



6 July 2026

John Greenewald
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Suite 1203
Castaic, CA 91384
john@greenewald.com

Reference: F-2013-02406

Dear Requester:

This letter is a final response to your 6 August 2013 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request seeking:

- 1. All documents pertaining to the capture of Osama Bin Laden's body, and all documents pertaining to what happened with Bin Laden's body after his capture – up to the point of his burial into the ocean.**
- 2. All records pertaining to the talking points for the media and the public, how the government would announce his death, etc.**

We processed your request in accordance with the FOIA (5 U.S.C. § 552, as amended, and the CIA Information Act, 50 U.S.C. § 3141, as amended).

With regard to Item 1, after a thorough review of your request, we determined that responsive records, should any exist, would be contained in operational files. The CIA Information Act, 50 U.S.C. § 3141, as amended, exempts CIA operational files from the search, review, publication, and disclosure requirements of the FOIA. This determination is not subject to an administrative appeal. We regret that we are unable to assist you further.

With regard to Item 2, in the course of processing this portion of your request, we determined that we received an earlier FOIA request for records on the same subject. Accordingly, we conducted a search of our database of previously-released records and located the enclosed document which we are providing to you as previously released.

As the CIA Information and Privacy Coordinator, I am the CIA official responsible for this determination. You have the right to appeal the response on Item 2 to the Agency Release Panel, in my care, within 90 days from the date of this letter. Please include the basis of your appeal.

Please be advised that you may seek dispute-resolution services from the CIA FOIA Public Liaison or from the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) of the National Archives and Records Administration. OGIS offers mediation services to help resolve disputes between

FOIA requesters and Federal agencies. Please note, contacting CIA's FOIA Public Liaison or OGIS does not affect your right to pursue an administrative appeal.

To contact CIA directly with questions or to appeal the CIA's response to the Agency Release Panel:	To contact the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) for mediation or with questions:
Information and Privacy Coordinator Central Intelligence Agency Washington, DC 20505 TEL: (703) 613-1287 FAX: (703) 613-3007	Office of Government Information Services National Archives and Records Administration 8601 Adelphi Road – OGIS College Park, MD 20740-6001 TEL: (202) 741-5770 / FAX: (202) 741-5769 EMAIL: ogis@nara.gov

Sincerely,



Stephen Glenn
Information and Privacy Coordinator

Enclosure

This document is made available through the declassification efforts
and research of John Greenewald, Jr., creator of:

The Black Vault



The Black Vault is the largest online Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)
document clearinghouse in the world. The research efforts here are
responsible for the declassification of hundreds of thousands of pages
released by the U.S. Government & Military.

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THE DIRECTOR
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

1 May 2011

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director National Intelligence

SUBJECT: (TS//) Request for Declassification in
Preparation for Counterterrorism Compound
Rollout

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1. (TS//) At the President's request, we have prepared materials for the public roll-out of the 1 May 2011 counterterrorism operation against a compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan. We request you declassify the following attached products:

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a. Three graphics, including one current image of the Abbottabad compound, one imagery-based line drawing, and one comparison of the Abbottabad neighborhood before construction of the compound with the neighborhood today;

b. One document containing the text of the talking points that will be used with the press for the background briefing;

c. One document containing the text of the questions and answers prepared for use at the background briefing; and

d. One document containing White House press guidance for the interagency.

2. (U) If you concur, please sign and send Director, National Geospatial Intelligence Agency the attached memo in order to complete the imagery-related declassification.

*Jeri - Tabled to
Director NGA and are
concur.*

Leon E. Panetta

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DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE
WASHINGTON, DC 20511

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, National Geospatial Intelligence Agency

SUBJECT: [] Declassification of Imagery Products

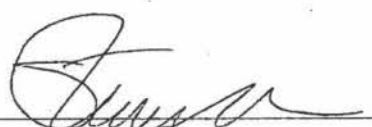
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1. [] I have reviewed the imagery-based products prepared at the request of the White House for use in the public roll-out of the Abbottabad compound operation.

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2. [] I authorize the use of these half-meter resolution products, as well as any text or other intelligence information derived from this imagery, in an UNCLASSIFIED manner for the public roll-out.

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for 
James R. Clapper

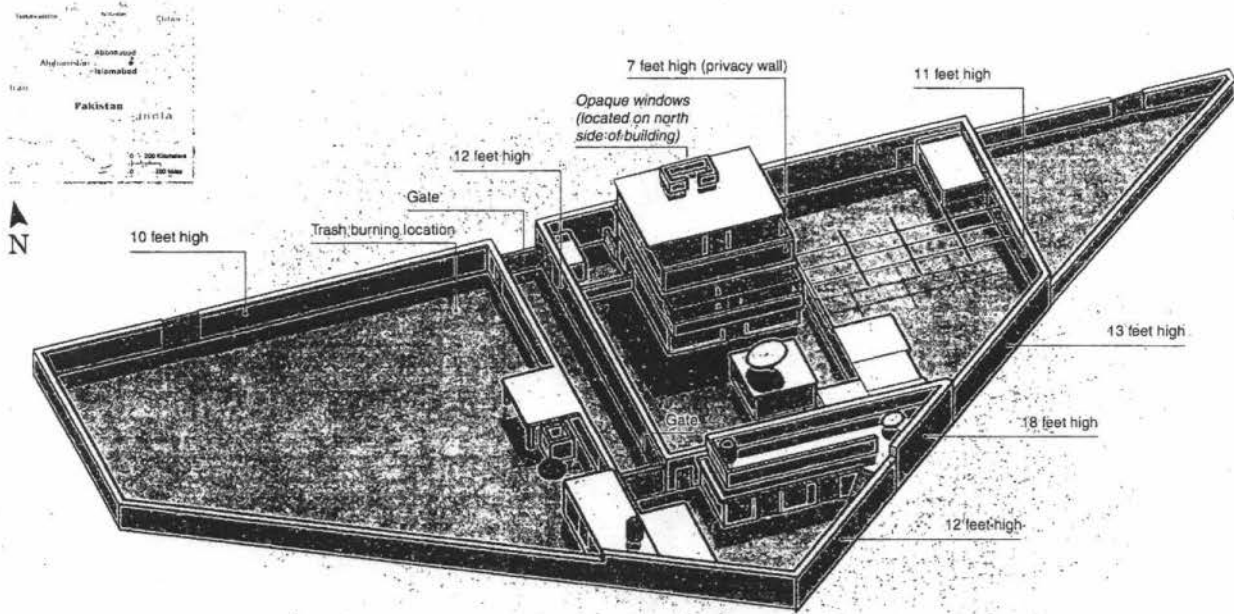
5/1/2011
Date

Classified By: 2248395
Reason: 1.4(c)
Declassify On: 20360429
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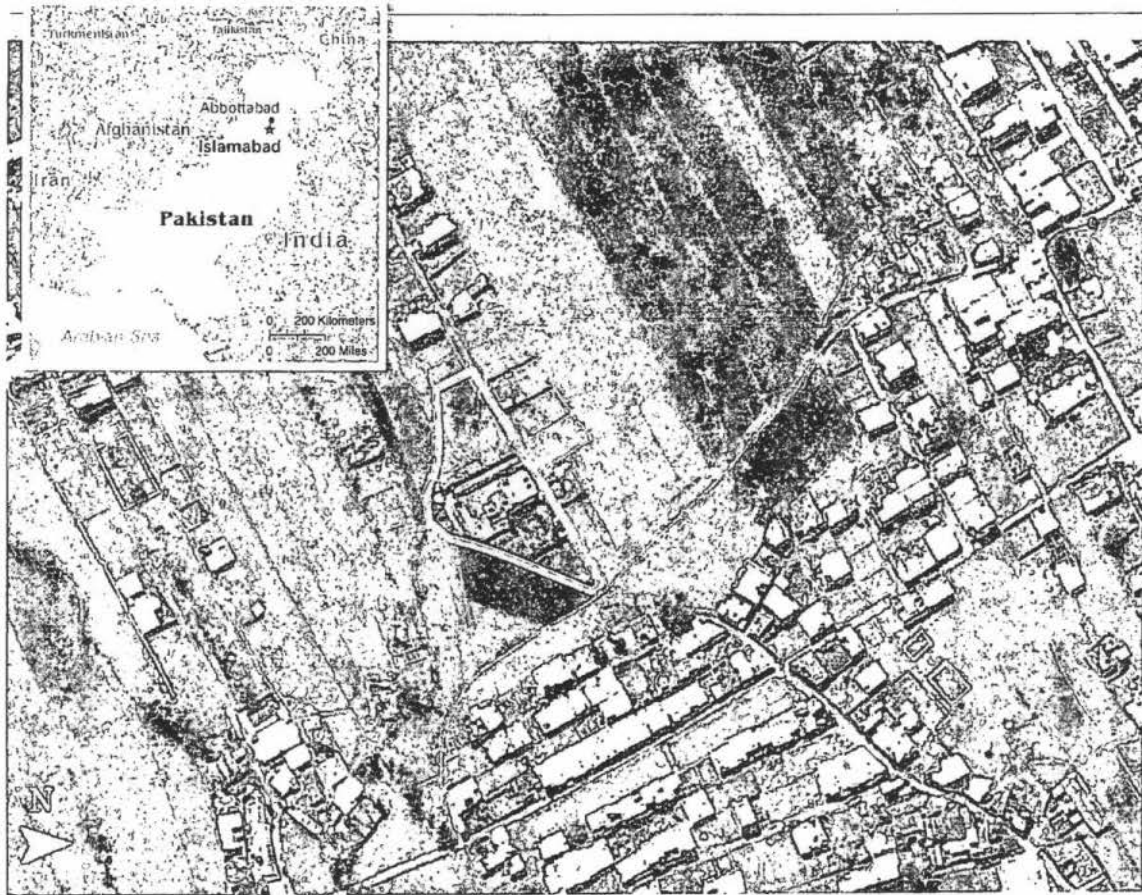
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Illustration of Abbottabad Compound

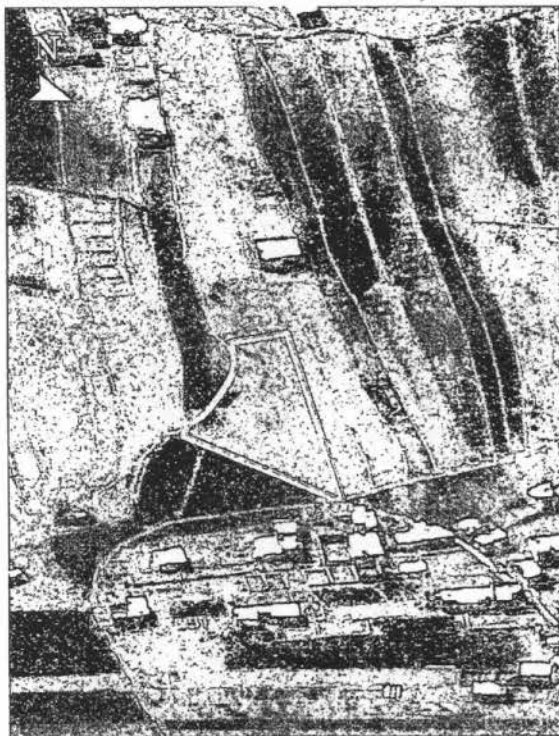


Abbottabad Compound, 2011

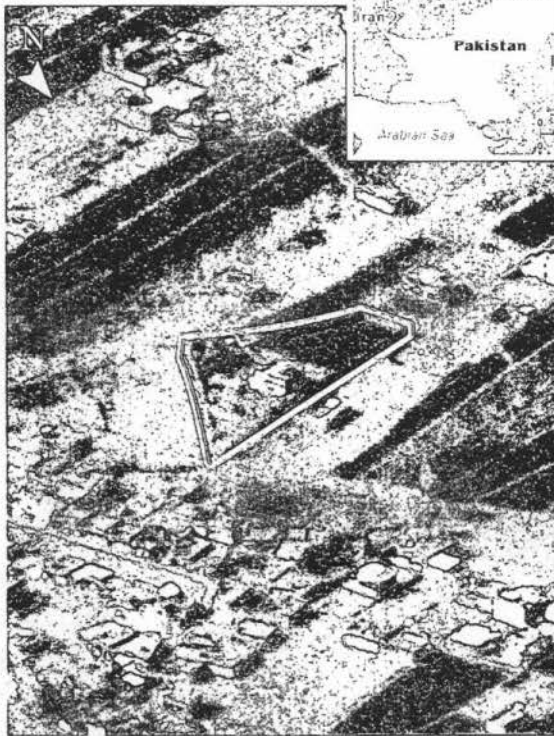


Abbottabad Compound

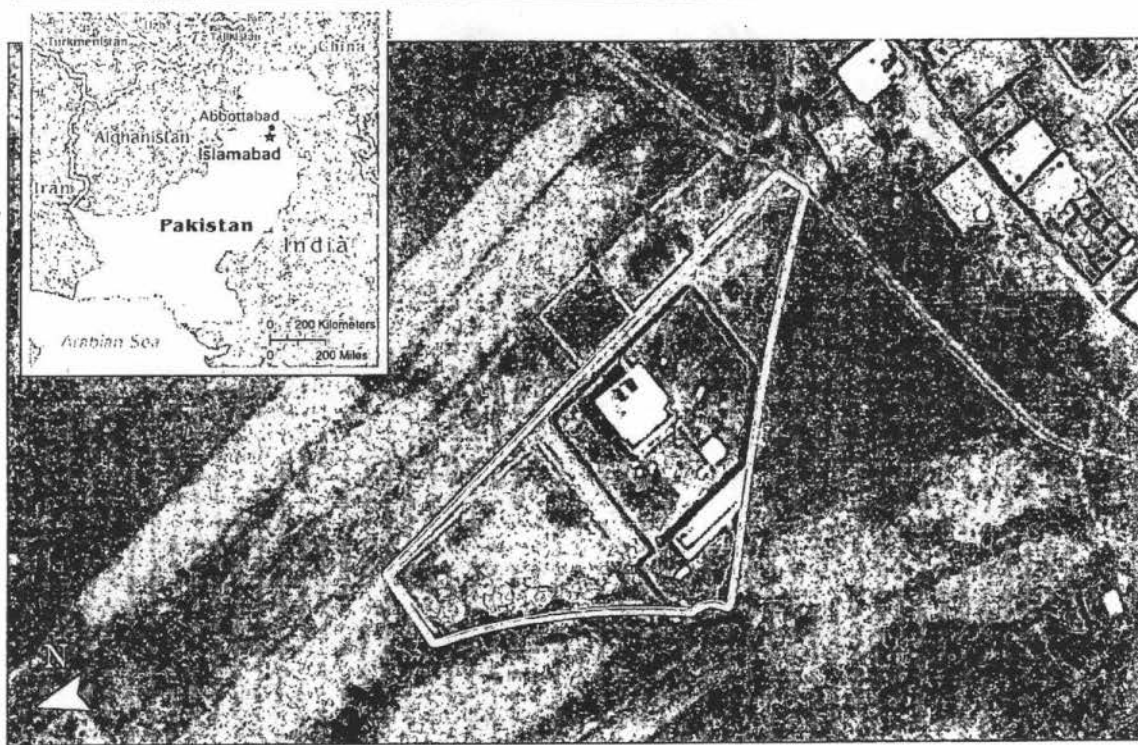
Preconstruction, 2004



Postconstruction, 2011



Abbottabad Compound, 2005



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Talking Points for Background Briefing (with USMIL references)
(written to be declassified)

Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism

- I am pleased to be joined by Leon Panetta, Director of the CIA, and Michael Morell, Deputy Director of the CIA. Each of us will make brief remarks. Then we'll be happy to take your questions.
- As you heard, the President ordered a raid today against an al Qaeda compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan. Based on intelligence collection and analysis, US forces found Osama Bin Laden living in a large home on a secured compound in an affluent suburb of Islamabad.
- The raid occurred in the early morning hours in Pakistan and accomplished its objective: Osama Bin Laden is no longer a threat to America.
- This remarkable achievement could not have happened without persistent effort and careful planning over many years. Our intelligence and military professionals did a superb job. They deserve tremendous credit for serving justice to Osama Bin Laden.
- Bin Laden was a sworn enemy of the United States and a danger to all humanity—a man who called for the murder of any American, anywhere on Earth.
- His death is central to the President's goal of disrupting, dismantling, and ultimately defeating al Qaeda and its violent allies.
- He was responsible for killing thousands of innocent men and women, not only on 9/11, but in the 1998 East Africa embassy bombings, the attack on the USS Cole, and many other acts of brutality.
- He was the leader of a violent extremist movement with affiliates across the globe that have taken up arms against the United States and its allies.
- Bin Ladin's most influential role had been to designate the US as al Qaeda's primary target and to maintain organizational focus on that objective. This strategic directive—first made in a 1996 declaration of jihad against Americans—was the cornerstone of Bin Ladin's message.

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- Since 9/11, our Intelligence Community has worked tirelessly to track down Bin Laden, knowing that his removal from al Qaeda would strike a crippling blow to the organization and its militant allies.
- Last September, the President was made aware of a compound in Abbottabad where a key al Qaeda facilitator appeared to be harboring a high-value target. He received regular intelligence updates on the compound and its inhabitants and he directed that action be taken as soon as he concluded that the intelligence case was strong.
- A range of options for achieving the mission were developed, and on Friday he authorized the operation.
- I'll turn to Leon and Michael now to walk you through the intelligence and today's operation.

Director of the Central Intelligence Agency

- Thank you John.
- First, I want to point out that today's success is a model of seamless collaboration, both within the Intelligence Community and with the US military. Since 9/11, this is what the American people have expected of us. Today, in this critical operation, we delivered.
- This military operation was the culmination of years of careful and highly advanced intelligence work. Officers from CIA, NGA, and NSA worked very hard as a team to analyze and pinpoint this compound. Together, they applied their unique expertise and capabilities to America's most vexing intelligence problem.
- When the case had been made that this was a critical target, we began working closely with our military colleagues to prepare this mission. In the end, it was the matchless skill and courage of American servicemen that secured this triumph for our country and the world.

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Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency

- The bottom line of all our collection and analysis was that we had high confidence that the compound harbored a high-value terrorist target. Experts who worked this issue for years assessed that there was a strong probability that the terrorist hiding there was Osama Bin Laden. (Show photo of Bin Laden)
- I'll walk you through the key points in the intelligence trail that led to that conclusion.
- From the time our nation first recognized Bin Laden as a threat, the CIA gathered leads on individuals in his inner circle, including personal couriers.
- Detainee reporting in the post-9/11 period flagged for us individuals who may have been providing direct support to Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri after their escape from Afghanistan.
- One courier in particular had our constant attention. Detainees gave us his *nom de guerre*, or nickname, and identified him as both a protégé of Khalid Sheikh Mohammad—the mastermind of the September 11th attacks—and a trusted assistant of Abu Faraj al-Libi, the former Number Three who was captured in 2005.
- Detainees also identified this man as one of the few al Qaeda couriers trusted by Bin Laden. They indicated he might be living with and protecting Bin Laden, but for years we were unable to identify his true name or location.
- Four years ago, we uncovered the identity of this key courier. For operational reasons, we cannot share his name with you.
- After months of persistent effort, about two years ago, we identified areas in Pakistan where the courier and his brother operated. Still, we were unable to pinpoint where they lived due to extensive operational security on their part. The fact that they were being so careful reinforced our belief that we were on the right track.

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- In August 2010, we found their residence—a compound in Abbottabad, a town about 35 miles north of Islamabad. (Show mid-distance map.)
- The area is relatively affluent, with lots of retired military. It also is insulated from the natural disasters and terrorist attacks that have afflicted other parts of Pakistan.
- When we saw the compound where the brothers lived, we were shocked. It can only be described as a fortress. The uniqueness of the compound—and additional intelligence collected over a number of months—raised further suspicions.
- The compound sits on a large plot of land, in an area that was relatively secluded when it was built. It is roughly eight times larger than other home sites in the area.
- When the compound was built in 2005, it was on the outskirts of the town center, at the end of a narrow dirt road. (Show 2005 image of the compound)
- In the last six years, some residential homes have been built nearby. You can see how the area has changed in this side-by-side shot. (Show side-by-side overhead view with compound outlines.)
- And this is a relatively recent shot of the compound. (Show 2011 image of the compound). You can see that Bin Laden wasn't living like his neighbors. Nor was he living in the difficult conditions of his fellow al Qaeda terrorists in the FATA.
- The physical security measures of this compound are extraordinary. It has 12-to-18- foot walls, topped with barbed wire. Internal walls section off different portions of the compound to provide extra privacy. Access to the compound was restricted by two security gates. And the residents of the compound burned their trash. (Show line drawing of compound with features labeled.)

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- The main structure, a three-story building, has few windows facing the outside of the compound. A terrace on the third floor has a seven-foot privacy wall.
- It is also noteworthy that the property is valued at approximately \$1 million dollars, but has no telephone or internet service connected to it. The brothers had no explainable source of wealth.
- Intelligence analysts concluded that this compound was custom built to hide someone of significance.
- Soon we learned that more people were living at the compound than the two brothers and their families. A third family lived there, one whose size and makeup matched the Bin Laden family members that we believed were most likely to be with Osama.
- Our best assessment, based on a large body of reporting from multiple sources, was that Bin Laden was living there with several family members, including his youngest wife.
- Everything we saw—the extremely elaborate operational security, the brothers' background and behavior, and the location and design of the compound itself—was perfectly consistent with what our experts expected Bin Laden's hideout to look like. Keep in mind that two of Bin Laden's gatekeepers—KSM and Abu Faraj—were arrested in settled areas.
- Our analysts looked at this from every angle, considering carefully who other than Bin Laden could be at the compound. We conducted red-team exercises and other forms of alternate analysis. No other candidate fit the bill as well as Bin Laden.
- So the final conclusion from an intelligence standpoint was twofold: We had high confidence that a high-value target was being harbored by the brothers on the compound; and we assessed that there was a strong probability that person was Osama Bin Laden.

Operation

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- Earlier this afternoon, US military forces conducted an aerial raid on the compound.
- Considerable planning helped prepare those servicemen for this very complex mission. Senior military officers have been involved in the decisionmaking and planning for this operation for months, and briefed the President regularly.
- I've already mentioned the unusual characteristics of this compound. Each of these—including the high walls, security features, suburban location, and proximity to Islamabad—made this an especially dangerous operation.
- The men who executed this mission accepted this risk, practiced to minimize those risks, and understood the importance of the target to the national security of the United States.
- I know you understand that I can't and won't get into many details of this mission, but I'll share what I can.
- This operation was a surgical raid by a small team, designed to minimize collateral damage and to pose as little risk as possible to non-combatants on the compound or to Pakistani civilians in the neighborhood.
- US troops were at the compound for under 40 minutes, and did not encounter any local authorities while performing the raid.
- In addition to Osama Bin Laden, three adult males were killed in the raid. We believe two were the couriers, and the third was Bin Laden's adult son.
- There were women and children at the compound at the time, and none of them was hurt. In fact, there were no other casualties.
- During the raid, we lost one helicopter due to mechanical failure. The aircraft was destroyed by the crew, and the assault force and crew members boarded the remaining aircraft to exit the compound. All

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noncombatants were moved safely away from the compound before the detonation.

- That's all I have at this time. I'll now turn it back to John.

Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism

Pakistan

- We shared our intelligence on this Bin Laden compound with no one, including Pakistan.
- That was for one reason and one reason alone—we believed it was essential to the security of the operation and our personnel. In fact, only a small group of people inside our own government knew of this operation in advance.
- Shortly after the raid, US officials contacted senior Pakistani leaders to brief them on the intent and results of the raid. That includes...TBD. US officials have also contacted a number of allied governments throughout the world.
- Since 9/11, the United States has made it clear to Pakistan that we would pursue Bin Laden wherever he might be. Pakistan has long understood that we are at war with al Qaeda. The United States had a legal and moral obligation to act on the information it had.
- Let me emphasize that great care was taken to ensure operational success, to minimize the possibility of non-combatant casualties, and to adhere to American and international law in carrying out the mission.

Heightened Threat and US Response

- I should note that, in the wake of this operation, there may be a heightened threat to the Homeland and to US citizens and facilities abroad.

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- Al Qaeda operatives and sympathizers may respond violently or try to avenge Bin Laden's death.
- Or other terrorist leaders may accelerate efforts to strike the United States as a way to burnish their credentials as leaders of the violent extremist movement.
- The United States is taking every possible precaution to keep safe Americans here at home and overseas. The State Department has sent guidance to embassies worldwide, and a travel advisory has been issued for Pakistan.

Effect on al Qaeda

- Without a doubt, the United States will continue to face terrorist threats and the United States will continue to fight those threats. We have always understood that this fight would be a marathon, not a sprint.
- There is also no doubt that the death of Osama Bin Laden marks the single greatest victory in the US-led campaign to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda. It is a major and essential step in bringing about al Qaeda's eventual dissolution.
- Bin Laden was al Qaeda's only *Amir*, or commander, in its 22-year history. He was largely responsible for the organization's mystique, its attraction among violent jihadists, and its focus on America as a terrorist target.
- As the only al Qaeda leader whose authority was universally respected, he also maintained its cohesion.
- His likely successor, Ayman al-Zawahiri, is far less charismatic and not as well respected within the organization, according to comments from several captured al Qaeda leaders. He probably will have difficulty maintaining the loyalty of Bin Laden's largely Gulf Arab followers.
- Although al Qaeda may not fragment immediately, the loss of Bin Laden puts the group on a path of decline that will be difficult to reverse.

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Finally, it's important to note that Bin Laden's defeat is perfectly consistent with the great movement toward freedom and democracy sweeping the Arab world. He stood in absolute opposition to what courageous men and women throughout the Middle East and North Africa are risking their lives for—individual rights and human dignity.

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Questions and Answers

(written to be declassified)

Regarding the Compound and Associated Intelligence***Where is the compound?***

- The compound is in Abbottabad, a town in Pakistan's Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province (formerly the Northwest Frontier Province), about 35 miles north of Islamabad.
- The compound sits on a large plot of land, roughly the size of an acre. When it was built in 2005, it was on the outskirts of the city center at the end of a narrow dirt road. In the last six years, some residential homes have been built near the compound.

What led you to this compound?

- Shortly after 9/11, a number of detainees began providing intelligence on the identities of various Bin Laden couriers and facilitators.
- One of the pieces of intelligence provided by the detainees was the nom de guerre, or nickname, of an individual who was a protégé of Khalid Sheikh Mohammad and one of the few couriers trusted by Bin Laden.
- Detainees indicated that this individual could be living with and protecting Bin Laden. For several years, intelligence agencies sought information on the true name of this individual and his whereabouts. We uncovered his true name about four years ago.
- Two years ago, we identified a man in Pakistan who we strongly believed was this long-sought individual. Around the same time, we also identified his brother. Both men exhibited extraordinary operational security in concealing their whereabouts and their connection to Abbottabad.
- In August 2010, we found a compound in Abbottabad where the brothers were living, and we were shocked by what we saw.

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(b)(3)***What did the compound look like?***

- The compound sits on approximately an acre of land—a plot roughly eight times larger than most in Abbottabad or other settled areas of Pakistan.
- It has very high walls to shield its occupants. In places, the walls reach 12-to-18 feet high and are topped with barbed wire. Additionally, walls were built to section off different portions of the compound to provide extra privacy.
- The main house is three stories high, with small windows covered with what appears to be one-way reflective material so that individuals cannot see into the house.
- The third floor has a balcony with walls that are 7 feet high – highly unusual for that area.
- Our information indicates that this compound was custom built to shield anyone from observing the occupants living at the house, which is of note given Bin Laden's background in construction.
- The property is valued at approximately \$1 million dollars, and the brothers who were harboring Bin Laden had no explainable source of wealth.
- The occupants of the compound burned all of their own trash – which we assessed was a way to prevent others from discovering information about the occupants.
- The compound has no telephone or internet service connected to it.

How confident were you that Bin Laden was there?

- We had high confidence that the compound harbored a high-value terrorist target.
- We assessed that there was a strong probability that Bin Laden was there. We carefully considered who else could be the harbored individual. No other candidate fit the bill as well as Bin Laden.
- First, because we learned that three families lived on the compound, including one whose size and makeup matched the Bin Laden family members that we believed were most likely to be with Osama.

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- And second, because everything we saw—the extensive operational security, the brothers' background and behavior, and the design of the compound itself—was consistent with what our experts would expect Bin Laden's redoubt to look like.
- It is important to remember that two other senior al Qaeda leaders—Khalid Sheikh Mohammad and Abu Faraj al-Libi—were arrested in settled areas of Pakistan.

What was the President's level of confidence in the intelligence?

- The President had complete confidence in the intelligence.

Why didn't the US trust the Pakistanis enough to share the intelligence with them?

- The United States shared our very sensitive intelligence with no one, and this was very tightly held in our own government. We were determined to protect the intelligence so that the operation would be successful. It was the best way to achieve our objective. The USG made several phone calls tonight to our Pakistani counterparts to discuss the operation with them.

Did you share this intelligence with any of our key CT partners?

- We did not, simply because this intelligence was so sensitive—even within our own government, few people knew about it. None of this changes the fact that we work very closely with a number of governments on CT issues, and will continue to do so. Those partnerships are of great importance to us. We shared this operation with our key counterterrorism partners, including Pakistan, as soon as possible after it occurred.

Why did it take so long to find him?

- We've said all along that finding one man—one who spent much of his time focused on his own security—in such a vast area halfway around the world is an extremely difficult and complicated task. Only a handful of his most loyal followers knew where he was.

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- The fact that we did find him attests to the skill, persistence, and sheer valor of the men and women who serve our country—at CIA, in the military, and across the Intelligence Community. For years, they have put their lives on the line so that the United States could bring Bin Laden to justice.

Did the detainee reporting you mentioned come from anyone who was held at a black site or subjected to enhanced interrogation techniques?

- I can't discuss details on the specific sources of the reporting. However, reporting from a wide variety of sources—independently verified—helped lead us to this location.

Did any detainees at Gitmo provide information that led to Bin Laden's location?

- I can't discuss details on the specific sources of the reporting. However, reporting from a wide variety of sources—independently verified—helped lead us to this location.

Regarding the Operation

How was the operation conducted?

- The operation was a surgical raid designed to minimize collateral damage and pose as little risk as possible to non-combatants on the compound and civilians in the immediate vicinity.
- US forces were at the compound for less than 40 minutes.

What unit conducted the raid?

- I cannot be any more specific than to say a small team of highly-skilled operators conducted the raid.

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How many troops were involved?

- I can't be specific. It was a small team.

From where was the operation launched?

- For operational reasons, I cannot share that information with you.

How long were US forces in Pakistan?

- I cannot get into that level of detail with you.

Are US forces still in Pakistan?

- No, they left the country after the operation.

What was the mission objective, as directed by the President?

- To kill or capture Osama Bin Laden.

Who was at the compound at the time of the mission?

- Osama Bin Laden and members of his family were at the compound.
- The two couriers and their families were present as well.

Who, other than Bin Laden, was killed?

- We believe the two brothers, who were the al Qaeda facilitators, and his son were also killed.
- The women and children at the compound were not injured or killed in the raid.

Was anyone captured during the raid?

- No one was detained.

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Did the occupants of the compound put up a fight?

- There was a firefight after our team arrived.

How exactly did Bin Laden die?

- Bin Laden was killed in the raid by the strike team.

What proof do you have that he is dead?

- Bin Laden's body has been identified by a senior US military officer. DNA testing is being conducted now, and results should be available tomorrow afternoon.

What was done with Bin Laden's remains?

- Great care has been taken to ensure the bodies will be handled in a respectful and dignified manner.

Were there any US casualties?

- No.

Are you planning similar operations against al Qaeda in the future on Pakistani soil?

- For obvious reasons, we don't discuss operational planning.
- But it is important to note the extraordinary circumstances here. This was Osama Bin Laden— a terrorist responsible for the deaths of thousands of innocent men and women, an avowed enemy of the United States, and a man who led a movement determined to destroy America and the freedoms it stands for.
- We would not expect to take similar action in the future unless it is directed at someone who presents a similar threat to the United States as Bin Laden.

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(b)(3)***Did the site yield anything of further intelligence value?***

- Without getting into detail, our team did collect valuable intelligence while on site and all of us will be working together to analyze that data.

Was this action justified under American and international law?

- This operation was the subject of a rigorous legal review. It complied with all applicable law, including the laws of war.
- As a matter of international law, al Qaeda has attacked the United States and continues to pose an imminent threat to the United States. As such, the United States may use force against al Qaeda consistent with its inherent right to national self-defense under international law.
- As a matter of domestic law, the United States has taken action in its defense pursuant to the President's constitutional authority and in accordance with the federal statutes governing such action.

Regarding Key Decisions***At what point was the President's mind made up to take this action?***

- The President was kept up-to-date on the intelligence from the time the compound was discovered. He made the decision to act as soon as he was comfortable with both the intelligence that this was likely Bin Laden and the planning for the operation.

Why did it take so long to take action once you located the compound?

- We wanted to make sure that we had the best possible intelligence about this compound and the people living there. We evaluated the analysis very thoroughly, including the use of red-team exercises.
- We also wanted to minimize collateral damage in the area.

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- Careful preparation is a hallmark of American counterterrorism operations, and planning for such a sensitive and complex mission took time.

Why kill rather than capture?

- There was a firefight when our team arrived.

Why was the decision to "go" made even though the US did not know for sure that Bin Laden was there?

- We had reason to believe he was there, and we probably had discovered all we were likely to learn about the target. We couldn't wait for absolute proof that might never come, nor could we risk the possibility that he might relocate. Those weren't risks the President was willing to take.

What other options were considered and/or discarded?

- I can't discuss those details. Discussing other options could offer insights to our enemies that we wouldn't want them to have.

Regarding Impact of the Operation

What does Bin Laden's death mean for al Qaeda as an organization?

- The death of Osama Bin Laden marks the single greatest victory in the United States' campaign to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda. It is central to the organization's strategic defeat.
- His demise does tremendous damage to the organization's leadership, cohesion, and morale.
- We believe it will put al Qaeda on a path to decline that will be difficult to reverse, thus accelerating al Qaeda's ultimate defeat.

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- Senior al Qaeda detainees have repeatedly said that Bin Laden was irreplaceable as a leader given his managerial capabilities and his overall symbolic value to those who espouse al Qaeda's worldview and violent tactics.
- These same detainees said Ayman al-Zawahiri does not have the same ability to lead al Qaeda, thus reducing the organization's efficiency and lethality.
- That being said, Zawahiri remains dangerous and the aggressive search for him continues.

For years, Bin Laden had been largely incommunicado and sidelined from al Qaeda's day-to-day decision making. Is his death worth the risks you took?

- Bin Laden was not just a symbol for extremists to rally around. He was the only figure in al Qaeda whose authority was universally respected, even by disaffected members of the group who are losing faith in its other leaders.
- He dictated that al Qaeda must focus on attacking the US homeland and was still involved in providing tactical guidance for al Qaeda operations targeting the US.
- He managed personnel decisions within the group.
- He served as the final arbiter on mergers with other extremist groups.
- And he used his appeal to bolster al Qaeda's fundraising and recruitment.
- Despite his physical separation from his lieutenants in the tribal areas of Pakistan, we know that al Qaeda relied on his guidance in keeping their focus on the United States in the wake of key leadership losses in Waziristan.

Does this mean Zawahiri is now America's most-wanted terrorist?

- Killing or capturing Zawahiri remains a priority. It would be extremely important to our national security, and we have the best minds working toward that objective every day.

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Do you know where Zawahiri is?

- The US government for years has believed that he is hiding out somewhere along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. We have no reason to believe he has left that area.

Is it possible that Bin Laden is more valuable to the organization dead than alive? Doesn't he have tremendous value as a martyr?

- We have always known that if Bin Laden was killed, his followers would regard him as a martyr. Whatever value that confers to al Qaeda is far outweighed by the damage done to the organization by removing him as the leader.

Isn't Bin Laden's death likely to elevate the importance of a charismatic leader like al-Awlaki in Yemen? Given the level of unrest there, will al Qaeda's center of gravity shift from South Asia to Yemen?

- I don't think it elevates al-Awlaki. AQAP is a regional node of al Qaeda, but it operates relatively independent of al Qaeda's senior leadership in Pakistan. That will remain the case.
- Still, Bin Laden's death does damage to AQAP for the same reasons it does damage to al Qaeda writ large. The strategic guidance he provided, the inspiration he offered to young recruits, the US-focus that he demanded—all of those things have been eliminated.
- Bin Laden has been the source of much of al-Qaeda's mystique and key to its cohesion, as he is the only figure in the organization whose authority is universally respected. We do not see al-Awlaki in the same light—nor do extremists.
- Our concern about the node in Yemen has been high for many years and the unrest there only adds to the worry that Yemen could become an attractive safe haven for AQ leaders currently operating out of Pakistan.
- The Intelligence Community, along with its military partners, will continue to work aggressively against AQAP to disrupt its planning and operations.

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Does Bin Laden's death impact the 9/11 trials at all?

- No; the trials will proceed as planned.

Has anyone been paid or will anyone be paid a reward for Bin Laden?

- It's too soon to be able to answer that question.

Does this increase the likelihood of a terrorist attack on the US?

- We understand that this US action could spark terrorist calls for revenge or efforts by some terrorists to establish their leadership credentials by mounting an attack on the United States.
- Our aggressive counterterrorism operations in recent years have put intense pressure on al Qaeda, and we will continue to do everything we can to prevent attacks on Americans and our allies.

Does this mean the end of the United States' intelligence partnership with Pakistan?

- Pakistan remains a vital partner in the fight against al Qaeda and its violent allies. The United States seeks to maintain cooperation with the Pakistanis against the terrorist threat, which is a serious danger to both our countries. [Obviously, this answer will be shaped by Pakistani reaction to the operation.]

Does this mean the end of Predator operations?

- We have a duty to defend the American people. We will do whatever is necessary and appropriate for self-defense against those who seek to attack our country.

Does this set a precedent for operations against CT targets in other countries without knowledge of the host country?

- Not at all. This was an operation directed against American's most wanted terrorist.

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Does the fact that detainee reporting was a key piece of this puzzle change the administration's views on rendition, detention, and interrogation?

- No. The US government has a wide range of counterterrorism tools at its disposal to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda and its militant allies.

Does Bin Laden's death change US counterterrorism policy or posture?

- No. Terrorism remains a very real and continuing threat to our nation, and countering that threat will remain a major focus of the United States and our allies.
- The United States will continue operations against al Qaeda, its affiliates, and followers in South Asia and around the world.
- In the short run, we are prepared for the possibility of a heightened threat US interests around the world.

What does this mean for US presence in Afghanistan?

- While al Qaeda and the Taliban have a partnership and share similar goals, the effectiveness of the insurgency in Afghanistan is driven primarily by other factors—local grievances, Taliban intimidation, lack of strong governance. So the short term impact is likely to be limited.
- Bin Laden's death could weaken the alliance between al Qaeda and the Taliban—because his personal connection to Mullah Omar was important.
- Over the longer term, this success will contribute to greater stability in the region as a whole, which will move us toward reducing the number of coalition forces in Afghanistan.

With Bin Laden out of the picture and al Qaeda so severely handicapped, is there still a compelling reason for the United States to be at war in Afghanistan?

- The president has set clear objectives for Afghanistan: to deny al Qaeda a safe haven; to weaken the Taliban and deny it the ability to overthrow the government;

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and to strengthen the capacity of Afghanistan's security forces and government. Those objectives continue to guide our engagement in Afghanistan.

- The demise of Bin Laden and the weakening of al Qaeda undoubtedly serve those objectives—because the Taliban and al Qaeda have an official partnership that reaches back more than a decade. Bin Laden's death and the damage it does to al Qaeda will advance stability in the region and help the United States move toward the goal of reducing the US military presence in Afghanistan.

Regarding Outreach to Stakeholders

Who notified the Pakistanis?

- Tonight the President called Pakistani President Zardari. Other senior US officials called Prime Minister Gilani, General Kayani, and General Pasha.

What was the Pakistani reaction when you told them of the operation?

- TBD

Who in Congress was briefed and when?

- Senate and House leadership, along with leaders of intelligence oversight committees, were first briefed on our intelligence about the compound late last year. They have been kept informed of our analysis and planning since then.

Did anyone in Congress or in the Administration advise against taking this action?

- This was the best information we had developed in the hunt for Bin Laden for many years. Across our government, officials were in agreement that the United States should act.

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What US allies, other than Pakistan, have the President or senior officials spoken to this evening?

- TBD

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Public Affairs Guidance for the Interagency

(written to be declassified)

Toplines:

Today President Obama authorized a unilateral raid against a compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan—approximately 35 miles north of Islamabad—where the CIA assessed Osama Bin Laden was hiding, protected by two of his closest facilitators.

Multiple streams of intelligence led us to the assessment that Bin Laden was located there and ultimately to this operation.

The operation met its objective: the death of Osama Bin Laden. Bin Laden was a sworn enemy of the United States and a danger to all humanity—a man who called for the murder of any American, anywhere on Earth.

The mission's success was the culmination of many years of complex, thorough, and highly-advanced intelligence operations and analysis led by the CIA with support from partners across the Intelligence Community.

Impact of Bin Laden's Death on al Qaeda:

The death of Osama Bin Laden marks the single greatest victory in the US-led campaign to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda. It is a major and essential step in bringing about al Qaeda's eventual dissolution.

Bin Laden was al Qaeda's only amir in its 22-year history. He was largely responsible for the organization's mystique, its ability to generate recruits from among violent jihadists, and its focus on the United States as a target for terrorist attacks. As the only al Qaeda leader whose authority was universally respected, he also maintained the group's cohesion.

His likely successor, Ayman al-Zawahiri, is far less charismatic and not as well respected within the organization, according to comments from several captured al Qaeda leaders. He probably will have difficulty maintaining the loyalty of Bin Laden's largely Gulf Arab followers.

In the near term, the threat to the US Homeland, US citizens and facilities abroad, and our allies may be heightened. Al Qaeda operatives and sympathizers may try to avenge his death. Other terrorist leaders may accelerate efforts to strike the United States and its allies as a way to burnish their credentials as leaders of the violent extremist movement.

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Nevertheless, Bin Laden's death is a crippling blow to al Qaeda. Although al Qaeda may not fragment immediately, the loss of Bin Laden puts the group on a path of decline that will be difficult to reverse. The USG will continue to fight against al Qaeda's remaining leadership and pursue the President's strategy to disrupt, defeat, and dismantle al Qaeda.

On the Intelligence Case:

Since 9/11, the Intelligence Community has focused on finding Bin Laden through his inner circle, including personal couriers.

A sustained and intensive effort to identify and locate those couriers led the CIA last year to an immense and unique compound in Abbottabad. The physical security measures of this compound are extraordinary. It has 12-to-18 foot walls topped with barbed wire, opaque windows, no phone or Internet connections, and the residents burned their trash—unlike their neighbors.

A key courier for Bin Laden lived inside the compound with his brother, and both practiced extensive operational security and exhibited advanced tradecraft. The US learned that other people also lived there—people who fit the profile of Bin Laden and his family.

Given this, and the extraordinary security of the compound and its occupants, analysts concluded the brothers were likely harboring a high-value terrorist. They conducted red-team exercises and other forms of alternative analysis. No other possible candidate fit the bill better than Osama Bin Laden.

On the Operation:

The operation was a surgical raid by a small team of skilled operators, designed to minimize collateral damage and to pose as little risk as possible to non-combatants on the compound or to Pakistani civilians in the neighborhood.

Those who executed this mission accepted the considerable risk and planned for every contingency. They understood the importance of the operation to the national security of the United States.

The team retrieved everything possible from the site for exploitation. The intelligence gained should provide further insight into how Osama Bin Laden lived the last years of his life and may offer additional insights into the rest of the organization.

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On US-Pakistan Relations:

The United States shared its very sensitive intelligence about the Abbottabad compound with no one. It chose to work unilaterally to protect the intelligence and the US servicemen executing the raid. Shortly after the operation, US officials were in touch with Pakistani counterparts to explain the objectives and the outcome of the raid.

The US has always told Pakistan that it would go after Bin Laden wherever he was found, and the Pakistani government has long understood the US commitment on that score.

Osama Bin Laden declared war on the United States and was responsible for not only the deaths of many Americans, but many Pakistanis as well. The United States had a legal and moral obligation to act on the information it had. Its actions fully comply with US and international law.

Possible Retaliation by al Qaeda:

The US government recognizes that al Qaeda members or other extremists might seek to retaliate against US interests at home and abroad.

The State Department and the US military are taking appropriate precautions at their locations around the world. Travel advisories will be issued for the following countries:

The Department of Homeland Security is also coordinating with their federal, state, local and tribal partners to be on the lookout for threats that could arise in response to today's action.

Bottom Line:

Bin Laden's defeat is perfectly consistent with the great movement toward freedom and democracy sweeping the Arab world. He stood in absolute opposition to what courageous men and women throughout the Middle East and North Africa are risking their lives for—individual rights and human dignity. His downfall is not only a counterterrorism success, but a triumph for all humanity.

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Al Qaeda leader
Osama Bin Laden
in a propaganda
statement issued
27 December 2001



Pakistan



Pakistan

