

Regional Power Play and Killing of Bin Laden and ISIS Caliphs

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Global Research, February 08, 2022

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Terrorism](#)

In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

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In an exclusive [insider account](#) [1] with its vast network of NATSEC skills, the New York Times has chronicled the most detailed “official story” of the killing of al-Baghdadi’s shadowy successor at Syria’s border along Turkey in a Special Ops night raid on Thursday.

But the whole screed is based on the testimony of five unnamed witnesses, including the one with pseudonym Abu Muhammad. I’m assuming his real name wasn’t **Abu Muhammad al-Jolani**, the fearsome head of al-Nusra Front, the savage terrorist organization controlling Syria’s northwest Idlib province, where the new ISIS Caliph, **Abu Ibrahim al-Hashemi al-Quraishi**, was killed, considering the Times reporters virtually played the role of terrorist apologists for myriad groups of Islamic jihadists and “moderate rebels” during Syria’s decade-long proxy war.

Sarcasm aside, the Times report notes:

“About 11 months ago, a Syrian truck driver rented the house targeted in the raid, said Muhammad Sheikh, whose family owns it. The truck driver paid \$130 per month and lived there on the second floor with his wife, their three children, his sister and her daughter, Mr. Sheikh said.

“Late last year, the United States got a tip that Mr. al-Qurayshi was living on the top floor, Biden administration officials said. He never left the building, but sometimes bathed on the rooftop. To communicate with the far-flung terrorist organization he headed, he relied on the polite truck driver who lived downstairs.”

Although the Times report alleges the ISIS leader was killed in a non-descript three-story house on the outskirts of Atmeh, a densely populated town in Syria’s northwest Idlib province straddling the border with Turkey, and the building and the impoverished locality were purportedly inhabited by “civilian refugees,” the fortified neighborhood was in fact an al-Nusra Front redoubt populated by militants and their families, with an al-Nusra Front checkpoint only 200 meters away, a Turkish police station 500 meters and a Turkish military

outpost a kilometer away from the building, according to [credible sources](#) [2] with inside information of Syria's Idlib.

Clearly, both the self-styled caliphs of ISIS, al-Baghdadi and al-Quraishi, were hiding in Syria's Idlib with the blessings of al-Nusra Front and Turkish security forces and were used as bargaining chips to extract geo-strategic concessions from the Trump and Biden administrations, respectively.

The scapegoating of both the ISIS caliphs by the Erdogan government, first in October 2019 to let Turkey mount Operation Peace Spring in northeast Syria and then on February 3 to reconcile with the Biden administration as Erdogan was repeatedly snubbed by Biden throughout his maiden year as president due to Erdogan's personal friendship and business partnership with Biden's political rival Trump, are reminiscent of the killing of the foremost terrorist leader, Osama bin Laden, also in a Special Ops night raid in May 2011, who was also hiding under the "protection" of Pakistan's security forces until he was betrayed by his patrons for "geo-strategic concerns."

As a Saudi citizen and belonging to the powerful Saudi-Yemeni clan of Bin Ladens, which has business interests all over the Middle East, Osama bin Laden was almost a royalty. He had so much clout even in the governments of Middle Eastern countries that he was treated like a "royal guest" by Pakistan's military at the behest of the Saudi royal family for five years from 2006 after his escape from Afghanistan right up to his death in 2011.

In comparison, even though they adopted the nom de guerre Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and Abu Ibrahim al-Hashemi al-Quraishi, respectively, in fact both **Ibrahim Awad** and **Amir Muhammad Sa'id Abdal-Rahman al-Mawla** were simply rural clerics in mosques in Iraq before they assumed the title of the caliphs of the Islamic State.

Regarding the killing of Osama bin Laden in May 2011, despite a few minor discrepancies, investigative journalist Seymour Hersh has published the most credible account to-date of the execution of Bin Laden in his book and article titled: [The Killing of Osama Bin Laden](#) [3], which was published in the London Review of Books in May 2015.

According to Hersh, the initial, tentative plan of the Obama administration regarding the disclosure of the execution of Bin Laden to the press was that he had been killed in a drone strike in the Hindu Kush Mountains on the Afghan side of the border, which could also have provided face-saving to Pakistan's military authorities.

But the operation didn't go as planned because a Black Hawk helicopter crashed in Bin Laden's Abbottabad compound and later blown up by the Navy Seals. Consequently, the whole sleepy town now knew that an operation was underway and several social media users based in Abbottabad live-tweeted the whole incident on Twitter.

Therefore, the initial plan was abandoned and the Obama administration had to go public within hours of the operation with a hurriedly cooked-up story. This fact explains so many contradictions and discrepancies in the official account of the story, the most glaring being the United States Navy Seals conducted a raid deep inside Pakistan's territory on a garrison town without the permission of Pakistani authorities.

According to a May 2015 [AFP report](#) [4], Pakistan's military sources had confirmed Hersh's account there was a Pakistani defector who had met several times with Jonathan Bank, the

CIA's then-station chief in Islamabad, as a consequence of which Pakistan's intelligence disclosed Bank's name to local newspapers and he had to leave Pakistan in a hurry in December 2010 because his cover was blown.

In his [May 2016 report](#) [5], Greg Miller of the Washington Post posited that Mark Kelton, the CIA station chief in Islamabad at the time of Bin Laden's killing in May 2011, was poisoned by Pakistan's intelligence service due to Kelton's role in the killing of Bin Laden. It's worth noting that Mark Kelton succeeded Jonathan Bank in January 2011, after the latter's name was made public by Pakistan's military intelligence due to Bank's "suspicious activities."

According to inside sources of Pakistan's military, after the 9/11 terror attack, the Saudi royal family had asked Pakistan's military authorities as a favor to keep Bin Laden under protective custody, because he was a scion of a powerful Saudi-Yemeni Bin Laden family and it was simply inconceivable for the Saudis to hand him over to the US. That's why he was found hiding in a spacious compound right next to the reputed Pakistan Military Academy in Abbottabad.

But once the Pakistani walk-in colonel, as stated in Seymour Hersh's book and corroborated by the aforementioned AFP report, told then-CIA station chief in Islamabad, Jonathan Bank, that a high-value al-Qaeda leader had been hiding in a safe house in Abbottabad under the protective custody of Pakistan's intelligence service, and after that when the CIA obtained further proof in the form of Bin Laden's DNA through the fake vaccination program conducted by Dr. Shakil Afridi, then it was no longer possible for Pakistan's military authorities to keep denying the whereabouts of Bin Laden.

In the book, Seymour Hersh has already postulated various theories that why it was not possible for Pakistan's military authorities to simply hand Bin Laden over to the US, one being that the Americans wanted to catch Bin Laden themselves in order to gain maximum political mileage for then-President Obama's presidential campaign slated for November 2012.

Here, let me only add that in May 2011, Pakistan had a pro-American People's Party government led by then-President Asif Ali Zardari, the husband of late Benazir Bhutto, in power. And since Ashfaq Pervez Kayani, then the army chief of Pakistan's military, and the former head of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Shuja Pasha, were complicit in harboring Bin Laden, thus it cannot be ruled out that Pakistan's military authorities might still have had strong objections to the US Navy Seals conducting a raid deep inside Pakistan's territory on a garrison town.

But Pakistan's civilian administration under then-President Asif Ali Zardari persuaded the military authorities to order the Pakistan Air Force and air defense systems to stand down during the operation. Pakistan's then-ambassador to the US Hussain Haqqani's role in this saga ruffled the feathers of Pakistan's military's top brass to the extent that Husain Haqqani was later implicated in a criminal case regarding his memo to Admiral Mike Mullen and eventually Ambassador Haqqani had to resign in November 2011, just six months after the May 2011 raid.

In his [March 2017 article](#) [6] for the Washington Post, Husain Haqqani confessed to the role played by the Asif Ali Zardari government in facilitating the killing of Bin Laden. Husain Haqqani identified then-President Asif Ali Zardari as his "civilian leader" and revealed: "In November 2011, I was forced to resign as ambassador after Pakistan's military-intelligence

apparatus gained the upper hand in the country's perennial power struggle. Among the security establishment's grievances against me was the charge that I had facilitated the presence of large numbers of CIA operatives who helped track down bin Laden without the knowledge of Pakistan's army, even though I had acted under the authorization of Pakistan's elected civilian leaders."

In his [April 2013 article](#) [7] for the New York Times, Mark Mazzetti noted: "Husain Haqqani had orders from Islamabad to be lenient in approving the visas, because many of the Americans coming to Pakistan were — at least officially — going to be administering millions of dollars in foreign-aid money. By the time of the Lahore killings, in early 2011, so many Americans were operating inside Pakistan under both legitimate and false identities that even the US Embassy didn't have accurate records of their identities and whereabouts."

Although Mark Mazzetti scrupulously avoided mentioning the role played by the mole inside Pakistan's security forces and the CIA station chiefs in locating the couriers of Bin Laden in his article and even tried to distract attention to Lashkar-e-Taiba, the timing of the surge of CIA operatives in Pakistan, late 2010 and early 2011, was telling, because those were exactly the months when the CIA was tracking Bin Laden's whereabouts.

Finally, although Seymour Hersh claimed in his account of the story that Pakistan's military authorities were also on board months before the operation, let me clarify that according to the inside sources of Pakistan's military, only Pakistan's civilian administration under the pro-American People's Party government was on board, and military authorities, which were instrumental in harboring Bin Laden and his family for five years, were intimidated only at the eleventh hour in order to preempt the likelihood of Bin Laden's "escape" from the custody of his facilitators in Pakistan's security apparatus.

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Notes

[1] 'Those Who Remain Will Die': Neighbors Recall Night of Fear in Syria

Raid: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/03/world/middleeast/isis-raid-idlib-qurayshi.html>

[2] Slain ISIS Terror Leader Resided In Turkish Occupation Area Of

Syria: <https://www.zerohedge.com/geopolitical/us-commandos-take-out-top-isis-leader-daring-raid-syria-s-idlib>

[3] Seymour Hersh: The Killing of Osama bin

Laden: <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v37/n10/seymour-m-hersh/the-killing-of-osama-bin-laden>

[4] Pakistan military officials admit defector's key role in Bin Laden

operation: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1181530/pakistan-military-officials-admit-defectors-key-role-in-bin-laden-operation>

[5] CIA station chief in Islamabad was poisoned by Pakistan's intelligence service: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/in-bin-laden-raids-shadow-bad-blood-and-the-suspected-poisoning-of-a-cia-officer/2016/05/05/ace85354-0c83-11e6-a6b6-2e6de3695b0e_story.html

[6] Ambassador Husain Haqqani's article in the Washington Post: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2017/03/10/yes-the-russian-ambassador-met-trumps-team-so-thats-what-we-diplomats-do/>

[7] How a Single Spy Helped Turn Pakistan Against the US: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/14/magazine/raymond-davis-pakistan.html>

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