



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on May 17, 2011

Fox News: Osama's Code Name Not Geronimo

It looks like the Indians upset about the military's using the code-word Geronimo during the operation to kill Osama bin Laden can settle down and smoke the peace pipe. According to Fox News, the name of the famous Chiracahua Apache was not the code name for Osama. The news emerges in a long, dramatic story that details the raid. The mission to kill the world's most wanted man, Fox reports, nearly failed.

But more importantly for Indians, the memory of Geronimo was not besmirched.



Drums Along The Potowmack

The [controversy began](#) when Indians learned that the name of Geronimo, who long eluded Mexican and American military forces, was associated with the operation and was, indeed, the code name for bin Laden. Indians revere the long-dead Apache, who [went to war](#) in 1858 after his family was slaughtered. Captured in 1886, he converted to Christianity, rode in President Theodore Roosevelt's inaugural parade, and then died in 1909. His daring and physical courage were legendary.

In using Geronimo's name, [Indians claimed](#), the White House went way off the PC reservation.

Anyhow, [stories surfaced](#) in the news that made the connection [included one](#) that quoted CIA Director Leon Panetta, who mentioned the G-word in an interview about the raid on bin Laden's compound:

Once those teams went into the compound, I can tell you that there was a time period of almost 20 or 25 minutes where we you know, we really didn't know just exactly what was going on. And there were some very tense moments as we were waiting for information. But finally, Adm. McRaven came back and said that he had picked up the word "Geronimo," which was the code word that represented that they got bin Laden.

Time magazine [chimed in](#) with this account:

Visual on Geronimo, said a disembodied voice, using the agreed-upon code name for Americas most wanted enemy, Osama bin Laden. Word then came that Geronimo had been killed. Only when the last helicopter lifted off some minutes later did the President know that his forces had sustained no casualties.

Thus did the [war dance begin](#). Word was, the military and White House denigrated the great Apache war chief. One Indian [writer averred](#) that later attempts to claim Osama was not Geronimo were mere damage control. It won't work. The Indians are angry. Using the name was "a bomb in Indian country."

Tribal members from around the country are turning to social networking sites Facebook and Twitter as an outlet to express their anger and sadness at the unwelcome association. This sucks, said Harold Monteau, an attorney and tribal member from Rocky Boy, Montana, A lot of people are angry about the obvious stereotypes it implies.

Its another attempt to label Native Americans as terrorists, said Paula Antoine from the



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Rosebud Sioux Tribe in South Dakota. Beaver North Cloud, a Jemez Pueblo tribal member from Albuquerque, New Mexico expressed her frustration, saying Damn it!!!! Why am I not surprised, yet so disappointed beyond words.

Such was the war cry that the Senate Committee On Indian Affairs [included a discussion](#) of misusing Geronimo's name [in its hearing](#) titled, ""Stolen Identities: The Impact of Racist Stereotypes on Indigenous People."

Time For A Peace Treaty

On Tuesday, [Fox News published](#) its harrowing account of a mission that nearly failed, revealing that Geronimo was not, contrary to smoke signals clouding up the Internet, the name for Osama. According to Fox:

Back at the White House Situation Room, word was relayed that bin Laden had been found, signaled by the code word "Geronimo." That was not bin Laden's code name, but rather a representation of the letter "G." Each step of the mission was labeled alphabetically, and "Geronimo" meant that the raiders had reached step "G," the killing or capture of bin Laden, two officials said.

In other words, the Indians upset about code name Geronimo went scalp-hunting for no reason.

Other Indian News

The unrest about taking Geronimo's name in vain isn't the only Indian news of late. Last week, actor [Johnny Depp announced](#) that when he portrays Tonto in Disney's forthcoming version of *The Lone Ranger*, he won't permit the Masked Man to be the chief.

Depp, [whose appearance](#) suggests a man one arrow short of a full quiver, claims he is descended from Indians. Indians are naturally angry and violent, Depp says, which explains why he's as mad as a riled up Comanche about the way Tonto got the "unpleasant end of the stick."

The Lone Ranger's director, Gore Verbinski, agrees. [Verbinski says](#) he would not have contemplated a film about the legendary duo, which was created for radio in the 1930s, if Tonto were not in charge. Verbinski said his version of the venerable Western tale will be akin to telling the story of Don Quixote from Sancho Panza's perspective.

If Verbinski directs a film about the Navy SEALs killing Osama bin Laden from bin Laden's point of view, he may well want to avoid using Geronimo's name in the script.

Photo: Geronimo, Chiricahua Apache leader, in 1898



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