

Seymour Hersh exposes official lies about Bin Laden killing

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Nearly four years since the US Special Forces raid that resulted in the murder of Osama bin Laden, an extraordinary political exposure by Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist Seymour Hersh published Sunday in the *London Review of Books* has torn the mask off the official narrative by the US government.

The wealth of details laid out in Hersh's article calls attention to the reality that nothing that any government official says on the record can be taken as the truth, and that the mainstream media operates as an echo chamber for official lies. Hersh asserts that the accounts given by President Barack Obama and members of his administration "might have been written by Lewis Carroll," author of *Alice in Wonderland*.

Among the claims exposed as fabrications are that the CIA torture program contributed to the discovery of bin Laden's hideout; that the raid was carried out without the knowledge of the Pakistani government; that the Special Operations team intended to take bin Laden alive, and only killed him after he resisted; and that bin Laden was given an Islamic burial at sea from the carrier USS Carl Vinson.

Hersh writes that the 2011 operation to kill bin Laden was initiated in August 2010 after a former senior Pakistani intelligence officer walked into the US embassy in Islamabad. He offered to give the CIA bin Laden's location in return for the \$25 million bounty the US government had placed on the Al Qaeda leader's head in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

In its broadcast Monday night, NBC News said that it had independently confirmed that Pakistani intelligence sources had given bin Laden's location to the CIA in 2010—perhaps the most important claim made in Hersh's report, and a devastating refutation of the official Obama administration cover story.

The Al Qaeda leader's location was not discovered via the CIA's torture program, as depicted in the propaganda film *Zero Dark Thirty*. This claim and the film were used to bolster public support for the CIA's illegal operations and further reinforce the Obama administration's concocted

narrative about the killings.

The walk-in told the CIA that bin Laden had lived with several of his wives and children undetected in the Hindu Kush Mountains in Afghanistan from 2001 until 2006 when his location was betrayed by a local tribesman bribed by the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI).

Bin Laden was then transferred to the compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, where he was held as a prisoner of the ISI. The residence was less than two miles from the Pakistan Military Academy and a 15-minute helicopter ride from Tarbela Ghazi, an ISI covert operations base.

Bin Laden's location in a headquarters town of the Pakistani military, crawling with security agents, has always been the weakest link in the official US narrative of the operation that killed the Al Qaeda leader. Hersh's account provides a far more convincing explanation of why bin Laden was in Abbottabad—he was being held under house arrest by the Pakistani authorities while they discussed his fate with their American paymasters.

According to the retired US official interviewed by Hersh, Saudi Arabia was financing bin Laden's upkeep in Abbottabad and worried that if the American government discovered that he was being held by the ISI they would force him to give up the details of the Saudi monarchy's support for Al Qaeda. The Pakistanis in turn worried that the Saudis might provide the US with information on his location, sparking a conflict with the US. These relationships demonstrate the fraud of the "war on terror," since bin Laden was being housed and financed by two of the leading US allies in the alleged struggle against Al Qaeda.

In fact, Saudi Arabia has longstanding ties with Al Qaeda, and members of the Saudi monarchy—likely with the knowledge of sections of the US state—financed and supported the hijackers who participated in the September 11 attacks.

Hersh's source makes absolutely clear that it was the intention of the Obama administration from the outset to kill bin Laden, and that this was enthusiastically supported by all concerned, the Pakistanis and the Saudis, for the time-

honored reason that “dead men tell no tales.” The raid against bin Laden’s compound, blessed by the ISI, was nothing less than a hit ordered by Obama, the executioner-in-chief. The informant had told the CIA that bin Laden was in poor health and would not put up any resistance.

The retired official stated that the operation against bin Laden “was clearly and absolutely a premeditated murder.” A former Seal commander told Hersh, “We were not going to keep bin Laden alive—to allow the terrorist to live. By law, we know what we’re doing inside Pakistan is a homicide. We’ve come to grips with that. Each one of us, when we do these missions, say to ourselves, ‘Let’s face it. We’re going to commit a murder.’”

The Obama administration has maintained since the assassination that killing bin Laden was seen only as a last resort, and that the primary mission was to capture him alive.

According to Hersh, the US commandos moved into the compound unopposed. There was no firefight as claimed by US officials. Using explosives to blow open steel security doors, the Special Forces operatives methodically made their way to the third-floor rooms where bin Laden was living. The Al Qaeda leader retreated to his bedroom where two of the Navy Seals opened fire with their automatic rifles, cutting his body to pieces. The commandos did not shoot in self-defense, the gravely ill bin Laden never reached for an AK-47, and he never tried to use one of his wives as a human shield.

Hersh writes that “a carefully constructed cover story would be issued” following the killing of bin Laden, in part to avoid revealing the role of the Pakistani state in providing the US with information about his location. A week after the killing, “Obama would announce that DNA analysis confirmed that bin Laden had been killed in a drone raid in the Hindu Kush, on Afghanistan’s side of the border.... It was understood by all that if the Pakistani role became known, there would be violent protests....”

The White House decided to announce bin Laden’s assassination on the night that it happened, however, in part due to the fact that a US helicopter had crashed in bin Laden’s compound, making the operation impossible to hide. The announcement—which Hersh describes as a “series of self-serving and inaccurate statements”—also provided the White House with an opportunity to rally support for the expansion of militarism abroad and the assault on democratic rights within the US.

The claim that bin Laden’s body was subsequently given a proper Islamic burial at sea from the USS Carl Vinson is also exposed as a lie. Instead, what remained of bin Laden’s bullet-riddled body, including his head, which is described as having “only a few bullet holes in it,” was

unceremoniously tossed into a body bag. On the commandos’ helicopter trip back to Jalalabad, Afghanistan, pieces of the body were dropped over the Hindu Kush mountains.

Hersh has come under immediate attack from the mainstream media for his reliance on anonymous sources. Such criticism means little coming from a media that relies consistently on anonymous government and intelligence sources to push the official line in the “war on terror” and in support of US provocations from Ukraine to the South China Sea. In the eyes of the government stenographers in the corporate-controlled media, Hersh’s main sin is that he uses anonymous sources to challenge the official narrative rather than regurgitate it.

Based on the historical record, Hersh is a far more reliable witness than the innumerable millionaire anchor-persons and pundits who serve as apologists for American imperialism. He was the first journalist to expose the abuse of Iraqi prisoners by American soldiers at Abu Ghraib. In 2013-2014, he published two devastating exposures of the US claims that the Syrian government had used chemical weapons, demonstrating that it was far more likely that the US-backed “rebels” were responsible.

It is far from certain that Hersh has provided the final accounting of the events that led to bin Laden’s death. While it relies chiefly on the account of a single anonymous retired senior intelligence official corroborated by other unnamed intelligence officials in the US and Pakistan, his narrative is a far more robust and believable story than the account spun by the propaganda of the Obama administration and the corporate media.



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