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Inside Track

Reported Killing of Osama bin Laden Exposes Pakistan, Raises Issues



AP Images

The reported killing of Osama bin Laden on May 1 by U.S. Navy Seals in Pakistan has brought to the fore many long-festering issues concerning our war in Afghanistan and the region.

Some of the questions that have stirred the most immediate and fiery reaction in American political circles concern the extent to which Pakistan's government, military, and intelligence officials aided, abetted, and protected bin Laden and his al-Qaeda/Taliban associates. Could bin Laden have taken up residence in the large, custom-built, high-security, walled compound in Abbottabad — virtually next door to Pakistan's major military academy — without Pakistan's knowledge and permission? "Almost impossible," said Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.). "Impossible," declared Fox News' Greta Van Susteren. "Inconceivable," stated former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. "Highly unlikely," said former Pakistani High Commissioner to Britain Dr. Akbar Ahmed. "Not credible," opined former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage. Sen. Mark Udall (D-Colo.) says, "Either the Pakistani government is incompetent or in cahoots." On this issue there appears to be a rare consensus among Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives, internationalists and constitutionalists, foreign and domestic pundits, and analysts.

Pakistan, which has received billions of dollars in military and civilian aid from the United States and been billed as our key ally in the "war on terror," is playing a double game. This has been widely recognized for years but the bin Laden compound in Abbottabad makes the duplicity undeniable.

Many counterterrorism experts believe it is likely that al-Qaeda's No. 2 chief, Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, is also in Pakistan (if not in one of the "stans" of the former Soviet Union). Ditto for the Taliban's Mullah Omar. Congressman Mike Rogers (R-Mich.), Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, told reporters at a news conference on May 3: "Of the 20 senior leaders in al-Qaeda, at least a dozen of them, we believe to be traveling around Pakistan someplace."

The current exposure of Pakistan's role in assisting al-Qaeda/Taliban provides an opportunity for some



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of the “experts” to be reminded that this is nothing new; the world’s “most wanted” terrorists have been making Pakistan a hideout for many years. The roll-call of terrorists apprehended in Pakistan includes 1993 World Trade Center bomber Ramzi Yousef, 9/11 “mastermind” Khalid Sheik Mohammed, and Mir Aimal Kasi, who killed two CIA employees and wounded three others in 1993 outside CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia.

Will Afghan War Continue in Perpetuity?

“Here at the State Department, we have worked to forge a worldwide anti-terror network,” said Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at a May 2 press conference, following President Obama’s announcement the previous night that Osama bin Laden had been killed. She continued: “Our partnerships, including our close cooperation with Pakistan, have helped put unprecedented pressure on al-Qaida and its leadership. Continued cooperation will be just as important in the days ahead, because even as we mark this milestone, we should not forget that the battle to stop al-Qaida and its syndicate of terror will not end with the death of bin Ladin. Indeed, we must take this opportunity to renew our resolve and redouble our efforts.”

“In Afghanistan,” said Clinton, “we will continue taking the fight to al-Qaida and their Taliban allies, while working to support the Afghan people as they build a stronger government and begin to take responsibility for their own security.”

Secretary Clinton’s statement, along with other similar comments by administration officials, indicates that the Obama administration remains committed to the nation-building intervention policies of the Bush administration. President Obama committed in November 2010 to withdraw the bulk of U.S. troops from Afghanistan by the end of 2014. However, even that delayed-withdrawal plan allows for an unspecified number of “counterterrorism” forces to remain in the country after relinquishing the main military operations to the Afghan army. Interventionists in both Republican and Democratic circles are pushing for a perpetual U.S. presence. Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) said in a January 2, 2011 interview that “the idea of putting permanent military bases on the table in 2011, I think would secure our national interest and tell the bad guys and the good guys we’re not leaving.”

However, the counterterrorism operation that resulted in the successful elimination of Osama bin Laden actually works to show the folly of the U.S. war in Afghanistan, which is already the longest in our nation’s history. Attempts to fight small, dispersed, elusive terrorist groups with massive, costly conventional forces are doomed to failure, resulting in serious collateral casualties and enormous political backlash — at home and abroad. In addition, the Karzai government in Afghanistan, which continues to receive billions of U.S. taxpayer dollars, has proven to be as corrupt and duplicitous as the Pakistani government.

China’s Central Banker: We Own Too Much U.S. Debt

China’s Central Bank Chairman Zhou Xiaochuan told a Chinese monetary conference last month that “foreign-exchange reserves have exceeded the reasonable level that our country actually needs,” which is essentially code for China won’t be buying U.S. government debt anymore. China’s foreign currency reserves exceeded \$3 trillion at the end of March, more than \$1 trillion of which is U.S. government debt.

The limit on America’s national credit card may have been reached.



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Other Chinese officials expressed the opinion that China should sell off much of their reserves. “The amount of foreign exchange reserves should be restricted to between 800 billion to 1.3 trillion U.S. dollars,” the Chinese government news service Xinhua reported April 23, attributing it to Tang Shuangning, chairman of the government’s multi-billion dollar investment group China Everbright Group.

It’s difficult to underestimate the economic impact of the end of the Chinese purchase of U.S. debt. The loose money policies of the Federal Reserve, which include near-zero interest rates and “quantitative easing” of the purchase of \$600 billion in U.S. government debt securities, have inflated the amount of money in circulation dramatically since 2008. With more dollars chasing a static amount of goods, it’s only a matter of time before prices rise (or, more appropriately, the dollar falls) proportionately. The Chinese purchase of U.S. dollars served as a strong, though temporary, hedge against U.S. price inflation by taking dollars out of domestic U.S. circulation.

Even if the Chinese don’t plan to stop buying U.S. Treasuries, U.S. consumers will likely endure moderate to severe price inflation. Indeed, Americans are already getting their first taste of the coming wave of price inflation. Most Americans are aware that the price of gasoline has skyrocketed in recent months, despite no interruption in supply or major spike in market demand for oil. Oil is not alone. All of the major commodities indexes are up 30-40 percent over the past year. Gold passed \$1,500 per ounce last month, and silver has increased from \$9 to \$47 per ounce since 2008. Other commodities, from corn to wheat, have all seen bull markets against the dollar over the past year.

The rise in commodities prices is part of a recent flight from what many investors see as a depreciating dollar. “What we’re seeing is a flight back into risky assets across the board, and that’s mostly coming at expense of the U.S. dollar,” Omer Esiner, chief market analyst at Commonwealth Foreign Exchange in Washington, told the *Wall Street Journal* April 20.

China’s Communist Regime Disappears Critics

The murderous communist regime ruling China has been cracking down on opponents in recent months, disappearing dozens of the nation’s most prominent human-rights activists and lawyers. While the world is watching, the Chinese government continues to intensify its clampdown on critics with zealous brutality and vengeance in what experts say is one of the fiercest episodes of repression in years.

Among the most prominent to be abducted was Ai Weiwei, probably China’s best-known artist internationally. He had been embarrassing the regime for years, suffering brutal beatings at the hands of China’s communist overlords. But it was assumed that his fame would offer him some degree of protection. It didn’t.

On April 4, Chinese authorities picked him up at an airport as he was about to board a flight for Hong Kong. Then, he disappeared, with no official statement on his whereabouts or condition. His family wasn’t even informed. The regime claims Ai is guilty of “economic crimes,” but nearly everyone outside of China knows that’s not true. Now, he’s said to be “confessing” to the charges — almost certainly under torture.

One of Ai’s associates, freelance journalist Wen Tao, was abducted the same day. Nothing is known publicly about his fate so far. Ai’s attorney, Liu Xiaoyuan, only re-appeared on April 19 after being



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detained by the regime earlier in the month. Liu told the U.K. *Guardian* that he did not want to give details about what had happened. Numerous other friends and associates of Ai have been detained, too.

They're not alone. Dozens — possibly hundreds — of high-profile critics, human-rights lawyers, and even bloggers have also been abducted by the communist “security” apparatus since February. Only a handful have been released so far, and all of those have refused to talk publicly about what they endured. At least some of the abductees have been sent to labor and “re-education” camps.

Human-rights activists are not the only ones suffering crackdowns and brutality at the hands of the communist regime. Christians and the people of Tibet are being brutalized, arrested, and “re-educated” too. Torture, labor camps, brainwashing, and outright murder are all tactics employed by the Chinese government in its zeal to retain absolute power.



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