

# Anchorage Daily News

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BREAKING NEWS AT ADN.COM

Alaska's Newspaper

DECADE-LONG HUNT FOR BIN LADEN ENDS IN A FIREFIGHT

## 40 minutes to capture or kill

*'A lot of people were holding their breath' in White House Situation Room*

By BOB DROGIN, CHRISTI PARSONS and KEN DILANIAN  
Tribune Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — The nail-biting moment, the period when absolute disaster loomed, came at the very start.

About two dozen Navy SEALs and other U.S. commandos were supposed to rope down into a Pakistani residential compound from a pair of specially modified Black Hawk helicopters in the pre-dawn hours Monday, race into two buildings and capture or kill Osama bin Laden. One chopper stalled as it hovered between the compound's high walls, unable to sustain its lift, and thudded into the dirt.

Half a world away in the White House Situation Room, the president and his war council crowded around a table covered with briefing papers and keyboards, and watched nervously as video feeds streamed in. The special forces team needed a rescue chopper. Gunfire was blazing around them. No one wanted another "Black Hawk Down" debacle.

"A lot of people were holding their breath," recalled John Brennan, the president's counterterrorism adviser.

The extraordinary drama surrounding the killing of bin Laden encompassed the White House, the CIA and other arms of America's vast national security apparatus. The tale is part detective story, part spy thriller. But the decade-old manhunt for the al-Qaida leader ultimately came down to a three-story building on a dirt road in the Pakistani army town of Abbottabad, north of Islamabad.

If the raid went wrong, Obama would bear the blame. He had vetoed a plan to obliterate the compound with an airstrike. Obama wanted to be certain he had bin Laden and there was no guarantee that a smoking crater would yield proof. He had asked for a bolder plan, one that would allow the U.S. to take custody of bin Laden or his body. It posed far more risk.

As reports flowed into the White House, the commando team methodically swept through the compound. Bin Laden and his family lived on the second and third floors of the largest structure, U.S. intelligence indicated. Officials said that when the commandos found him there, he was armed and "resisted." They shot him in the head and chest.

There were conflicting reports Monday about whether bin Laden had fired at the Americans, or whether he had tried to use a woman as a human shield. His wife, who called out bin Laden's name during the fight, was wounded in the leg during the battle and may have tried to interpose herself between the troops and her husband, but bin Laden was not hiding behind her, a senior U.S. official said.

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President Barack Obama, Vice President Joe Biden and members of the national security team receive an update on the mission against Osama bin Laden in the White House Situation Room on Sunday. The photo is digitally altered to blur a confidential paper in front of Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.



Bin Laden



A Pakistani soldier stands on top of the house where it is believed bin Laden lived in Abbottabad, Pakistan.

## How could Pakistan not know of hideout?

By GREG GORDON, DAVID GOLDSTEIN and JONATHAN S. LANDAY  
McClatchy Newspapers

WASHINGTON — The U.S. military's successful takeout of Osama bin Laden raised big questions — and a chorus of skepticism — about whether Pakistan's military and intelligence services knew all along that the global terrorist leader was hiding in their backyard.

The raid also put U.S. military boots and helicopters on the ground inside Pakistan's sovereign territory, an unwelcome encroachment even though President Barack Obama had reserved

the right to do it if he obtained "actionable intelligence" in the hunt for the al-Qaida leader.

There was little question that the raid on bin Laden's hideout marked a new shift in the dynamics of the frayed, seesawing U.S.-Pakistan relationship, one that's vital to both sides, but for quite different security reasons.

Economically struggling, Pakistan and its military have received billions of dollars in American aid in the nearly 10 years since the Sept. 11 terror attacks, while the U.S. needs counterterrorism help from the country that is one of the world's biggest terrorist havens.

Culminating a 15-year hunt, bin Laden was found in a neighborhood filled with retired military officers, near several key military installations and that is undoubtedly watched over by Pakistan's most powerful intelligence service.

Skepticism toward Pakistan's failure to arrest him months or even years ago stems in part from its history of allowing Taliban and al-Qaida members to flee across the border when U.S. troops invaded Afghanistan in the fall of 2001. In addition, a Pakistani nuclear expert shared secrets of atom-

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**INSIDE**  
**THE HUNT:** When one of bin Laden's most trusted aides picked up the phone last year, he unknowingly led U.S. pursuers to the doorstep of his boss.  
**DNA CONFIRMATION:** The U.S. is certain they got their man, but doubters remain.  
**TIMELINE:** Events in the life of a terrorist. **Page A-4**  
**GAME CHANGER:** Without bin Laden, there would probably be no Department of Homeland Security, no Patriot Act, no Quran-burning pastors.  
**GOING VIRAL:** Facebook, Twitter ahead of news sites and even the military.  
**2012 RACE:** The killing gives Obama an unforeseen boost in his re-election bid. **Page A-5**



**adn.com GALLERY:** See photos of the Pakistan compound and reaction across the world to bin Laden's death **adn.com/photos**

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