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THE DEATH OF OSAMA BIN LADEN



Pete Souza / The White House

President Obama meets in the White House Situation Room to discuss the operation with members of his national security team, including CIA Director Leon Panetta (holding paper), Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, Chief of Staff William Daley (behind Panetta) and Defense Secretary Robert Gates (right).

Under cover of dark, killers find the target

Unsure he was even there, U.S. commandos slip past Pakistani radar, raid terrorist's compound and put down the world's most wanted man

By Jonathan S. Landay
MCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS

WASHINGTON — Even as the Navy SEALs slid down ropes from their hovering helicopters, there still was uncertainty that the man they were after was inside the massive, night-shrouded compound on the edge of the sleeping city in northeastern Pakistan.

After all, Osama bin Laden was long thought to be hiding in a cave or other refuge in Pakistan's rugged tribal area bordering Afghanistan.

But one of the commandos thought he recognized the leader of al Qaeda, and dropped him with a shot to his left eye as the SEALs stormed into a third-floor room of the main house during a nearly 40-minute firefight.

The commando compared the dead man's face to bin Laden's picture. They seemed to match. So did measurements of his nose, eyes, height and other features. Then one of the dead man's wives positively identified him. Yet it wasn't until later that DNA tests of "99.99 percent confidence" dispelled any lingering uncertainty.

Bin Laden was dead.



ABC News

The room where Osama bin Laden was killed by a U.S. special forces team is shown in a video image obtained by ABC News.

"Justice has been done," President Obama declared on national television after he and close aides, who had monitored the operation as it unfolded on the other side of the world, were sure the leader of al Qaeda was killed before dawn on Monday, Pakistan time.

"It was probably one of the most anxiety-filled periods of time, I think, in the lives of the people who were assembled here," John Brennan, Obama's chief counterterrorism adviser, said Monday.

No Americans were killed or injured. Four people other than bin Laden died: a trusted courier thought by U.S. officials to have harbored bin Laden and his family for several years; the courier's brother; bin Laden's son, Khaled; and a woman.

Details of one of the riskiest covert operations ever pulled off by the CIA and the U.S. military emerged in briefings and interviews Monday with administration, intelligence and military officials after the raid outside the city of Abbotta-

bad. All but Brennan requested anonymity as matter of policy.

The helicopters, flying from Afghanistan in the dark, had to operate undetected in one of Pakistan's densest air defense zones, evading radars and missile batteries protecting the capital, Islamabad, and the adjacent military headquarters city of Rawalpindi.

One of four helicopters involved in the mission developed a mechanical failure and stalled outside the compound's towering walls. It was blown up before the 79 raiders departed so its top-secret equipment couldn't be captured. Pakistani jets scrambled, but not until the SEALs were long gone with bin Laden's corpse.

Before leaving, the SEALs swept up computer hard drives and other materials that intelligence analysts are now scouring for the identities and whereabouts of other al Qaeda operatives and information that can be used to fight the terrorist network, U.S. officials said.

Bin Laden's corpse was flown to the aircraft carrier Carl Vinson for burial in the northern Arabian Sea.

CIA Director Leon Panetta oversaw the operation from a

Raid continues on A2