

THE 9/11 MYTH: State Propaganda, Historical Revisionism, and the Perpetuation of the 9/11 Myth

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In the immediate wake of President Obama's May 1, 2011 announcement of the alleged extrajudicial killing of Osama bin Laden by US military forces, a struggle reemerged over the official 9/11 myth that major journalistic outlets have been complicit in perpetuating over the past decade. The corporate media's reaction to the robust skepticism over bin Laden's assumed execution suggested a great deal about the extent to which they are locked in to upholding the broader 9/11 parable and serving the Anglo-American political-economic establishment and status quo.

After Obama's statement on bin Laden's fate citizen journalists and activists employing blogs and social media posed questions that should have been asked by professional journalists—specifically pointing to the need for further evidence supporting the president's claims and the Obama administration's curiously inconsistent description of events. Many cited reports and commentary by mainstream news outlets, such as [CBS](#), [CNN](#), and [The New York Times](#), quoting government sources that bin Laden was in failing health and likely died in December 2001. Nevertheless, once a lie has been put in to motion and accepted as truth by the intellectual class it often becomes a de facto reality the broader society is obliged to endure, for better or worse.

In 2005 author and media critic [Normon Solomon contacted the Washington Post to inquire whether its reporting of the 1964 Tonkin Gulf incident alleging the North Vietnamese attacked US ships was ever retracted](#). Though later proven false, the reports were carried as front page news in US papers and figured centrally in the Congressional passage of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution formally initiating the Vietnam War. Solomon eventually caught up with one especially pertinent *Post* staffer. "'I can assure you that there was never any retraction,' said Murrey Marder, a reporter who wrote much of the *Washington Post's* coverage of August 1964 events in the Gulf of Tonkin. He added: 'If you were making a retraction, you'd have to make a retraction of virtually everyone's entire coverage of the Vietnam War.'"

A similar dynamic is at play in defending the 9/11 myth. Yet today public skepticism more forcefully presents itself as an unmanageable chorus of disbelief through the internet. Nevertheless, following the lead of official spokespersons when such sources should be vigorously scrutinized, the so-called free press continues its willful immersion in a false historical reality. In so doing it condemns much of society to a constant forgetting and continued existence in a government-devised milieu impervious to conventional reason and logic.

Journalistic outlets exercising true independence and not beholden to maintaining the official 9/11 story would have likewise exhibited skepticism at Barack Obama's claims, especially in light of the administration's clearly contrived attempts at selling the event, such as photos of cabinet members allegedly watching it via satellite. Instead, journalists became part of the dutiful cheering section, attacking detractors' assertions as "conspiracy theories".

In keeping with a tradition of largely superficial reportage of 9/11 and its aftermath, many stories derided what professional journalists themselves should have been forcefully demanding: more proof of the operation's authenticity and outcome. In fact, this skepticism is exactly what a variety of bloggers and like alternative news outlets offered.

When such assertions can't be easily suppressed they must be ridiculed. A LexisNexis search yields over 100 stories and opinion pieces appearing in major newspapers and wire services for the week of May 2, 2011 dismissing criticisms and calls for further evidence as "conspiracy theories". In light of the following one must ponder whether the national media's output would differ significantly if the US government exercised direct control over them.

"The White House was facing mounting pressure Monday night to release concrete evidence that Osama bin Laden had been assassinated, after conspiracy theories began to circulate suggesting he may have survived the attack." -Canwest News Service, May 2, 2011.

"[W]hile the watery grave may help diminish bin Laden's status as a martyr to his followers, it was already fueling conspiracy theories; as the administration resisted releasing even photographs of the slain terrorist leader on Monday, a predictable haze of myth and rumor has already, inevitably, begun to rise around him." -[Politico.com](#), May 2, 2011.

"While much of America celebrated the dramatic killing of Osama bin Laden, the Sept. 11 conspiracy theorists still had questions. For them and a growing number of skeptics, the plot only thickened."—[Washington Post](#), May 2, 2011.

"Osama bin Laden had scarcely drawn his last breath when the conspiracy theories sprouted: Where's the body? Where are the photos of the corpse? Why didn't they take him alive? The theorists demanded."—[Atlanta Journal Constitution](#), May 3, 2011.

"Less than 48 hours after the White House announced the killing of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan and his burial at sea, 'conspiracy theories' are racing across the planet."—[Christian Science Monitor](#), May 3, 2011.

"As blogs hummed with allegations that the Obama administration had faked the middle-of-the-night raid, the Bin Laden 'death hoax' threatened to replace questions about President Obama's citizenship as the latest Internet rumor to go viral."—[Los Angeles Times](#), May 3, 2011.

"The news that Osama bin Laden was killed by an American military raid ordered by President Obama is too far from the narrative of those who desperately cling to the twisted notion that our president is a passive, hate-America-first, subversive Al-Qaeda sympathizer, if not operative."—[Palm Beach Post](#), May 3, 2011.

"The White House says Osama bin Laden is dead and buried deep under the

Arabian Sea. But conspiracy theorists in Pakistan, the United States and other countries insist that like Elvis, he's still in the room."—Toronto Star, May 4, 2011.

"Like clockwork, the death of Osama bin Laden has ushered in another round of conspiracy theories. The al-Qaida leader's body may be beyond the reach of his followers' veneration as it rests on the sea floor, but the lack of a corpse in custody has offered proof of a conspiracy to those inclined to doubt the official narrative."—Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, May 4, 2011.

"The decision not to release photographs of Osama bin Laden's corpse and the way the White House has changed its account of how he died has prompted conspiracy theories about his death. Perhaps unsurprisingly, these theories have proliferated across the web."—UK Guardian, May 6, 2011.

When the world's most powerful journalistic institutions resort to name calling there is something seriously amiss in the broader intellectual climate. Much like 1964, it involves a conscious betrayal of the historical record and the attendant consequences of such.

The conspiracy theory/theorist soubriquet is reflexively feared by professional journalists and academics alike who believe (with some justification) their reputations will be undermined by such thought crimes against the state. Thus, like an instrument that would easily be at home in the most extreme totalitarian regimes, intellectual workers self-discipline themselves as the "conspiracy theory" mechanism determines the trajectory and parameters of public discourse, dissent, and recollection.

Intellectual cowardice is reinforced by a set of circumstances whereby even if alternative accounts questioning the official line are exhaustively researched and documented with credible information and sources, mobilization of the "conspiracy theory" label by state censors and their journalistic accomplices will render the counter-arguments suspect. And, in an on-the-go culture where citizens are heavily reliant for information on headlines and sound-bites versus deliberate analysis, such lines of reasoning are destined for the memory hole.

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James F. Tracy was a tenured Associate Professor of Journalism and Media Studies at Florida Atlantic University from 2002 to 2016. He was fired by FAU ostensibly for violating the university's policies imposed on the free speech rights of faculty. Tracy has filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against the university, with trial set to begin November 27, 2017. Tracy received his PhD from University of Iowa. His work on media history, politics and culture has appeared in a wide variety of academic journals, edited volumes, and alternative news and opinion outlets. Additional information is available at MemoryHoleBlog.com, TracyLegalDefense.org, and jamesftracy.wordpress.com.

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