



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on May 7, 2011

Will Killing Osama Be a Boon to Obama?

Something similar is apparent in our electioneering. There is no longer, if there ever was, such a thing as a time between election campaigns. Everything, it seems, is about the next election. Osama's dead body had no sooner hit the ocean deep before the pundits and prognosticators were evaluating the effect the killing of the grand terrorist would have on President Obama's reelection campaign. Some have even gone so far as to suggest this marvelous coup has virtually "sealed" the President's reelection. Not so fast. Some of these prophets may have honed their skills in the George Tenet school of prognostication: "It's a slam-dunk, Mr. President."



I am something of a "political junkie," but I was not thinking at the time about the 2012 election. I was wondering how even the government could get away with dropping Obama's body in the ocean without first filing an environmental impact statement. Does Al Gore know about this?

But I can't resist the zeitgeist, so now I'm thinking about the effect the killing of Osama might have on the election campaign of Obama. I think the bump in his popularity will be small in the short-term and non-existent over the course of the marathon to November 2012. Getting Osama was temporarily satisfying, but not the earthshaking event one might take it to be, given the non-stop coverage and commentary over the past week. It is not like Pearl Harbor or the assassination of President Kennedy, events so indelibly planted in people's minds that nearly all who were over the age of five when either event occurred can remember exactly where they were and what they were doing at the moment they first heard of it. It was only a week ago, but how many of us remember precisely where we were and what we were doing when we heard the news that Osama had been killed. It was ... sometime over the last weekend, right?

Ah, but Americans have experienced once again that sense of unity and pride in being Americans, right? Hey, people even gathered in front of the White House to shout not at, but *for* President Obama and what he and his "spooks" and SEALs had accomplished: "USA! USA!" Yes, indeed. And a few weeks ago there was snow on the ground in New England. This wave of patriotic furor will soon recede and may already have begun to ebb as people realize the death of Osama has not contributed significantly, if at all, to their sense of security and well being.

Go ahead, ask yourself and people you know — and even people you don't know — If they feel safer knowing that Osama is dead. Chances are you'll encounter some who insist that it's all a hoax and that Osama is still alive or has been dead for years or perhaps was never born. But mostly, I suspect, you'll get a shrug of the shoulders, a slight shaking of the head and a simple "No." There was, of course, much grief and anger in the land on and for some time after 9/11, another of those events imprinted indelibly in our memories. But among the general populace, anxiety about what Osama and his gang might do to



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us had a shorter life than the Department of Homeland Security's color-coded alerts. Life went on. As the President advised, we went shopping.

The conventional wisdom is that when Americans are feeling good about their country, such good feeling benefits incumbents. "Morning in America," recall, was the theme of Ronald Reagan's smashing 49-state victory over the hapless Mondale in 1984. (America was on something of a binge at the time, as evidenced by the succession of \$200 billion -a-year deficits. But "Morning in America" sounded better than "It's another tequila sunrise.") Riding a tide of good feeling, however, can lead to a bumpy road at the end. Recall how popular Gerald Ford was when he came into office after Watergate and declared, "Our long national nightmare is over." Then he committed the unpardonable sin of pardoning Nixon and was dogged by a stagnant economy and an inflation that refused to be subdued by Jerry's platitudinous words and his conspicuous wearing of the ludicrous "WIN" button, for "Whip Inflation Now." But Ford made his imagined era of good feelings the centerpiece of the most inane reelection campaign ever devised by the mindlessness of man. There was even song about how "I'm feeling good about America" (*tra la la la la la!*). It turned out we were not feeling that good after all. Ford lost to the peanut picker from Georgia.

George W. Bush won a second term in 2004, but the hanging of Saddam Hussein (remember that?) did not prevent "Decider Guy" from leaving the White House with an approval rating slightly higher than the swine flu's. The previous President Bush was supposed to be a shoo-in for a second term when he enjoyed a 91 percent approval rating after the first War of the Bushes had driven Saddam out of Kuwait. But Bush lost to a glib and artful draft evader. And there has already been talk of Obama's "Churchill dilemma," referring to the abruptness with which the British electorate sent ol' "Winnie" packing in the first election after Word War II.

If Osama's delusional followers pull off another attack or two in the United States, the killing of Osama will be seen as having made no difference, or might even be blamed for making things worse. If, on the other hand, terrorism appears dormant in the land, the memory of Osama's demise will have faded well into the background of the public's consciousness, while jobs, inflation, and the economy in general remain in the forefront. Obama's political advisers will likely be urging their candidate to remember the mantra of Bill Clinton's successful 1992 campaign against the elder Bush:

"It's the economy, stupid."



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