

## **Osama Bin Laden's Murder: It Is Terror, But Not Victory**

Very little is known about the top-secret U.S. operation that executed Osama bin Laden, except what President Barack Obama chose to announce: that U.S. secret forces found bin Laden, killed him on May 1, 2011 and disposed of his body at sea on May 2.

Although Obama hailed this as a “turning point in the war on terror,” it is clear that he was not proposing any plans to bring U.S. troops home. Instead, the resulting jingoistic media barrage is being used to celebrate the three unpopular wars that have devastated Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan, at the cost of more than 1 million lives and \$1 trillion over the past 10 years.

**The orchestrated celebration of this military operation will justify further expansion of the military budget, weapons systems and tactics like targeted assassinations, secret rendition and new drone attacks.**

The threat of shadowy bin Laden and the al-Qaida network has been used again and again to build support for U.S. wars, repressive legislation, maximum security measures and wide-ranging attacks on civil liberties.

Obama warned of “violent attacks around the world after the death of bin Laden.” Such dire yet vague warnings might also be used to push through new legislation giving a blank check to wildly increased levels of repression within the U.S. and to waging new U.S. wars abroad without any form of Congressio-

nal debate or authorization. Such pieces of legislation are already introduced in both houses of Congress.

House bill H.R.968 and Senate bill S.551 are expected to be included in the upcoming military appropriations bill. These ever-expanding annual military appropriation budgets now sail through Congress without question or discussion.

### **Creating anti-Muslim bigotry**

The constant threat of terror attacks has whipped up a climate of anti-Muslim hate and fear in large parts of the population. Racism and fear are essential props of imperialist war. Whenever support for U.S. wars and the mood of hatred seems to wane, U.S. officials from local prosecutors to FBI and national police agencies uncover a new “plot.” Many have been exposed as scurrilous acts of entrapment against immigrants. But the media feeding frenzy lasts for weeks and poisons all relations.

Although no other attack blamed on Muslims has taken place since Sept. 11, 2001, hundreds of Muslims in the past 10 years have been sentenced to decades and even life in prison based on frenzied and flimsy charges. Thousands of Arab and South Asian immigrants have been deported without any appeal or due process. Thousands more have simply “disappeared,” as victims of extra-judicial kidnapping and secret rendition.

This is hardly the first U.S. political assassination. Progressive and revolutionary figures like Che Guevara in Bolivia, Patrice Lumumba in Congo and Salvador Allende in Chile were killed at the behest of the CIA. Today hundreds of drone attacks routinely target thousands of civilians in villages from Libya, Pakistan and Afghanistan to Yemen, Sudan and Somalia.

The assassination of bin Laden completely overwhelmed all coverage of NATO’s attempt to assassinate Muammar Gadhafi in Libya, which resulted in the death of Gadhafi’s son and three grandchildren in a missile strike.

It is significant that the operation against bin Laden comes at the very beginning of President Obama's announced new presidential campaign. It immediately raised his ratings in the corporate media, which are tied to the largest military corporations, at a time when big business is demanding more givebacks and every state and city is instituting cutbacks.

### **U.S. war created bin Laden**

Of course, the assassination of bin Laden raises many questions. He was not killed in a cave in Afghanistan or even near the border area, but in the center of the military stronghold of Abbottabad, just 100 yards from the Kakul Military Academy, the school for training officers of the Pakistani Army. It is a little like finding bin Laden on an estate next door to West Point Military Academy.

It is difficult to imagine that this elaborate compound was unknown. In the past decade U.S. military aid to Pakistan has surpassed \$20 billion. It has left the people of Pakistan impoverished and the military more bloated, repressive and corrupt than before. The war in Afghanistan continues at a cost of \$2 billion a week. U.S. wars and unlimited military aid are a source of fantastic profit to private contractors and hundreds of U.S. military corporations and banks.

**No declaration of war, no evidence and no discussion precede or follow these attacks. Similar targeted assassinations by Israel are now considered routine in the West Bank and Gaza.**

It is almost impossible to find a description of bin Laden that does not include the role of U.S. secret agencies in funding and training him during the years of war against the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in the 1980s. The U.S. had no trouble supporting a reactionary political outlook then that was discon-

nected from mass movements and progressive social issues and willing to use political terror, fanaticism and sectarian violence.

Again and again divisive sectarian bombings and attacks in Iraq and Afghanistan have been blamed on al-Qaida operatives, even when these acts have seemed to put a brake on unified mass resistance, thus assisting the continuing U.S. occupation.

In the past three months unified resistance by millions of people across the Arab world has challenged U.S. corporate domination and U.S.-supported dictators in a way that isolated sectarian bombings never could. It is no stretch to speculate that U.S. and Israeli “secret ops” may turn to bombings and massacres by unknown groups to create fear, sectarian divisions and new excuses for massive repression against the Arab Spring of revolutionary upheavals.

This is an old police tactic, used all too effectively against workers’ struggles in the past. On May Day in Chicago 125 years ago, a bomb thrown by police agents in what came to be called the Haymarket Riot was used to frame up organizers advocating the eight-hour workday and break up the workers’ movement.

An April 28, 2011, bombing at a café in Marrakesh, Morocco, that killed 16 people, many of them Western tourists, seemed to be directed not at the corrupt monarchy but at dampening the mass resistance that was spreading.

That bombing was immediately used as an excuse for a crack-down by the government and a reversal of the constitutional reforms that King Mohammed VI had promised after massive demonstrations demanding reforms and democracy. Security forces have since been stationed in Morocco’s main cities, supposedly to protect the public.

It is too soon to know the fallout of the latest U.S. secret operation in Pakistan. But we do know the U.S. has no plans to end the terror of its “war on terror.”

Every effort must be made to challenge the ugly, pro-war climate being whipped up. Demands to end these wars and bring

all U.S. troops home must become part of every struggle generated by the cutbacks and the growing attacks on unions.

**This summary execution will be used to justify further expansion of the military budget, new weapons systems and a stepped-up level of domestic repression.**

### **Events show the limits of U.S. power**

President Barack Obama has praised the targeted assassination of Osama bin Laden as a turning point and “one of the greatest military and intelligence operations in U.S. history.”

However, events in the week running up to the execution exposed the limits of U.S. imperialist power and showed why the imperialists are so desperate to project an all-powerful image.

Obama’s message was that the Pentagon can do anything, go anywhere, kill anyone, bomb any country. Sovereignty is now irrelevant. The compliant media are glorifying Navy SEALs, Army Special Forces and Airborne Night Stalkers as “America’s quiet professionals.” We are told they have recently carried out 50 operations in a dozen countries. International lawlessness — the use of torture, kidnapping, secret rendition, extrajudicial killings and targeted assassinations — is justified and defended.

But all this has been unable to reverse U.S. imperialism’s steadily eroding position in the region. Consider a few events that took place in the two weeks before and after the bin Laden assassination. Clearly events are spinning out of their control.

### **Prison break in Kandahar**

All their night-vision goggles, electronic listening gear and special ops units couldn’t prevent the escape on April 24, in Kandahar of 541 prisoners labeled as Taliban, including 104 commanders described as the very backbone of the insurgency.

The tunnel they had dug for months stretched half a mile and had electricity and air holes. Keys they had obtained to the cells

allowed organizers to open cellblocks and escort prisoners to the escape route.

The facility had undergone security upgrades and tightened procedures since a Taliban attack in 2008 had freed 900 prisoners. In that assault, an explosives-laden tanker truck at the prison gate diverted attention while an explosion at a back wall opened an escape route. Dozens of militants on motorbikes aided the escapes.

Afghan government officials and their NATO backers had repeatedly asserted that the prison now had vastly improved security since that attack with new guard towers, night illumination, a ring of concrete barriers topped with razor wire and an entrance reached by passing through multiple checkpoints and gates.

### **Turn the guns around**

On April 27, 2011, nine U.S. officers — two lieutenant colonels, one of whom had retired and become a contractor, two majors, four captains and one master sergeant, all of them armed — were killed in a meeting room at Kabul airport. The shooter was not with al-Qaida or the Taliban but was a trusted Afghan Air Force pilot with 20 years' seniority.

This is the seventh time this year that a trusted Afghan officer has turned his gun around and killed U.S. military officials.

The same week also saw attacks inside the Afghan Defense Ministry, at a Kandahar city police station and at a shared Afghan/U.S. military base in the east. In neighboring Helmand province on April 29, 2011, the top civilian chief of Marjah district was assassinated.

On the same day, April 27, 2011, the Wall Street Journal ran a front-page article headlined, "Karzai Told to Dump U.S." The article explained that "Pakistan is lobbying Afghanistan's president against building a long-term strategic partnership with the U.S., urging him instead to look to Pakistan — and its Chinese ally — for help in striking a peace deal with the Taliban and rebuilding the economy, Afghan officials say." The article described the

tensions between the U.S. and Pakistan and the deep hostility to U.S. domination throughout the region. Even the forces U.S. imperialism has created, armed and financed are increasingly wary of their alliances.

### **Cutting supply lines**

Meanwhile, there were mass sit-ins and rallies near Peshawar, Pakistan, involving thousands of people who blocked the main supply roads used by the U.S. and NATO to resupply their forces in Afghanistan via the Khyber Pass.

The organizers threatened that if drone strikes inside Pakistan did not stop within 30 days, they would block all NATO supply routes across Pakistan and march to the capital, Islamabad, to force the government to take a stand on the issue. U.S. drones have killed more than 1,000 people in Pakistan alone.

The execution of bin Laden came just one day after U.S. bombs meant for Muammar Gadhafi, the Libyan head of state, killed his son and three young grandchildren. The U.S./NATO war on Libya, once considered an easy “regime change,” continues without even a pro-forma congressional discussion or vote.

### **Arab spring**

All these immediate setbacks for imperialism reflect also the millions in the streets in Egypt and Tunisia who totally overwhelmed those U.S.-government-supported, long-term dictatorships that Washington had relied on in the region.

The April 27, 2011 announcement by Fatah and Hamas of a historic agreement of Palestinian unity, reached in Cairo with the assistance of Egyptian officials, led to immediate U.S. threats to cut off all aid to Fatah and to outraged denunciations by Israel. For many years U.S./Israeli policy has been to keep the Palestinian movement divided and the democratically elected government of Hamas isolated.

On that same day, the station that pumped natural gas from al-Sabil terminal near El Arish, Egypt, into Israel was blown

up. This third attack in three months will close the pipeline for weeks. Egyptian officials have also announced they are reviewing the below-market-price contract for natural gas that Egypt had formerly granted to Israel. Recent polls show the majority of Egyptians want to end the “peace treaty” with Israel.

On April 30 Egypt announced it was opening the Rafah border crossing into Gaza and ending the blockade of Gaza on a permanent basis. The U.S. and Israel had imposed a strict blockade on Gaza since 2007 with Hosni Mubarak’s full compliance. Mubarak’s overturn in Egypt has meant an end to many reactionary policies. The people are in motion, asserting their rights and making new demands.

Meanwhile thousands of Iraqis continue to take to the streets and demonstrate in front of U.S. bases protesting shortages of electricity, food and jobs and calling on all U.S. troops to leave. U.S. officials are having a difficult time negotiating an agreement for continued bases in Iraq, even with a compliant and corrupt government of their own making.

### **Execution against bin Laden**

The U.S. operation in Abbottabad, close to the Pakistan Military Academy and the restricted site of the Kahuta nuclear plant, sparked deep apprehension.

Pumped up by the bin Laden execution, the Pentagon launched another drone attack on Pakistan on May 6, 2011, killing 17 people.

In Yemen that same day a drone attack failed to kill Anwar al Awlaki, a U.S. citizen and radical cleric who has never been charged with any crime but is now on a U.S. international hit list. The announcement said the drone attack “may have killed some members of al-Qaida in Yemen.” The attack is a disaster for the U.S.-supported military dictatorship in Yemen, which is on the brink of collapse. For three months millions of people have cou-

rageously demonstrated in the streets against the government. The Pentagon had stopped drone attacks, fearing they would further undermine the military dictatorship. Last year after a U.S. drone mistakenly killed the leaders of a Yemeni province, even the government expressed great anger.

On May 8, the Taliban allegedly launched a multipronged attack on the offices of the governor, the national security directorate, police headquarters and a U.S. Special Forces base in Kandahar, Afghanistan. It created chaos in the capital of a province that NATO has spent the past year trying to pacify. The May 8 Observer of Britain explained, “The dream of turning the city into a bulwark of security was badly tarnished.”

**U.S. media polls have measured a temporary “bump” in President Obama’s ratings. But U.S. imperialism’s own standing is in continuing decline. It has economic problems it can’t solve and terrifyingly destructive weapons that are increasingly raising more anger and organized resistance than fear.**

After promises of an economic rebound, U.S. unemployment in April 2011 climbed to 9 percent. Wholesale attacks on Medicare and Social Security are proposed as solutions to the budget deficit. The capitalist economy can no longer afford guns and butter. Now the ruling class is pinning its hopes on the super-profits of military contracts and conquest.

While it is true that the Pentagon has weapons enough to destroy the world, it is increasingly coming up against the limits of the capitalist system it serves.

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