

Osama Bin Laden: Dead or Alive?

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Theme: [Terrorism](#)

Global Research, October 09, 2009

9 October 2009

Is Osama bin Laden still alive? I have dealt with this question in a recent little book entitled *Osama bin Laden: Dead or Alive?* The present essay summarizes the main points of this book.

Since the transference of power from the Bush administration to that of Barack Obama administration, the question of whether bin Laden is dead or alive has become more important.

Although George W. Bush famously said that he wanted Osama bin Laden “dead or alive,” he made clear that he was not serious about this. Besides stating that he was not concerned about bin Laden, he demonstrated this by diverting most of America’s military resources to Iraq. Bush could, of course, be unconcerned about bin Laden because he knew that, besides the fact that bin Laden had nothing to do with 9/11, he was probably dead anyway.

I do not know what President Obama and his people think about these matters, but their rhetoric presupposes that bin Laden was responsible for 9/11 and is still alive.

In November 2008, for example, a Washington Post story said:

“President-elect Barack Obama . . . intends to renew the U.S. commitment to the hunt for Osama bin Laden. . . . ‘This is our enemy,’ one adviser said of bin Laden, ‘and he should be our principal target.’”

In his White House address of March 27 of this year, President Obama said:

“[A]l Qaeda and its allies – the terrorists who planned and supported the 9/11 attacks – are in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Multiple intelligence estimates have warned that al Qaeda is actively planning attacks on the U.S. homeland from its safe-haven in Pakistan. . . . [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.”

Obama has appealed regularly to these intelligence estimates, which have invariably claimed that bin Laden is hiding in Pakistan, somewhere along its border with Pakistan. This claim has been used to justify the extension of US military activity into Pakistan, with the result that people now speak of the “AfPak war.”

One way to argue against this war is to point out that, if these intelligence experts do not even know whether bin Laden is alive, they certainly cannot know where he is and what he

is thinking.

There are, to be sure, other good arguments against the this war, and many critics are making these arguments. But to point out that bin Laden is almost certainly dead provides an argument that goes to the heart of the publically articulated rationale for this war.

Of course, another way to argue against this war would be to point out that bin Laden had nothing to do with 9/11. But even though our own FBI has admitted that it “has no hard evidence connecting Bin Laden to 9/11,” a large part of the American population has been conditioned to reject all revisionism about 9/11 out of hand. As we saw recently with “the Van Jones affair,” people are considered unfit for public service if they once signed a document suggesting that the official account of 9/11 might not be fully true.

My little bin Laden book is primarily for people who, besides assuming that Osama bin Laden was responsible for the 9/11 attacks, also believe that the AfPak war is justifiable because we need to prevent him from planning another attack. Many such people will turn against the war if they become aware of convincing evidence that bin Laden is almost certainly dead. There is considerable evidence for this conclusion.

This evidence is of two types: objective evidence and testimonies.

Objective Evidence that Bin Laden is Dead

The objective evidence includes the following facts:

First, up until mid-December 13, 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.

Testimonial Evidence that Bin Laden Is Dead

In addition to this objective evidence, we had considerable testimony in 2002, from people in position to know, that bin Laden was dead, or probably so. These people included:

- President Musharraf of Pakistan;
- Dale Watson, the head of the FBI's counterterrorism unit;
- Oliver North, who said: "I'm certain that Osama is dead. . . And so are all the other guys I stay in touch with";
- President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan;
- Sources within Israeli intelligence, who said that any new messages from bin Laden were "probably fabrications";
- Sources within Pakistani intelligence, who "confirmed the death of . . . Osama Bin Laden" and "attributed the reasons behind Washington's hiding news on the death of Osama Bin Laden to the desire of the hawks of the American administration to use the issue of al-Qaida and international terrorism to invade Iraq."

For this reason, perhaps, the stories about the demise of bin Laden largely came to an end in the latter part of 2002, when the United States was gearing up for its attack on Iraq. From then until now, there have been few such stories.

Recently, however, two former intelligence officers have spoken out. In October 2008, former CIA case officer Robert Baer suggested in passing during an interview on National Public Radio that bin Laden was no longer among the living. When Baer was asked about this, he said: "Of course he's dead."

In March of 2009, former Foreign Service officer Angelo Codevilla published an essay in the *American Spectator* entitled "Osama bin Elvis." Explaining his title, Codevilla wrote: "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."

This is an excellent article, with only one serious flaw. In 2007, Benazir Bhutto, being interviewed by David Frost, referred to Omar Sheikh as "the man who murdered Osama bin Laden." Codevilla cited this statement as further evidence that bin Laden is dead. But Bhutto had simply misspoken: She had meant to say "the man who murdered Daniel Pearl," which is the standard way of referring to Omar Sheikh. That she misspoke was shown the next day, when she told CNN: "I don't think General Musharraf personally knows where Osama bin Laden is." Ten days later, speaking to NPR, she reported having asked a policeman assigned to guard her house: "Shouldn't you be looking for Osama bin Laden?" This flaw aside, Codevilla's article provides good support for his claim that the widespread belief in bin Laden's continued existence is not backed up by evidence.

What about the "Messages from Osama bin Laden"?

Many people, of course, assume that there is a lot of evidence that bin Laden is still alive, namely, the dozens of audio tape and video tape "messages from bin Laden" that have appeared since 2001. These tapes provide good evidence, however, only if they are

authentic. The longest chapter of my book is devoted to this question.

I show, in the first place, that the technology for making fake audio and video tapes is now so advanced that even experts can be fooled. So although the press regularly tells us that intelligence agencies have authenticated the latest bin Laden tape, it is virtually impossible to prove a tape to be authentic.

It is sometimes possible, however, to prove a tape to be a fake. For example: If the person hired to play bin Laden writes with his right hand; if he is much heavier and darker than bin Laden was in a tape made about the same time; if he has fatter hands and shorter fingers; if his nose has a different shape. And if, in discussing the Twin Towers, he says that the fire melted the steel, whereas the real bin Laden would have known that a building fire cannot melt steel. I am speaking here of the video that was allegedly found by US troops in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, in November 2001, which is widely known as the “bin Laden confession video.”

Also obviously fabricated was the “October Surprise” video, which appeared on October 29, 2004, just in time to help George W. Bush get reelected. One clue that it was a fake, aside from its timing, is provided by its language. Bin Laden’s own messages were saturated with references to Allah and the Prophet Mohammed. But in this October Surprise video, Allah was mentioned rarely and the only “Mohammad” mentioned was Mohamed Atta. Also, whereas undoubtedly authentic bin Laden messages portrayed worldly events as cause or at least permitted by Allah, the speaker on this October Surprise video gave a purely secular account of events, even telling the American people: “Your security is in your own hands.”

The most obviously faked video is one that, appearing in 2007, was identical to the October Surprise video of 2004, except that the bin Laden figure now had a completely black beard, leading me to call it the video from “Blackbeard the Terrorist.” Although pundits tried, with straight faces, to explain why bin Laden might have dyed his beard, or put on a fake one, this video was best treated with the respect it deserved by a YouTube video featuring a actor wearing a very long, very black, beard, and saying:

Hello, long time no see. It is me, Osama bin Laden. And no, this not to be confused with just-for-men hair color commercial. . . . I make this video to prove to world that me still alive and kicking.

This video is very funny. But there is, of course, nothing funny about the fact that obviously fake bin Laden videos have been used, and are still being used, to justify the AfPak war, which continues to kill dozens if not hundreds of innocent people each week, including women and children attending weddings and funerals.

Conclusion

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.

Its other main point, to which a separate chapter is devoted, is that these fake bin Laden tapes appear to be simply one part of an extensive propaganda operation, in which the US military intelligence is using tax dollars – illegally – to propagandize the American public, with the aim of furthering the militarization of America and its foreign policy.

I hope my little book will stimulate the 9/11 truth movement, along with the anti-war

movement in general, to take on more fully the task of exposing this propaganda effort, to which a growing portion of our tax dollars is being devoted.

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