

OSAMA BIN LADEN IN ABBOTTABAD: PAKISTANI INCOMPETENCE OR COMPLICITY?

It's probably just a coincidence that the US finally got Osama bin Laden at a time when its relationship with Pakistan is at a post-9/11 low. President Obama said the discovery of OBL came from a lead first generated last August.

Then, last August, after years of painstaking work by our intelligence community, I was briefed on a possible lead to bin Laden. It was far from certain, and it took many months to run this thread to ground. I met repeatedly with my national security team as we developed more information about the possibility that we had located bin Laden hiding within a compound deep inside of Pakistan. And finally, last week, I determined that we had enough intelligence to take action, and authorized an operation to get Osama bin Laden and bring him to justice.

Plans for the operation intensified over a series of Principals meetings in March and April.

The president chaired no fewer than five national security council meetings on this topic – on March 14th, March 29th, April 12th, April 19th and April 28th.

“When a case had been made that this was a critical target we began to prepare this mission in conjunction with the US military,” a senior administration official said.

At 8:20am on Friday, April 29th in the Diplomatic Room, President Obama met with National Security Adviser Tom Donilon, White House chief of staff William Daley, White House counterterrorism adviser John Brennan and deputy National Security Adviser Denis McDonough and gave the order for the operation.

But we did not give Pakistan a heads up.

Which is why the details Jane Perlez lays out—notably, that OBL’s hideout was nearly adjacent to the Pakistani equivalent of West Point, where General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani proclaimed victory over terrorism last month—raise so many questions about whether Pakistan knew OBL was hiding out in this compound.

[OBL] was killed in Abbottabad, a city of about 500,000, in a large and highly secured compound that, a resident of the city said, sits virtually adjacent to the grounds of a military academy. In an ironic twist, the academy was visited just last month by the Pakistani military chief, Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, where he proclaimed that Pakistan had “cracked” the forces of terrorism, an assessment that was greeted with skepticism in Washington.

Update: Here’s an ABC video from the mansion, also showing how close the military academy is.

And Perlez describes the curious silence from top Pakistani leaders about OBL’s death.

After the killing of Bin Laden became public in Pakistan, an ISI official confirmed his death but then insisted, contrary to President Obama’s statement, that he was killed in a joint United States-Pakistani operation, apparently an effort to show that Pakistan knew

about the operation in advance.

On Monday, General Kayani, President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan, and the ISI chief, Lt. Gen. Ahmad Shuja Pasha, met in Islamabad but had not issued any statement more than six hours after President Obama's announcement of Bin Laden's death.

Finally, Perlez notes that we picked up a key al Qaeda operative in Abbottabad in February, just as the Raymond Davis was souring our relations with Pakistan significantly.

A Qaeda operative, Umar Patek, an Indonesian involved in the Bali bombings in 2002, was captured in a house in Abbottabad in February where he was protected by a Qaeda courier, who worked as a clerk at the city post office.

As relations with Pakistan have grown strained over the last several months, they have insisted we just need to trust them. Until we learn how it is that they missed this mansion specially built for OBL's family, it seems further suspicion, not trust, is the appropriate stance.