



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on February 27, 2017

Father of Navy SEAL Killed in Yemen Raid Wants Investigation

Bill Owens, the father of Chief Petty Officer Ryan Owens, the Navy SEAL killed in the January 29 raid in Yemen against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), has called for an investigation into his son's death. "Don't hide behind my son's death to prevent an investigation," the elder Owens told the *Miami Herald* in a February 24 interview. "I want an investigation.... The government owes my son an investigation," he said.



Owens also questioned the timing of the mission. "Why at this time did there have to be this stupid mission when it wasn't even barely a week into his administration? Why?" Owens asked. "For two years prior, there were no boots on the ground in Yemen — everything was missiles and drones — because there was not a target worth one American life. Now, all of a sudden we had to make this grand display?"

When they brought his son's body home to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware, Owens, his wife, Marie, and other family members were there to meet the flag-draped casket. In accordance with the family's wishes, no members of the media or public were present. Only moments before the private ceremony, they learned that President Trump and his daughter Ivanka had come to pay their respects. However, Owen told the officiating chaplain that he did not want to meet with Trump. The president met with other family members while Owens and his wife waited in another room.

"I'm sorry, I don't want to see him," Owens related telling the chaplain. "I told them I don't want to meet the president." "I told them I didn't want to make a scene about it, but my conscience wouldn't let me talk to him," Owens said in the interview with the *Herald*.

While the younger Owens was the only U.S. *military* fatality in the raid, he was not the only U.S. citizen killed. The other American casualty was Nawar al-Awlaki, the eight-year-old daughter of Anwar al-Awlaki, a U.S. born Islamic killed in a U.S. drone strike in Yemen on September 30, 2011. Al-Awlaki was alleged to be an operational leader of AQAP. Al-Awlaki's son, Abdulrahman al-Awlaki (a 16-year-old American citizen), was killed while eating dinner at an outdoor restaurant in Yemen in a CIA drone strike ordered by former President Obama on October 14, 2011.

Two U.S. officials speaking on condition of anonymity stated that the target of the airstrike was Ibrahim al-Banna, an Egyptian believed to be a senior operative in AQAP. Another U.S. official described Abdulrahman al-Awlaki as a bystander who was "in the wrong place at the wrong time," and that "the U.S. government did not know that Mr. Awlaki's son was there" before the airstrike was ordered.

With the death of Nawar al-Awlaki, it appears that Al-Awlaki's children have had an unusually high level of bad luck in Yemen where U.S. military operations are concerned.

The January 29 operation killed 14 alleged members of AQAP and left more than a dozen other men,



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women, and children dead, including Nawar al-Awlaki.

Two more U.S. servicemen were injured when a U.S. military aircraft was sent to evacuate the wounded commandos but came under fire and the aircraft had to be “intentionally destroyed in place,” the Pentagon was quoted by Reuters.

Nawar al-Awlaki’s grandfather, Nasser al-Awlaki, who served as a minister under a previous government, related the story of how his granddaughter died to Reuters. “She was hit with a bullet in her neck and suffered for two hours,” said the elder al-Awlaki. “Why kill children? This is the new [U.S.] administration — it’s very sad, a big crime.”

As *The New American’s* contributing writer Joe Wolverton observed in [a February 1 article](#):

Yes, it is undoubtedly a crime for an American serviceman to kill a 8-year-old girl.

The killing by the military of the other 29 or so men and women may have been justified had they been enemy combatants, people fighting against the United States after Congress had exercised its constitutional obligation by declaring a state of war with the United States and the targeted individuals. Such a condition does not exist, however, and those killed by Special Operations forces were sentenced to die by one man: Donald J. Trump.

On January 30, President Trump said in a statement about the raid: “In a successful raid against al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula headquarters, brave U.S. forces were instrumental in killing an estimated 14 AQAP members and capturing important intelligence that will assist the U.S. in preventing terrorism against its citizens and people around the world.”

This positive spin on the raid drew a surprising retort from one of the Senate’s most strident advocates of an interventionist foreign policy, Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) “When you lose a \$75 million airplane and, more importantly, an American life is lost ... I don’t believe you can call it a success,” McCain told NBC News.

During a February 1 press briefing, journalist Sarah Murray asked White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer if the administration had a discussion about the risks involved in the Yemen raid and if the White House still viewed it as “a success in spite of the death of a Navy SEAL.”

Spicer replied:

With respect to Yemen, I think it’s hard to ever say something was successful when you lose a life. But you’ve got to understand that Chief Owens — he went back, deployed 12 times, because he loved this country and he believed in the mission. And knowing that we killed an estimated 14 AQAP members and that we gathered an unbelievable amount of intelligence that will prevent the potential deaths or attacks on American soil is something that I think most service members understand that that’s why they join the service.

During a February 8 press briefing, NBC’s Kristen Welker noted that Yemen, following the recent raid, had withdrawn permission for the United States to run special operations in ground missions against suspected terrorists and asked Spicer if that did not “undercut the administration’s ability to fight terrorism in that region” and asked him: “Do you stand by your assessment that it’s a success?”

Spicer immediately went on the offensive and said:

It’s absolutely a success. And I think anyone who would suggest it’s not a success does disservice to the life of Chief Ryan Owens. He fought knowing what was at stake in that mission. And anybody



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who would suggest otherwise doesn't fully appreciate how successful that mission was, what the information that they were able to retrieve was, and how that will help prevent future terrorist attacks.

Knowing that McCain had already done more than "suggest" that the mission wasn't a success, Welker mentioned McCain, when Spicer interrupted her with:

I understand that. I think my statement is very clear on that, Kristen. I think anybody who undermines the success of that raid owes an apology and [does] a disservice to the life of Chief Owens.

When Welker asked Spicer: "Are you saying that Senator John McCain owes him an apology?" Spicer (who had seconds earlier interrupted Welker) seemed to take offense at her interjection and repeated his words:

Hold on, Kristen, can I answer the question? I'm answering the question. Please let me finish. The raid — the action that was taken in Yemen was a huge success. American lives will be saved because of it. Future attacks will be prevented. The life of Chief Ryan Owens was done in service to this country and we owe him and his family a great debt for the information that we received during that raid. I think any suggestion otherwise is a disservice to his courageous life and the actions that he took.

Since Spicer had obviously avoided mentioning McCain's name, Welker followed up with a more pointed question: "Is that your message to Senator John McCain? He's called it a failure."

Spicer, who was obviously wary of tangling with McCain, replied: "That's my message to anybody who says that. Anybody. I just — I don't know how much clearer I can be, Kristen."

Trump, however, was not afraid to take issue with McCain by name. In a series of tweets, on February 9 he stated:

Sen. McCain should not be talking about the success or failure of a mission to the media. Only emboldens the enemy! He's been losing so long he doesn't know how to win anymore, just look at the mess our country is in — bogged down in conflict all over the place. Our hero Ryan died on a winning mission (according to General Mattis), not a 'failure.' Time for the U.S. to get smart and start winning again!"

Going back to Spicer's assertion that anyone who would suggest that the Yemen raid was not a success "does disservice to the life of Chief Ryan Owens," we must juxtapose that statement with the words of Ryan Owens' father, Bill Owens, who asked: "Why at this time did there have to be this *stupid* mission when it wasn't even barely a week into his administration? Why?" (Emphasis added.)

That's right, the senior Owens called the raid a "*stupid* mission." Would he use those words to describe a successful mission? Therefore, if Bill Owens regards the mission as stupid, is he not doing much more than suggesting that the mission was not a success?

In Spicer's opinion, anyone who questions whether the mission was a success, including McCain (and apparently) Owens' own father, "does disservice to the life of Chief Ryan Owens. "

By extension, therefore, Spicer is accusing Bill Owens of doing a disservice to his own son! The persistent Kristen Welker of NBC might ask Spicer to explain himself further on this point the next time she attends one of his press briefings.



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