

Bin Laden killed during targeted U.S. mission in Pakistan

Written by By Betsy Blevins, Managing Editor
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MAY 5, 2011 - Much of the nation and world watched as President Barack Obama announced late Sunday evening that the leader of the al-Qaeda terrorist organization, Osama bin Laden, age 54, had been killed during a U.S. mission in Pakistan that day. Crowds gathered at the White House in Washington, D.C., and at Ground Zero in New York City, N.Y. as the news leaked within the hour prior to the President's official announcement. The throngs waved flags as chants of "U.S.A! U.S.A! U.S.A!" and the familiar tunes of the Star Spangled Banner and God Bless America filled the night sky. Many felt that justice had finally been served for Bin Laden, who had the blood of thousands of innocent children, women and men on his hands following attacks starting in the early 90's.

"Tonight, I can report to the American people and to the world that the United States has conducted an operation that killed Osama bin Laden, the leader of al-Qaeda," stated President Obama, after greeting the American people.

Obama reminded the country of the events of Sept. 11, 2001, where thousands of Americans lost their lives in New York, Virginia and Pennsylvania during attacks masterminded by bin Laden, and carried out by some of his followers. Bin Laden's organization was also believed to be responsible for several other bombings in various countries before and after 9/11, which made him a wanted man by many.

Many believe that President George Bush initially ordered the hunt for bin Laden; however, a 2001 report released by CBS news stated that it was actually President Bill Clinton who did so, following the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Africa. President Bush did reaffirm the United States' commitment to finding him and fighting the war against terror after 9/11, and also placed him on the FBI's Most Wanted list - a list he remained on until his death.

Bin Laden's profile on the FBI website - which now bears the word "Deceased" in red lettering across his photo - shows that the charges pending against him in America included multiple counts of each of the following: murder of U.S. nationals outside the United States; conspiracy to murder U.S. nationals outside the United States; and attack on a federal facility resulting in death. The reward for his apprehension or conviction totaled \$27 million, though it has been reported that members of the military do not qualify.

While many details surrounding the events of Sunday's capture are still coming to light and

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under much speculation, President Obama provided some insight during his ten-minute address Sunday night.

"Today, at my direction, the United States launched a targeted operation against that compound in Pakistan," President Obama stated. "A small team of Americans carried out the operation with extraordinary courage and capability. No Americans were harmed. They took care to avoid civilian casualties. After a firefight, they killed Osama bin Laden and took custody of his body. For over two decades, bin Laden has been al Qaeda's leader and symbol and has continued to plot attacks against our country and our friends and allies. The death of bin Laden marks the most significant achievement to date in our nation's effort to defeat al Qaeda."

In the days and hours following the news, it has been confirmed that the million-dollar compound where bin Laden was staying was near Abbottabad, Pakistan, and the mission was carried out by a group of U.S. Navy SEALs, assisted by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Reports show that the SEALs flew in helicopters to the site and were prepared to capture bin Laden alive if possible, but it became apparent during a 40-minute fire fight that it was not. Reports state that he died from a gunshot wound to the head. Four others in the compound died alongside him - three men and a woman, who was reportedly one of bin Laden's wives. His body was taken into custody by the United States, reportedly transported to the USS Carl Vinson and later buried in the North Arabian Sea within 24 hours, per Islamic custom.

While President Obama saw this as a big step for America, he was quick to warn his people about potential retaliation, saying "His death does not mark the end of our effort. There's no doubt that al Qaeda will continue to pursue attacks against us. We must and we will remain vigilant at home and abroad." But he also used the opportunity to remind his people of what they're made of.

"Let us think back to the sense of unity that prevailed on 9/11. I know that it has, at times, frayed. Yet today's achievement is a testament to the greatness of our country and the determination of the American people. The cause of securing our country is not complete, but tonight we are once again reminded that America can do whatever we set our mind to. That is the story of our history."

President Obama ended his speech simply and familiarly.

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"May God bless you. And may God bless the United States of America."