if he actually had been involved – would not have admitted this in front of anyone who might be untrustworthy. And yet, after saying that bin Laden was, out of caution, initially reluctant to talk about 9/11, Osseiran gives this explanation for why he finally did:

“Since his immediate entourage already knew of his complicity, and only two individuals apart from his visitor were strangers, he eventually and erroneously concluded that all were harmless.”⁴²

According to Osseiran, therefore, this was the situation. There were strangers in the room, and bin Laden had taken no precautions to make sure that his remarks were not being recorded. And yet he, in this situation, revealed his big secret. Is that not extremely implausible?

Bin Laden Appeared Too Healthy

In the last of the indubitably authentic bin Laden videos, which was made sometime between November 16 (when the bombing of Khost, which was mentioned on the tape, occurred) and December 27 (when the tape was publicly released), bin Laden had, in the words of London's Telegraph, a "gaunt, frail appearance" and his "beard was much whiter than on November 3," when the previous bin Laden video had been broadcast. Also, "bin Laden's left arm . . . hung limply by his side while he gesticulated with his right."⁴³ Dr. Sanjay Gupta, CNN's medical correspondent, likewise commented on bin Laden's "grayness of beard, his paleness of skin, very gaunt sort of features," along with the fact that "[h]e never moved his left arm at all."⁴⁴

In the video released December 13, by contrast, the bin Laden figure was rather well filled out, his skin and his beard were dark, and he was easily able to move both arms.

This contrast in appearance and ability formed a very strong argument against the government's account, according to which this was a tape of bin Laden that had been made on November 9. It would be hard to believe that bin Laden's appearance could have deteriorated so radically between November 9 and the day, sometime between November 16 and December 27, on which the tape of the "gaunt" bin Laden was made.

This argument does not apply against Osseiran's theory, however, because he believes that this tape was made on September 26, so there would have been between 50 and 90 days for bin Laden's appearance to have deteriorated before the "gaunt" video was made.

It is still the case, to be sure, that the bin Laden figure in the December 13-released video appears to be heavier than bin Laden as seen in the undoubtedly authentic videos made near September 26, when Osseiran believes that this one was made. But he would argue that this problem is solved by an analysis provided by Ed Haas, according to which the event was probably recorded in PAL video format, which is common in Pakistan and has a higher spatial resolution than the NTSC format, which is used in the United States. If so, the conversion from the PAL to the NTSC format could have resulted in "an image that appears to be 'squashed' along the vertical axis, making people and objects look fatter after the conversion."⁴⁵

Different Facial Structure, with Differently Shaped Nose

I have no expertise in these matters, but if we assume, for the sake of discussion, that Haas's suggestion, combined with the proposed early recording date (September 26), could explain why the bin Laden figure in the video appears too healthy and heavy, there would still be problems with his physical appearance. One of these, as I pointed out, is that this man's nose does not seem to be shaped the same as that of Osama bin Laden.⁴⁶ This differently shaped nose, moreover, seems to be simply one part of a differently shaped facial structure. As one can see by comparing an undoubtedly authentic image of bin Laden with the face of the man in the so-called confession video, the nose of the real bin Laden appears to be much longer.⁴⁷

So for Osseiran to make a convincing case, he would need to show that the conversion from the PAL to the NTSC format could also explain these differences.

Writing with the Right Hand

Another problem mentioned in my book that Osseiran, as far as I know, has not addressed is the fact that, in the video in question, the bin Laden figure writes with his right hand, whereas the FBI's webpage for "Usama bin Laden" as a "Most Wanted Terrorist" describes him as left-handed.⁴⁸

This apparent anomaly cannot be explained, I pointed out, by supposing that his left arm was immobile – as it was in the post-November 16 video, which was released December 27 – because the bin Laden figure in this video easily raises his left hand above his head. This fact, of course, is not inconsistent with Osseiran's thesis, according to which the video was taped on September 26, which may well have been before bin Laden suffered the stroke or whatever it was that caused the immobility of his left arm that is apparent in the post-November 16 video.

However, Osseiran and other defenders of the authenticity of this video could overcome this problem if they could provide convincing evidence that the FBI was wrong – that Osama bin Laden was, in fact, right-handed.

Evidence for this contention was provided in late 2009, in fact, in *Growing Up Bin Laden*, a book that Jean Sasson co-authored with Osama bin Laden's first wife, Najwa bin Laden, and his fourth son, Omar bin Laden. According to Omar, his father was actually right-handed. Here is his statement:

"For the first time I will reveal a truth that my father and his family have carefully guarded for most of his life, for in our culture it is believed that any physical disability weakens a man. My father is right-handed, but he has to make use of his left eye for any task that requires perfect vision. The explanation is simple. When my father was only a young boy, he was happily hammering on some metal when a piece of the metal flew into his right eye. The injury was serious, resulting in a hushed-up trip to London to seek the care of a specialist.

"The diagnosis upset everyone. My father's right eye would never again see clearly. Over the years my father taught himself to conceal the problem, thinking it better for people to believe him to be left-handed rather than allow them knowledge that his right eye barely functioned. The only reason my father aims his weapon from his left side is because he is virtually blind in his right eye. Perhaps my father will be angry that I have exposed this carefully guarded secret, but it is nothing more than a truth that should hold no shame."⁴⁹

If this claim is true, then the FBI was wrong to describe bin Laden as left-handed.

Certain facts about both Jean Sasson and Omar bin Laden, however, should lead us to be suspicious of this claim.

Jean Sasson: To put it bluntly, Jean Sasson is simply not a trustworthy author. John R. MacArthur, the publisher of Harper's magazine, has called her "a propagandist for hire."⁵⁰ The occasion for this description was Sasson's 1991 book, *The Rape of Kuwait*, which rose to second place on the New York Times bestseller list in March of that year, thereby helping solidify American support for the plan of the George H. W. Bush administration, in response to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait the previous summer, to attack Iraq. And that – other than making a lot of money – was the book's purpose.

Sasson had proposed the idea of such a book to the Kuwaiti government, which was aggressively trying to convince Washington to attack Iraq on Kuwait's behalf. In pursuing this objective, Kuwait paid Hill and Knowlton (H&K), a well-connected public relations firm, close to \$11,000,000 to sell the war.

At the center of the H&K campaign was the testimony of a 15-year-old Kuwaiti girl, going only by the name "Nayirah," who said that, after the Iraqis invaded her country, she worked as a volunteer in a hospital. "While I was there," she testified tearfully to the Congressional Human Rights Caucus on October 10, 1990:

"I saw the Iraqi soldiers come into the hospital with guns, and go into the room where 15 babies were in incubators. They took the babies out of the incubators, took the incubators, and left the babies on the cold floor to die."⁵¹

This was pure fabrication. This girl, whose full name was Nayirah al-Sabah, was the daughter of Saud al-Sabah, Kuwait's ambassador to the United States, who was a good friend of President George H. W. Bush. Rather than having observed these events, she had been given these lines by H&K, which thereby earned the millions it was paid: "[O]f all the accusations made against [Saddam Hussein]," wrote MacArthur, "none had more impact on American public opinion" than this story of babies being ripped out of incubators.⁵²

Evidently to garner still more support from the American public, Kuwait agreed not only to give Sasson a big advance on the book - which she reportedly wrote in nine days in order to get it published before the bombardment of Iraq began - but also to put up over \$1 million to buy hundreds of thousands of copies of the book to get it on the New York Times list of bestselling books - a story that MacArthur told in "How Kuwait Duped The Times' Bestseller List."⁵³

Calling *The Rape of Kuwait* "lurid and wildly inaccurate," MacArthur pointed out that it, among other things, "embellished on Nayirah's tall tale of atrocities."⁵⁴ Also calling this book "a piece of propaganda financed by a foreign government with an interest in driving the United States into war," he characterized it as "154 pages of nonsense and lies."⁵⁵

Sasson's next two books - entitled *Princess: A True Story of Life Behind the Veil*, and *Princess: Sultana's Daughters* - raised even more serious questions about Sasson's honesty. They were purportedly based on the diaries of a Saudi princess using the alias "Sultana," but they were almost certainly plagiarized.

A plagiarism suit was brought by Friederike Monika Adsani of London, originally from Austria, who provided evidence that these books had been plagiarized from her own book manuscript, "Cinderella in Arabia," which recounted her recently ended 23-year marriage to a wealthy Kuwaiti. Back in 1988, she said, she had sent this manuscript to Peter Miller, a New York literary agent, but he told her there was no chance of getting it published. In 1992, however, after Sasson's books had appeared, Adsani, seeing similarities between the experiences of Princess Sultana and her own and discovering that Peter Miller was Sasson's agent, charged that Sasson's manuscript had plagiarized her "Cinderella in Arabia."

A New York Times story about the lawsuit provided this summary of some of the similarities listed by Adsani and her lawyer:

“‘Cinderella’ is the story of a woman who marries the first-born son of a wealthy, influential Kuwaiti family. Her husband was educated in medicine in England. In ‘Princess,’ the woman marries the first-born son of a wealthy and influential Saudi family. Her husband was educated in law in England. In both books, . . . the wife encounters strong opposition from her mother-in-law, who tries to break up her marriage. There is physical conflict between the women and the use of witchcraft and sorcery against the children, which results in injury to one of them. Both wives are physically inspected by their in-laws. Both fight with their husbands and are punched by him. Both partly design and build dream homes next to a mosque that have nearby private zoos. Both women decide they want a divorce, then reconcile, then decide to escape after their husbands turn to other women. Both women get venereal diseases from their husbands, who have been infected by prostitutes.”⁵⁶

Adsani’s lawyer also had a statement by a professor of English, supported by 32 pages of examples, which said that “Princess and Sultana’s Daughters are substantially similar to Monika Adsani’s manuscript entitled Cinderella in Arabia.” The lawyer had affidavits, furthermore, from a former US Ambassador to Saudi Arabia and from another expert on the country, both of whom said that Sasson’s books contained so many obvious errors that they could not possibly have been based on diaries a Saudi princess. Adsani’s lawyer even had a statement from the former CEO of Knightsbridge (which had published Sasson’s first book, *The Rape of Kuwait*), who said that Peter Miller had approached him in 1990 about publishing “a non-fiction manuscript by a woman who he said had lived many years in the Gulf region,” which “would be much more successful if it were published under Jean Sasson’s name.”⁵⁷

In spite of such evidence, the judge took the side of the defense – which was representing not only Sasson and Miller but also some very powerful publishing corporations: William Morrow, Avon Books, the Hearst Corporation, and Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group. In 2001, Adsani’s manuscript was published as *Cinderella in Arabia: A Cross-Cultural Autobiography*.⁵⁸ The reviews on Amazon.com suggest the correctness of agent Peter Miller’s reported belief that the story could be a commercial success only if rewritten by someone such as Jean Sasson. This does not change the fact, however, that it appears that Miller and Sasson got away with plagiarism.

In 2003, Sasson published *Mayada*, the supposed account of an Iraqi woman oppressed by Saddam’s regime. In *Soft Weapons*, Gillian Whitlock used this book as a prime example of “propaganda generated through the veiled best-seller,” which proved useful in “naturalizing aggressive military strategy as a benevolent intervention.” During Sasson’s promotional tour for the book, Whitlock added, she even personally “attested to the sight of advanced weaponry . . . in Iraq” and “assure[d] the American public that loyal Iraqis enthusiastically welcome occupying American troops as a liberating force.”⁵⁹

Finally, besides providing false propaganda about the Arab-Muslim world herself, Sasson also endorsed Norma Khouri’s bestselling but totally fraudulent “memoir” about Jordan, *Honor Lost* (originally *Forbidden Love*), calling it a “true story.”⁶⁰

It would seem, therefore, that one looking for the truth should not trust anything that is found only in a Jean Sasson book, especially if it is something that might have propaganda value for the United States and its military allies.

Omar bin Laden: With regard to new information contained in the chapters of *Growing Up*

Bin Laden that are attributed to Omar bin Laden, there is an additional reason to be skeptical of it: The circumstances behind this book suggest that he may have shaded the truth in order to aid his own cause.

In 2007, Omar, who already had a wife and a two-year old child, was married in Egypt to a British woman, Jane Felix-Browne, who took an Islamic name, Zaina Mohamed al-Sabah.⁶¹ Omar then applied for permission to move to England to live with her. But in April 2008, he received word that his application for a spousal immigration visa had been denied. The stated reason was that Omar had, in recent media interviews, indicated “continuing loyalty to [his] father,” so that his presence in England might cause “public concern.”⁶²

Following this rebuff, apparently, Omar suggested to Jean Sasson that they collaborate on a book. “[D]uring the spring of 2008,” she wrote in the book’s Final Comments, she received an email letter from Omar saying that “he wanted me to reveal his personal story.”⁶³ In these comments, Sasson indicated that she had concerns about Omar that were similar to those of the British authorities:

I did not want to participate in the book if Omar believed that his father had valid reasons for his murderous behavior. I was concerned, too, when I read a number of Internet articles in which Omar seemed inconsistent about his father’s cruel actions. Indeed, while Omar proclaimed his hatred of violence, for a long time, he seemed unable to accept as true that his father had been the man responsible for 9/11.⁶⁴

In order for his autobiographical account to be acceptable to Sasson and also to change the attitude of the British authorities, therefore, it would need to show three things:

- Omar does not doubt his father’s responsibility for the 9/11 attacks;
- Omar does not believe his father had valid reasons for these attacks; and
- Being opposed to cruelty and terrorism, Omar has completely renounced his father’s beliefs and commitments.

Press interviews prior to that time had given cause for doubt about all three points. With regard to the first point: His new wife, having said in 2007 that Omar “misses his father,” added: “Omar doesn’t know if it was his father who was responsible for the 9/11 attacks.”⁶⁵ Omar himself was quoted in April 2008 as saying that, although he condemned the 9/11 attacks, he could not condemn his father due to lack of evidence of his guilt: “Who can know 100 per cent that my father is behind 9/11? . . . I do not know if my father is a terrorist or was involved in the attacks.”⁶⁶

With regard to the second point, the Associated Press in January 2008 said, “Omar doesn’t criticize his father and says Osama bin Laden is just trying to defend the Islamic world,” then quoted him as saying: “My father thinks he will be good for defending the Arab people and stop anyone from hurting the Arab or Muslim people any place in the world.”⁶⁷ At about the same time, ABC News quoted Omar as saying: “[My father] believe if he put two buildings down, maybe some people, little will die. But millions other will [be] save[d]. He believe that.”⁶⁸

With regard to the third point, ABC News, besides reporting that Omar “did not consider his

father to be a terrorist,” quoted him as saying: “My father is very kind man. . . . I still love him, so much, with all my heart.”⁶⁹ In April 2008, the Telegraph referred to similar statements by Omar and characterized him as having “revealed a somewhat ambiguous attitude towards his father’s track record.”⁷⁰

After *Growing Up Bin Laden* appeared, the reviews made clear that Omar had addressed all three points. A review in *Time* magazine began:

“For Omar bin Laden, . . . the awful realization that his father was a terrorist mastermind who was plotting a global conspiracy that would destroy the lives of thousands of innocent people and even his own family came gradually.”⁷¹

A *Washington Post* review summarized Omar’s portrait of his father thus:

“Osama bin Laden is a monster, a priapic zealot who was as cruel and arrogant in family life as he has been in his bloodstained public career. Not only is he a mass murderer, he is committed to inflicting death on as many people as possible. He lives to kill, the pursuit of violent jihad overpowering even the most basic human feelings and paternal concerns. He was a tyrannical and selfish father who deprived his many children of education, food and the comforts of modern life.”⁷²

Omar had clearly made all three points that needed to be made. The only question is: Did he do so in a believable way? A note of caution was raised by an *Asia Times* reviewer, who wrote:

“Omar bin Laden . . . is reliant on the good graces of a number of easily offended people His newly released biographical book . . . is almost sycophantic when it comes to discussing anything that might impact his present situation. . . . The person he can afford to offend . . . is his father. [Omar is] at times prone to overly explicit condemnations (one suspects he has an eye on future visa applications; he was recently rejected from Britain despite his wife’s nationality).”⁷³

And indeed, when read with this suspicion in mind, the book contains much that seems to confirm it.

For one thing, the main purpose of Omar’s contribution to the book seems to be to show that he is completely different from, and has fully broken with, his father. He emphasizes their differences time and time again,⁷⁴ and on his final page, Omar says:

“I am nothing like my father. While he prays for war, I pray for peace.

“My father has made his choice, and I have made mine.

“And now we go our separate ways, each believing that we are right.

“I am, at last, my own man.”⁷⁵

In drawing this contrast, moreover, Omar contradicts things he had said earlier. In the book,

he speaks of his “father’s message of hate”; he says that after the 1988 attacks on the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, his father “had no regrets for the action, even for the death of Muslims”; and on the final page, he says: “I often wonder if my father has killed so many times that the act of killing no longer brings him pleasure or pain.”⁷⁶ Prior to writing the book, however, Omar had said: “My father is very kind man. . . . And he very sorry when he do something like 11th September.”⁷⁷

Even his account of coming to accept his father’s responsibility for 9/11 is unconvincing. In the book, Omar says that this question was resolved after hearing “an audiotape of my father’s words taking credit for the attacks.” Although he does not there indicate when he heard this, except for saying that it was “much later,”⁷⁸ summaries of interviews after the book’s publication show that he was saying that it occurred within months of 9/11.⁷⁹ If so, why was he in April of 2008 still saying that he was uncertain?

It would appear, therefore, that many of the things in Omar’s contribution to the book are there not because they are true, but because he felt that they needed to be there in order for Sasson to publish his story and for that story to convince British immigration authorities to give him a visa.

There is, moreover, another conceivable motive. Press reports indicated that, as we would expect, intelligence agents were in contact with him.⁸⁰ These agents might have promised to help him obtain a visa if he included certain points in his book, such as the statement that his father was actually right-handed and the assertion, which he also makes, that his father did not need dialysis but merely “had a tendency to suffer from kidney stones.”⁸¹ We cannot know this to be the case, to be sure, but we also cannot rule it out.

Finally, we have another reason, beyond Omar’s possible motives, for being skeptical about any claims that are found only in Omar’s contribution to this book: Given the fact that it was put into final form by Jean Sasson, whose relationship to truth seems at best episodic, we cannot be sure that all the things in Omar’s chapters really came from him.

This problem was brought to light during a Rolling Stone interview with Omar, after Guy Lawson, the interviewer, referred to one of the most cited passages in the book. According to this passage, Osama bin Laden, after putting up a sheet of paper for men to sign if they were willing to volunteer to be suicide bombers, encouraged his own sons to sign it. When one of Omar’s youngest brothers started to do so, Omar became furious and said: “My father, how can you ask this of your sons?” But when Lawson quoted this passage, Omar appeared confused and asked: “It says that in the book?” After Omar’s wife Zaina confirmed that it did, Omar, shaking his head, said: “It was not like that.” His father had not suggested that his own sons should sign up, Omar told Lawson, but “one of my little brothers wanted to put his name. I shouted at him not to do it.” And that was it. Lawson asked, “You never said anything to your father?” Omar had spoken sternly to his father at other times, he replied, but “not at this moment,” after which he added: “He [my father] walked away from us. He was smiling, like it was just between him and his God.”⁸²

In the book, however, the supposed account by Omar says that he rebuked his father, after which:

“He stared at me with evident hostility, gesturing with his hands: ‘Omar, this is what you need to know, my son. You hold no more a place in my heart than any other man or boy in the entire country.’ He glanced at my brothers. ‘This is

true for all of my sons.’ My father’s proclamation had been given: His love for his sons did not sink further than the outer layer of his flesh. His heart remained untouched by a father’s love. . . . I finally knew exactly where I stood. My father hated his enemies more than he loved his sons.”⁸³

According to the Rolling Stone interview, however, this conversation – quoted time and time again as revealing Osama bin Laden to have been an unfeeling monster of a father – never happened. Jean Sasson apparently invented the entire scene. Lawson concluded: “In Omar’s world, it appears, it is possible to be misquoted in your own autobiography.”⁸⁴ That certainly seems to be the case if your autobiography was put into final form by Jean Sasson.

The moral of this long discussion of *Growing Up Bin Laden* is that this book is simply too untrustworthy, for several reasons, for its claim that Osama bin Laden was right-handed to overturn the intelligence community’s long-standing description of him as left-handed. Further investigation, perhaps involving bin Laden’s wives or other children,⁸⁵ might be able to resolve the issue.

Things the Real Bin Laden Would Not Have Said

In any case, even if Osseiran were able to overcome all of the problems discussed above, there would still remain what I consider the main reason for calling the so-called confession video a fake: the fact that its bin Laden figure said many things that the real Osama bin Laden, if he had planned the 9/11 attacks, would surely not have said. Largely repeating here the analysis I gave in my book – which Osseiran failed to address in his critique – I will examine five such statements in the video:

Pre-Boarding Ignorance of the Hijackers: Speaking about the young men who carried out the hijackings, the bin Laden figure in the video said:

“The brothers, who conducted the operation, all they knew was that they have a martyrdom operation. . . . [T]hey didn’t know anything about the operation, not even one letter. But they were trained and we did not reveal the operation to them until they are there and just before they boarded the planes.”⁸⁶

According to the FBI, however, the 19 (alleged) hijackers had purchased their plane tickets two weeks in advance, so they would at least have needed to know which flights they were supposed to board.⁸⁷

One might, to be sure, suspect that “bin Laden” meant only that the men did not know that they were intended to hijack and then crash the planes into the Twin Towers, the Pentagon, and one other target. But even this idea would be absurd. If the hijacker pilots did not know their targets until “just before they boarded the planes,” how could they have found their way to those targets without assistance from air traffic control? Even if they used hand-held GPS (global positioning system) units, as some defenders of the official account have suggested, they would have needed to know the coordinates of their targets.

In fact, a supposed “bin Laden video” that appeared on September 9, 2002, showed the alleged hijackers, as the BBC reported, “reading flight manuals and studying maps, one of which is of the Washington DC area.”⁸⁸ To be sure, Osseiran, believing that bin Laden’s original plan had been taken over and expanded by people in the US government,⁸⁹ could dismiss this video as a piece of post-operation propaganda. But the problem would still

remain of how the al-Qaeda pilots could have reached their targets without guidance from air traffic control, unless they knew the details of the operation in advance.

Pilots as Not Knowing “Muscle Hijackers”: Making another statement that did not fit with the evidence compiled by the FBI, the bin Laden figure of the confession video said:

“Those who were trained to fly didn’t know the others. One group of people did not know the other group.”

According to what the official reports said, however, the pilots and the other men, usually called the “muscle hijackers,” mingled with each other: Some of the muscle hijackers reportedly settled in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, along with pilots Mohamed Atta, Marwan al-Shehhi, and Ziad Jarrah, while the other muscle hijackers settled in Paterson, New Jersey, along with pilot Hani Hanjour.⁹⁰

Again, Osseiran might dismiss this contradiction as simply another reflection of the fact that the plan created by bin Laden was later modified. If so, however, one must wonder why bin Laden – who knew something about the need for close cooperation when people are carrying out dangerous missions – would have devised a plan in which the al-Qaeda pilots would not know the hijackers who were to subdue the crew and passengers.

Iron-melting Fires: Arguably the most problematic statement made by the confession video’s “bin Laden” is one that Osseiran quoted, but only partially. Here is the statement in full:

“[W]e calculated in advance the number of casualties from the enemy who would be killed based on the position of the tower. We calculated that the floors that would be hit would be three or four floors. . . . [D]ue to my experience in this field, I was thinking that the fire from the gas in the plane would melt the iron structure of the building and collapse the area where the plane hit and all the floors above it only. This is all that we had hoped for.”⁹¹

In an essay in which Osseiran argued that bin Laden really did confess to planning the attacks, he quoted a portion of this passage and then said: “That is enough for me.”⁹² The portion he quoted, however, did not include the statement in which the bin Laden figure said that, given his “experience in this field,” he “was thinking that the fire from the gas in the plane would melt the iron structure of the building.” This statement is doubly problematic.

In the first place, given bin Laden’s “experience in this field” – he was a civil engineer – he would surely have known that that the Twin Towers would have been supported by steel, not iron. If the translation is correct, therefore, this is a statement that the real bin Laden would have been unlikely to make.

Even more serious is the second problem: As a civil engineer, Osama bin Laden would surely have known that the “fire from the gas in the plane” could not have melted any of the Twin Towers’ steel support columns. He would have known that a building fire, even one fed by jet-fuel (which is essentially kerosene), could not have brought any of the steel columns anywhere close to their melting point. The real Osama bin Laden, therefore, would not have expected any of the buildings’ columns to have melted.

He would not, therefore, have had even the minimal expectation about floor collapse expressed by the man on the tape, namely, that the fire would “collapse the area where the plane hit and all the floors above it.” Although the man on the tape formulated this expectation as a modest hope – that he expected “only” those floors to collapse – the real bin Laden, unless he expected Allah to help out with a miraculous intervention, would likely have laughed and said “only?”⁹³

The Opinion of Professor Bruce Lawrence

Another reason I gave for calling this video a fabrication was that Professor Bruce Lawrence, considered America’s leading academic expert on bin Laden,⁹⁴ had called it “bogus.” Adding that he had some friends in the US Department of Homeland Security assigned to work “on the 24/7 bin Laden clock,” he said that “they also know it’s bogus.”⁹⁵ Having quoted Lawrence’s statements in my book, I then referred to Osseiran without mentioning his name, saying:

“One defender of the authenticity of this ‘bin Laden video’ has claimed that Lawrence was talking about a later one.”⁹⁶

I had shown otherwise by pointing out that Lawrence had called the video to which he was referring the “bogus smoking-gun tape that came out in November 2001.”⁹⁷ In saying “November,” Lawrence – whose statement was made in response to a question during a radio interview – probably had in mind the fact that this video was said to have been made on November 9 and was reportedly found near the end of that month. In any case, by referring to it as the “smoking-gun tape,” he clearly indicated that he was referring to the so-called confession video we are discussing.

Osseiran, however, claimed that this was disproved by an email exchange he had with Lawrence after hearing that radio interview. Having sent Lawrence a letter criticizing his statement and explaining his own hypothesis, Osseiran received a reply in which Lawrence explained that, by calling the tape a fake, he “meant that it did not originate with OBL.” On the basis of that statement, Osseiran concluded that it could “hardly be described as a [mere] claim on my part that Dr. Lawrence back peddled [sic].” In explaining why he interpreted Lawrence’s reply as back-pedaling, Osseiran wrote:

“His play on words that the tape did not originate with bin Laden is either supportive of my work or, if otherwise, needs to be publicly explained.”

Lawrence’s statement, however, surely meant simply that the bin Laden figure in the tape was not Osama bin Laden himself. That Lawrence did not accept Osseiran’s theory about the tape is further suggested by the fact, reported by Osseiran, that Lawrence “has since been unresponsive to all communications.”

Conclusion: Osseiran accused me of “cherry picking” evidence in order to support my claim that the so-called confession video, which was released December 13, is a fake. This accusation is doubly problematic: Besides the fact that the examples he gave do not support his charge,⁹⁸ he has himself engaged in this practice. That is, he simply ignored a major portion of the evidence I had provided in support of the conclusion that the “bin

Laden confession video” is a fake. Given Osseiran’s charge that my statement to this effect is an “outrageous falsehood,” it was incumbent upon him to address all the evidence I had presented for this statement. But he addressed only parts of it, ignoring the strongest part: the various examples of things that Osama bin Laden would almost certainly not have said. Osseiran cannot expect people to take his “sting” hypothesis seriously unless he can successfully counter this evidence.

Criticism #4: The Evidence for Bin Laden’s Death Is Inconclusive - and Not Even Very Good

Near the beginning of his critique, Osseiran wrote: “I have looked into the possibility of him [bin Laden] being dead while doing my own research and found all evidence to be inconclusive.” By thus phrasing his statement, he implied that I had claimed the evidence to be conclusive. But that is not so.

The strongest assertion I made, which occurs on the final page of the book, says: “The available evidence, therefore, supports Robert Baer’s statement, made in October 2008, that Osama bin Laden is dead.” To say that the available evidence “supports” a thesis is not to say that it conclusively proves it. Moreover, to speak of the “available evidence” is to acknowledge that evidence supporting the opposite conclusion might surface.

Most of the people I quoted in support of my thesis, moreover, used the word “probably.” Dale Watson of the FBI’s counterterrorism division, for example, said: “I personally think [bin Laden] is probably not with us anymore.” President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan said: “I would come to believe that [bin Laden] is probably dead.”

Likewise, in an online essay with the same title as my book, I wrote: “If my little book, by showing that bin Laden has probably long been dead, can help shorten this war, it will have served its main purpose.”⁹⁹

Osseiran, however, seemed to be saying that my evidence, besides not being conclusive, was not even very good. Supporting this claim would have required him to show that all of the evidence I provided was weak. He, however, simply ignored most of it.

In the aforementioned essay, I summarized the evidence provided in my book, dividing it into two types: objective and testimonial. The objective evidence was summarized thus:

“First, up until mid-December, 2001, the CIA had regularly been intercepting messages between bin Laden and his people. At that time, however, the messages suddenly stopped, and the CIA has never again intercepted a message.

“Second, on December 26, 2001, a leading Pakistani newspaper published a story reporting that bin Laden had died in mid-December, adding: ‘A prominent official in the Afghan Taleban movement . . . stated . . . that he had himself attended the funeral of bin Laden and saw his face prior to burial.’”

“Third, bin Laden had kidney disease. He had been treated for it in the American Hospital in Dubai in July 2001, at which time he reportedly ordered two dialysis machines to take home. If you have ever wondered what bin Laden was doing the night before the 9/11 attacks, CBS News reported that he was being given kidney dialysis treatment in a hospital in Pakistan. And in January of 2001, Dr. Sanjay Gupta said – based on a video of bin Laden that

had been made in either late November or early December of 2001 - that he appeared to be in the last stages of kidney failure.

“Fourth, In July of 2002, CNN reported that bin Laden’s bodyguards had been captured in February of that year, adding: ‘Sources believe that if the bodyguards were captured away from bin Laden, it is likely the most-wanted man in the world is dead.’

“Fifth, the United States has since 2001 offered a \$25 million reward for any information leading to the capture or killing of bin Laden. But this reward offer has produced no such information, even though Pakistan has many desperately poor people, only about half of whom have been supportive of bin Laden.”

The testimonial evidence consisted of statements by the following people:

- President Musharraf of Pakistan
- Dale Watson, the head of the FBI’s counterterrorism unit
- Oliver North
- President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan
- Sources within Israeli intelligence
- Sources within Pakistani intelligence
- Former CIA case officer Robert Baer
- Former Foreign Service officer Angelo Codevilla (who said: “Seven years after Osama bin Laden’s last verifiable appearance among the living, there is more evidence for Elvis’s presence among us than for his.”)

In belittling this evidence, Osseiran commented on only on the testimonial evidence and two examples of the objective evidence, and most of these comments are weak.

His strongest treatment involved an alternative explanation for my first example of objective evidence - the fact that all interceptions of communications with bin Laden suddenly ceased in mid-December 2001. Osseiran wrote:

“Mr. Griffin and I agree on one thing, December 13, 2001 is a very important date. . . . One of Mr. Griffin’s arguments supporting the death theory is that it is the date bin Laden went quiet, i.e. no electronic intercepts. I have a more plausible take on this quietness and it is not death. December 13 also happens to be the date the Pentagon released the ‘bin Laden Confession Tape’. . . . When Bin Laden saw himself on TV confessing he realized that the taping was done by a covert camera and realized how close intelligence were to capturing him; Bin Laden would never let anyone that close again. . . . It is no coincidence bin Laden went silent on that date and into deep hiding; it was the only logical reaction to the release of the tape.”

If Osseiran’s “sting” hypothesis were plausible, this explanation for the sudden cessation of intercepts might seem convincing. As I have indicated, however, that hypothesis is, for

several reasons, implausible.

Also, even if bin Laden had indeed decided to go into “deep hiding,” doing so successfully would have been no easy matter for this tall, very well-known man. Ignoring the fifth example of objective evidence I had provided, Osseiran failed to address the question of why, if bin Laden has been alive all these years, not a single person has reported his location in order to collect the \$25 million reward.

With regard to my third example of objective evidence, Osseiran wrote:

“Assuming it is true that bin Laden had kidney problems, severity unknown, to present dialysis as the only effective treatment without considering other treatments that are more effective and readily available is simply disingenuous. There is an older treatment that bin Laden could have stocked up on.”

The note for this passage, however, referred the reader to a Wikipedia article about peritoneal dialysis.¹⁰⁰ So the treatment Osseiran had in mind was not an alternative to dialysis, but simply an alternative to the type of dialysis, called hemodialysis, given in clinics. The most important difference is that one undergoes peritoneal dialysis by means of a permanent tube in the abdomen, “with the primary advantage being the ability to undertake treatment without visiting a medical facility.” Osseiran’s claim that peritoneal dialysis is “more effective” than hemodialysis is not supported by the article, which says, in fact, that “PD is less efficient at removing wastes from the body than hemodialysis.”¹⁰¹

The main problem with Osseiran’s statement, however, is that the issue is not what bin Laden could have done, but what he reportedly did do, and my book referred to multiple reports that, besides undergoing dialysis in a hospital in Dubai, he had transported dialysis machines to Afghanistan. (More recently, moreover, I learned the above-mentioned fact that, according to CBS News, he was in a hospital in Pakistan getting dialysis the night before the 9/11 attacks.¹⁰²) It would seem, therefore, that bin Laden preferred hemodialysis to the other type. I also reported that, according to Dr. Sanjay Gupta, the video released December 27, 2001, indicated that bin Laden was in the final stages of kidney failure. Osseiran’s speculation about bin Laden’s possible options did nothing, therefore, to undermine the evidence provided by these reports that he was near death because of kidney disease.

Osseiran did make a valid point in saying that, “if bin Laden survived Tora Bora and made his way to Pakistan,” he might have received a kidney transplant (which could have extended his life for many years). In engaging in this speculative possibility, however, Osseiran simply ignored my second type of evidence: the report of bin Laden’s funeral in the Tora Bora area in the middle of December – a rather striking piece of evidence simply to ignore.

Osseiran also ignored my fourth example of objective evidence – the report that bin Laden’s bodyguards were found in 2002 without him, which CNN took as a sign that he was no longer alive.

With regard to the testimonial evidence I provided, Osseiran’s only comment was to say that heads of state and intelligence officials “are not reliable sources.” That may in general be the case. But one of the principles of historiography is that, if a person makes a statement

that runs counter to the official stance of the organization to which that person belongs, this is a reason to accept it as an honest statement of the person's belief.

In sum: Osseiran's attempt to dispute my conclusion that Osama bin Laden probably died in December 2001 consisted of an alternative to one of my examples of objective evidence, a weak response to another, a weak response to the testimonial evidence, and no response whatsoever to three examples of objective evidence. I will continue, therefore, to maintain that the presently available evidence suggests that bin Laden probably died in December 2001.

Conclusion

Osseiran and I share the desire to help bring the Af-Pak war to an end. We also agree that the truth about Osama bin Laden, if it were to become publicly known, could help bring about that result. We even agree that a proper understanding of the bin Laden videotape released by the Pentagon on December 13, 2001, is crucial for understanding the truth about bin Laden. We disagree, however, on the proper understanding of that videotape.

Concluding that this video was a fabrication, I believe this conclusion to be important for two reasons. First, it destroys the government's primary exhibit for its claim that bin Laden acknowledged responsibility for the 9/11 attacks. Second, as one of the three most obviously fabricated bin Laden videos, it provides a basis for suspecting all of the post-2001 video and audio tapes to be fabrications.

Osseiran and I also disagree on the twofold question of the persuasiveness and importance of the evidence that Osama bin Laden has long been dead. For me, that evidence is strong enough to conclude that he is probably dead, and this conclusion is important because it undermines, even for people who still accept bin Laden's responsibility for 9/11, the public rationale for the continuation of the war in Afghanistan and its extension into Pakistan.

The conclusion that bin Laden has most probably been dead since December 2001 is also important because, in conjunction with the evidence that the video released December 13, 2001, is a fabrication, it provides a strong reason for considering all of the post-2001 bin Laden tapes to be fakes - fakes that were created, evidently, to maintain support for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and other policies that were justified on the basis of the 9/11 attacks. If so, they constitute a massive, illegal propaganda effort directed at the American public.

Osseiran, by contrast, seems unconcerned with the question of whether bin Laden is alive or dead and also with the question of whether some or all of the bin Laden tapes issued from 2002 until the present are fakes. For him, the all-important truth is that the tape released December 13, 2001, was the product of a sting operation set up by the CIA, during which US forces could have killed or captured bin Laden. Getting that truth revealed, Osseiran claims, would undermine the war by showing that it was launched for a purpose other than, or at least in addition to, that of killing or capturing bin Laden. Osseiran was apparently motivated to attack my work because I have not accepted what he considers this all-important truth.

But the question of Osseiran's motivation is irrelevant to the only important question, which is whether his criticisms are correct. Although three of them are not, as we have seen, I gratefully acknowledge the correctness of the criticism about the Al Jazeera interview. Becoming aware of the authenticity of that reported interview has helped me strengthen my

case with regard to the crucial issue: the bogus nature of the “bin Laden confession video” released December 13, 2001.

Notes

1 David Ray Griffin, *Osama bin Laden: Dead or Alive?* (Northampton, Mass.: Olive Branch [Interlink Books], 2009); henceforth OBLDA.

2 Sue Reid, “Has Osama Bin Laden Been Dead for Seven Years – and Are the U.S. and Britain Covering It Up to Continue War on Terror,” *Daily Mail*, September 11, 2009 (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1212851/Has-Osama-Bin-Laden-dead-seven-years-U-S-Britain-covering-continue-war-terror.html>); Bill Coles, “The World’s Most Wanted Man,” *Daily Express*, September 12, 2009 (<http://www.dailyexpress.co.uk/posts/view/126787/The-world-s-most-wanted-man>).

3 Conspiracy Files: Osama Bin Laden – Dead or Alive? BBC2, January 10, 2010; available on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cpqq9SF2x50>).

4 David Bamber, “Bin Laden: Yes, I Did It,” *Telegraph*, November 11, 2001 (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/1362113/Bin-Laden-Yes,-I-did-it.html>); discussed

5 OBLDA 20.

6 OBLDA 20-22.

7 In later explaining why it had refused to air it, Al Jazeera gave three reasons: that bin Laden had changed the questions to be asked; that “[t]he interview was not that newsworthy”; and that bin Laden had insisted that, if any of the interview was aired, it all had to be, so Al Jazeera, not wanting to strengthen the perception that it was a mouthpiece for bin Laden, decided not to air any of it. See Sarah Sullivan, “Courting Al-Jazeera, the Sequel: Estrangement and Signs of Reconciliation,” *TBS Journal*, February 20, 2002 (http://www.tbsjournal.com/Archives/Fall01/Jazeera_special.htm), and Oliver Burkeman, “News Channels at War: Al-Jazeera Accused of Hiding Bin Laden,” *Guardian*, February 2, 2002 (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2002/feb/02/usnews.afghanistan>).

8 James Risen and Patrick E. Tyler, “Interview With bin Laden Makes the Rounds,” *New York Times*, December 12, 2001 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/12/12/world/a-nation-challenged-propaganda-interview-with-bin-laden-makes-the-rounds.html>).

9 “Transcript of Bin Laden’s October Interview,” CNN, February 5, 2002 (<http://archives.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/south/02/05/binladen.transcript/index.html>).

10 Maher Osseiran, “Osama Bin Laden, Dead or Alive? An Irrelevant Question Asked by David Ray Griffin,” *9/11 Blogger*, December 5, 2009 (<http://911blogger.com/node/22047>).

11 “‘Feeble’ to Claim Bin Laden Tape Fake: Bush,” *CBC*, December 14, 2001 (http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2001/12/14/bush_osama011214.html).

12 “Bin Laden’s Sole Post-September 11 TV Interview Aired,” CNN, February 5, 2002 (<http://archives.cnn.com/2002/US/01/31/gen.binladen.interview/index.html?related>).

13 Alan Elsner, "Bin Laden: From 'Evil One' to Unmentionable One," Reuters, August 20, 2002 (<http://www.ratical.com/ratville/CAH/linkscopy/BCFenemies.html>).

14 Samuel P. Winch, "Constructing an Evil Genius," All-Academic, 2004 (http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/1/1/2/8/1/p112814_index.html).

15 Karen DeYoung, "Obama to Explore New Approach in Afghanistan War," Washington Post, November 11, 2008 (http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/11/10/AR2008111002897_pf.html).

16 "Obama: 'Capture Or Kill' Bin Laden," CBS News, January 14, 2009 (<http://cbs5.com/national/barack.obama.interview.2.908702.html>).

17 "CIA: Finding Bin Laden Top U.S. Priority," UPI, June 12, 2009 (<http://www.voltairenet.org/article160602.html>).

18 Kim Landers, "US Says Hunt Still on for Bin Laden," Australian Broadcasting Corporation, August 7, 2009 (<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/08/07/2648521.htm>).

19 "Bin Laden Death Tied to al Qaeda Defeat - McChrystal," Reuters, December 8, 2009 (<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N08219254.htm>).

20 "Remarks by the President on the New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan," White House, March 27, 2009 (http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-on-a-New-Strategy-for-Afghanistan-and-Pakistan).

21 As to why Blair claimed not to have the video, Osseiran, who accuses me of "excessive speculation," provides this explanation: "The most likely scenario is that CNN, who was very unhappy with the decision [by Al Jazeera not to air the video], informed the American government, and as a consequence, their cohorts, the British, of Al-Jazeera's position prompting British or American intelligence to steal the tape. The quotes from the tape in David Bamber's report of November 11 helped Al-Jazeera recognize the tape as their own and moved to prevent Blair from using it on November 14."

22 In a brief comment entitled "Response to Maher Osseiran's Critique of David Ray Griffin's Osama bin Laden: Dead or Alive?" History Commons, December 8 (<http://hcggroups.wordpress.com/2009/12/08/response-to-maher-osseiran-s-critique-of-david-ray-griffin-s-osama-bin-laden-dead-or-alive>), Kevin Fenton wrote: "You have to ask the question: why did Griffin not point out that the video whose authenticity he was questioning had been public for seven years? If one is considering claiming that a video is fake, would it not be wise to actually view and analyse it, and then discuss that analysis with one's readers? Of course, there is the possibility that Griffin remained unaware that the video had actually been broadcast, but this then says what about his research?" This second possibility is the case, and what it says about my research on this video is that it was woefully inadequate. Osseiran suggests, however, a different explanation, calling my error "intentional." His basis for making this charge was that "[t]he truth was available" to me, because it had been "pointed out to [me] on numerous occasions" by Osseiran himself. As far as I recall, however, our discussion, carried on by email, focused entirely on the video

released December 13, about which he sent me several papers. I was unaware that he had, in a paper quoted in his critique - "Bush, Blair, and the Terrorism Shell Game," posted February 20, 2007 (http://www.mydemocracy.net/war_crimes/bush_blair_synthetic_terrorism.htm) - briefly discussed the Al Jazeera interview. While preparing for writing this response to Osseiran's critique, I discovered that I had a copy of this article. But it contained no underlining to suggest that I had read it. I suspect that, having read several 2006 versions of Osseiran's argument about the December 13th-released tape, I assumed that this 2007 article would be simply one more version of the same argument - which it is for the most part - and filed it away without reading it. In any case, why Osseiran thinks that I, having known the truth about the video to which Blair was referring, would have intentionally engaged in speculation about it that could easily be shown to be false, resulting in embarrassment for me, I do not know (even given his assumption, expressed late in his critique, that I am a "mole," working on behalf of insidious forces).

23 See, e.g., David Ray Griffin, *The New Pearl Harbor Revisited: 9/11, the Cover-Up, and the Exposé* (Northampton: Olive Branch, 2008), esp. Chaps. 6 and 8.

24 David Bamber, "Bin Laden: Yes, I Did It" (see note 4, above).

25 "UK Offers New Bin Laden Evidence," CNN, November 14, 2001 (<http://archives.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/europe/11/14/inv.britain.proof/index.html>).

26 "Osama bin Laden's First Television Interview Since September 11; Deadline of Death Delayed for American Journalist," CNN, January 31, 2002 (<http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0201/31/se.00.html>).

27 Sarah Sullivan, "Courting Al-Jazeera, the Sequel: Estrangement and Signs of Reconciliation," TBS Journal, February 20, 2002 (http://www.tbsjournal.com/Archives/Fall01/Jazeera_special.htm).

28 Oliver Burkeman, "News Channels at War: Al-Jazeera Accused of Hiding Bin Laden," *Guardian*, February 2, 2002 (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2002/feb/02/usnews.afghanistan>).

29 Quoted in Walter Pincus and Karen DeYoung, "U.S. Says New Tape Points to Bin Laden," *Washington Post*, December 9, 2001 (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/11/18/AR2007111800690.html>).

30 Associated Press, "Bin Laden Denies Being Behind Attacks," September 16, 2001 (<http://web.archive.org/web/20011221225437/http://www.jsonline.com/news/nat/sep01/binladen-denial.asp>).

31 "Bin Laden's Message to the US," *Asia Times*, October 10, 2001 (<http://www.atimes.com/media/CJ10Ce02.html>); the text of the speech can be read at "Osama bin Laden Speeches," September 11 News.com (<http://www.september11news.com/OsamaSpeeches.htm>).

32 "Transcript of Bin Laden's October Interview," CNN (see note 9, above).

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 This would be true, at least, until the appearance of the “October Surprise” video of 2004. But it also, I argued in my book, shows multiple signs of being a fabrication.

37 OBLDA 23.

38 Osseiran even claims that I had “stated that [I] believed in [his] work to the point [of trying] to include it in ‘Debunking 9/11 Debunking’ and apologized by email for [my] failure to do so.” However, the email statement from me that he quoted to support this claim merely said: “after I read Ed’s essay and your latest version, I checked to see if I could modify my account of this video in my book somewhat but it was too late.” Although Osseiran infers from that statement that I was “not only very familiar with the work but also a believer,” my statement does not say that but merely that I would modify my discussion of the video. If I recall correctly now, I found his hypothesis interesting enough to write about, especially in light of Ed Haas’s essay of March 7, 2007, entitled “Taking the Fat Out of the Fat Bin Laden Confession Video” (<http://web.archive.org/web/20070918060054/muckrakerreport.com/id372.html>), which argued that distortions caused during the production of the tape could account for the fact that its bin Laden figure appeared too fat to be the real bin Laden. Adding a treatment of the Osseiran-Haas hypothesis would have been a significant modification of my discussion of this video, but it would not have entailed an endorsement of that hypothesis.

39 Maher Osseiran, “Is bin Laden Responsible for the 9/11 attacks?” July 26, 2007 (http://www.mydemocracy.net/war_crimes/bin_laden_911_responsible.htm); “Osama’s Confession; Osama’s Reprieve,” Counterpunch, August 21, 2006 (<http://www.counterpunch.org/osseiran08212006.html>).

40 Osseiran, “Osama’s Confession; Osama’s Reprieve”; “Is bin Laden Responsible for the 9/11 attacks?”

41 Osseiran, “Osama’s Confession; Osama’s Reprieve”; “Is It High Treason or Just a Simple Case of Dereliction of Duty?” January 11, 2007 (http://www.mydemocracy.net/war_crimes/treason_dereliction_duty.htm).

42 Maher Osseiran, “Bin Laden’s Confession; Is That What It Is?” March 15, 2007. At one time, this paper was posted at Muckraker Report (<http://www.muckrakerreport.com/id375.html>) ; available at 911 Blogger (<http://www.911blogger.com/node/6954>).

43 Toby Harnden, “US Casts Doubt on Bin Laden’s Latest Message,” Telegraph, December 27, 2001 (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/1366508/US-casts-doubt-on-bin-Laden%27s-latest-message.html>).

44 “Dr. Sanjay Gupta: Bin Laden Would Need Help if on Dialysis,” CNN, January 21, 2002 (<http://www.cnn.com/2002/HEALTH/01/21/gupta.otsc/index.html>). For the tape, see “Osama Bin Laden Tape Dezember [sic] 2001” (http://www.myvideo.de/watch/3760193/Osama_Bin_Laden_Tape_Dezember_2001).

45 Ed Haas, "Taking the Fat Out of the Fat Bin Laden Confession Video," March 7, 2007 (see note 38, above).

46 I had suggested looking at "Osama bin Laden Gets a Nose Job" (http://www.awitness.org/news/december_2001/osama_nose_job.html).

47 These differences are emphasized in a one-minute clip entitled "The Bin Laden Confession Tape" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19eVwHAbmRI>).

48 "Most Wanted Terrorists: Usama bin Laden," Federal Bureau of Investigation (<http://www.fbi.gov/wanted/terrorists/terbinladen.htm>).

49 Najwa bin Laden, Omar bin Laden, and Jean Sasson, *Growing Up Bin Laden: Osama's Wife and Son Take Us Inside Their Secret World* (New York: St. Martin's, 2009), 159-60.

50 John R. MacArthur, *Second Front: Censorship and Propaganda in the Gulf War*, updated with a new preface (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 258.

51 *Ibid.*, 58.

52 *Ibid.*, 54.

53 John R. MacArthur, "How Kuwait Duped The Times' Bestseller List," *New York Observer*, March 11, 1996.

54 MacArthur, *Second Front*, 258.

55 "Foreign Government Financed Propaganda into Best Seller," National Public Radio, March 30, 1996.

56 Lawrence Van Gelder, "Plagiarism Suit on Parallel Tales of Arab Wives," *New York Times*, January 10, 1995 (<http://www.nytimes.com/1995/01/10/nyregion/plagiarism-suit-on-parallel-tales-of-arab-wives.html>).

57 Richard H. Curtiss, "'Princess' Plagiarism Suit Provides Rare Look into Literary Arab-Bashing," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, October 1996: 82, 111-12 (<http://www.wrmea.com/backissues/1096/9610082.htm>).

58 Monika al-Amahani, *Cinderella in Arabia: A Cross-Cultural Autobiography* (iUniverse, 2001).

59 Gillian Whitlock, *Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 91.

60 *Ibid.*, 113-14, 213n8. Besides providing a blurb for Khouri's book, Sasson also wrote a brief review of it on Amazon.com in which she called it a "true story" and added: "I recommend this book with as much enthusiasm as I can possibly muster" (<http://www.amazon.ca/product-reviews/0743448790?pageNumber=11>). The review that exposed Norma Khouri's book as a fraud showed that anyone who knew much about Jordan would have quickly seen its fraudulent nature; see Malcolm Knox, "The Lies Stripped Bare," *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 24, 2004

(<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/07/23/1090464851887.html?oneclick=true>).

61 David Brown, "Briton Marries Bin Laden's Son," London Times, July 11, 2007 (<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article2056380.ece>).

62 David Brown, "Osama Bin Laden's Son Omar Ossama Is Banned from Britain," London Times, April 30, 2008 (<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article3842353.ece>).

63 Growing Up Bin Laden, 287.

64 Ibid., 289.

65 Brown, "Briton Marries Bin Laden's Son."

66 Brown, "Osama Bin Laden's Son Omar Ossama Is Banned from Britain."

67 "Bin Laden Son Aims to be 'Ambassador of Peace,'" Associated Press, January 21, 2008 (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/22711392>).

68 Nick Watt, "Bin Laden's Son Wants to Make Up for Father's 'Mistake,'" ABC News, January 21, 2008 (<http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/story?id=4168151>).

69 Ibid.

70 Tom Leonard, "Osama bin Laden's Son Asks 'Find Another Way,'" Telegraph, April 12, 2008 (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1576262/Osama-bin-Ladens-son-asks-find-another-way.html>).

71 Andrew Lee Butters, "Growing Up bin Laden: Osama's Son Speaks," Time, October 27, 2009 (<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1932318,00.html>).

72 Thomas W. Lippman, "My Father, the Terrorist," Washington Post, November 15, 2009 (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/13/AR2009111301386.html>).

73 Simon Allison, "Osama bin Laden, My Father," Asia Times Online, December 24, 2009 (http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/KL24Ak01.html).

74 Growing Up Bin Laden, 41, 127, 140, 163, 165, 178, 199, 200, 221, 239, 242, 275, 287.

75 Ibid., 287.

76 Ibid., 199, 237, 248, 287.

77 Watt, "Bin Laden's Son Wants to Make Up for Father's 'Mistake.'"

78 Growing Up Bin Laden, 285.

79 Butters, "Growing Up bin Laden: Osama's Son Speaks"; Charlotte Kemp, "My Bizarre and Terrifying Childhood with My Father, Osama bin Laden," Daily Mail, October 28, 2009 (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/worldnews/article-1223409/My-bizarre-terrifying-childhood-father-Osama-bin-Laden.html>); Thomas Hochwarter, "Bin Laden Will Never Be Found, Son

Claims,” Austrian Times, December 15, 2009 (http://austriantimes.at/news/General_News/2009-12-15/18872/Bin_Laden_will_never_be_found,_son_claims).

80 Hochwarter, “Bin Laden Will Never Be Found, Son Claims”; Watt, “Bin Laden’s Son Wants to Make Up for Father’s ‘Mistake.’”

81 Growing Up Bin Laden, 172.

82 Guy Lawson, “Osama’s Prodigal Son,” Rolling Stone, January 20, 2010 ([http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/;kw=\[3351,103658\];jsessionid=465B03872F009E8F44198245A66FC4C5](http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/;kw=[3351,103658];jsessionid=465B03872F009E8F44198245A66FC4C5)).

83 Growing Up Bin Laden, 263.

84 Lawson, “Osama’s Prodigal Son.”

85 See Lara Setrakian, “Osama Bin Laden’s Teen Daughter Allowed to Leave Iran,” ABC News, March 22, 2010 (<http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/International/iran-releases-osama-bin-ladens-teenage-daughter/story?id=10169432>).

86 “Transcript of Usama bin Laden Video Tape,” Department of Defense, December 13, 2001 (<http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Dec2001/d20011213ubl.pdf>).

87 For the government documentation of these ticket purchases, see the Complete 9/11 Timeline at History Commons, “August 25-September 5, 2001: Hijackers Spend Over \$30,000 on 9/11 Tickets” (<http://www.historycommons.org/context.jsp?item=a082401buyingtickets&scale=0>).

88 “Bin Laden ‘Voice’ Lists Hijackers,” BBC, September 10, 2002 (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2249984.stm).

89 In “Bin Laden’s Confession; Is That What It Is?” Osseiran wrote: “The magnitude of 9/11 was not achieved by Osama bin Laden alone. He might have been the originator of the plan. He might have put his plan in motion. But the reason 9/11 unfolded is because it was allowed to unfold by elements of the global intelligence community and other segments of the U.S. government. That is to say that Osama bin Laden was enabled and his plan exploited by the very people that could have stopped it. Instead of preventing 9/11 once they learned of it, people like Dick Cheney decided to make it worse – to create their desired New Pearl Harbor to further facilitate their lust for a New World Order. One could argue that the first hijacking related to 9/11 occurred when the bin Laden plan was hijacked by those that could make WTC7 collapse – a building that bin Laden was not targeting.”

90 These points were made in the testimonies of Cofer Black, Dale Watson, and Robert Mueller, September 26, 2002. See “Complete 9/11 Timeline,” April 23—June 29, 2001: 9/11 ‘Muscle’ Hijackers Arrive in US at This Time or Earlier” (<http://www.historycommons.org/context.jsp?item=a042301muscle&scale=0>).

91 “Transcript of Usama bin Laden Video Tape.”

92 “Bin Laden’s Confession; Is That What It Is?”

93 If bin Laden had done research on this question, he would have found that fires, no matter how big and long-lasting, had never caused steel-framed high-rise buildings to collapse, even partially. He would also have learned that no partial collapse had ever resulted if the fire had been produced by an airplane crashing into the building (as when in 1945 a B-25 bomber struck the Empire State Building and created big fires and a hole 20 feet high (see Norman Glover, "Collapse Lessons," *Fire Engineering*, October 2002 [http://fe.pennnet.com/Articles/Article_Display.cfm?Section=Archi&Subsection=Display&P=25&ARTICLE_ID=163411&KEYWORD=norman_%20glover])). And he would have learned that a study of the damage that would be caused to the Twin Towers in particular by the impact of a large airliner, traveling at a high speed, would have consisted of "only local damage which could not cause collapse" (quoted in James Glanz and Eric Lipton, *City in the Sky: The Rise and Fall of the World Trade Center* [New York: Times Books, 2003], 131).

94 Lawrence is the editor of *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden* (London and New York: Verso, 2005).

95 Lawrence made these statements on February 16, 2007, during a radio interview conducted by Kevin Barrett of the University of Wisconsin at Madison. It can be heard at Radio Du Jour (http://www.radiodujour.com/people/lawrence_bruce). Osseiran mischaracterized Lawrence's position by saying that it was "based on Dr. Lawrence's 'friends' in Homeland Security," as if Lawrence were not, as a bin Laden expert, voicing his own opinion. What Lawrence said was that his friends in Homeland Security were of the same opinion.

96 OBLDA 36. Osseiran responded to this statement by saying: "I do resent the use of the word claim by Mr. Griffin as I do not claim, I state." Osseiran evidently believes that the word "claim" is properly used only to characterize assertions that are false.

97 OBLDA 36.

98 Osseiran's main example of my "cherry picking" is the fact that I quoted Ed Haas's report of a conversation he had with an FBI official (who admitted that the FBI "has no hard evidence connecting Bin Laden to 9/11") but ignored an essay by Haas that disagrees with my position on this video. "Cherry picking," however, involves citing only the evidence related to some issue that supports one's hypothesis while ignoring other relevant evidence that counts against one's hypothesis about that issue. This is a topic I have written about at some length: At the same time I was writing the little book on bin Laden, I was also writing my book on the NIST report about WTC 7 (*The Mysterious Collapse of World Trade Center 7*), a large part of which deals with evidence contradicting NIST's fire hypothesis that NIST had simply ignored. The principle of scientific method thereby violated by NIST, I suggested, could be phrased thus: "Relevant evidence should not be ignored." This principle does not entail that if you quote a particular author on one topic, you are obligated to refer to that author's opinions about other topics. If that were a rule, bibliographies would be impossibly long.

99 "Osama Bin Laden: Dead or Alive?" [Global Research](http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=15601), October 9, 2009 (<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=15601>); a slightly revised version was posted at *Veterans Today*, October 22, 2009 (<http://www.veteranstoday.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=9079>).

100 Peritoneal Dialysis, Wikipedia, December 9, 2009

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peritoneal_dialysis).

101 Ibid.

102 For the video, see "911 Bin Laden at Rawalpindi Hospital September 10th 1 28 2002 CBS" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OW4A-yd9BI>); for the text, see "Bin Laden Whereabouts before 9/11," CBS Evening News with Dan Rather," January 28, 2002 (<http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/CBS203A.html>).

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