



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on May 6, 2011

Media Scrambles as Bin Laden Story Crumbles

While the establishment media was busy parroting President Obama's announcement of Osama bin Laden's supposed assassination, reporting the unsubstantiated claims as if they were unquestionable facts, much of the so-called "alternative" press was far more cautious — and accurate, it turns out. But more importantly, with the new official storyline indicating that bin Laden was in fact unarmed, bigger and much more important questions are beginning to emerge.



In terms of coverage, it turns out that the skeptical approach proved far superior in terms of getting it right. Countless mainstream sources were so confident in Obama's word that they [reported](#) many of the claims as [fact](#) without even attributing them to the President.

But the official White House narrative has been changed so many times in recent days that now it's almost unrecognizable. There wasn't even a fire fight; yet this was one of the crucial elements of the original story that justified the assassination of a person the government painted as the most valuable source of information on the planet — the leader of al-Qaeda. And in [reporting](#) the statements as fact, the establishment press has officially been left with egg all over its face again.

"[Bin Laden] was engaged in a firefight with those that entered the area of the house he was in," [said](#) terror czar John Brennan. Similarly, Obama [said](#) that "after a firefight, they killed Osama bin Laden and took custody of his body." The next day, however, the White House spokesman [admitted](#) bin Laden "was not armed." Trying to save face and justify the killing of an unarmed man, the spokesman added, without elaborating, that "resistance does not require a firearm."

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More than a few other important parts of the storyline have been altered, contradicted, or simply exposed as false, too. Everything from which of bin Laden's sons was supposedly killed to the claim that his wife was killed after being used as a "human shield" — all of it has changed for some reason or another. The transcript after Brennan's speech was [altered](#) to change the name of the dead son. The new and improved narrative now [says](#) that not only was bin Laden's wife not killed, but that she was not used as a human shield.

Originally the White House also suggested top officials watched the raid live through a video feed. Terror czar Brennan, for example, claimed that they "had real-time visibility into the progress of the operation." CIA boss Leon Panetta later [exposed](#) that claim as false in an interview with PBS, saying: "There was a time period of almost 20 or 25 minutes that we really didn't know just exactly what was going on."



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That means the “[photo op](#)” of Obama and other officials intently “watching” the operation in the “Situation Room” was almost certainly staged for the press. And almost every media outlet that ran the picture used inaccurate captions parroting the White House claims.

And there’s more. The night of the raid, one administration official told reporters that a helicopter was lost due to mechanical failure. During that same briefing, another administration official said, “We didn’t say it was mechanical.” Now they claim the crash had something to do with the temperature at bin Laden’s supposed compound.

A poorly photo-shopped image of a dead bin Laden embarrassed a large swath of the world press and [several Senators](#), too. Shortly after newspapers and television stations around the globe ran the image, it was exposed as a shoddy forgery that had been circulating for years. Now Obama said he “decided” [not to release any pictures](#) — or any other evidence that any element of the story is true, for that matter.

And then there’s the burial issue. The Obama administration originally claimed no country would accept the body; so, it was dumped at sea — Mafia style — in accordance with what Obama alleged were Islamic traditions and customs. When prominent Muslim theological leaders [repudiated](#) that lie and noted that it was actually a violation of Islamic tenets to bury Osama bin Laden in the ocean, the new line was that the decision was to avoid the creation of a “shrine.” That lie fell apart, too, when it was widely reported that bin Laden’s brand of Islam calls for unmarked graves — building any sort of shrine would have been blasphemous. So far, no new excuses have been concocted for allegedly feeding the body to the fish.

After the numerous discrepancies and falsehoods in the storyline became painfully obvious, the Associated Press, [USA Today](#), Fox News and other outlets slowly and begrudgingly started to report it. “From the first moments, a good number of the details about bin Laden’s killing, on points large and small, have been wrong,” [admitted](#) a Fox reporter in one of the more candid acknowledgements to appear in the mainstream press.

But of course, most of the media were also dutifully offering and parroting all manner of excuses. “Fog of war” was to blame for the confusion, claimed the White House spokesman after that excuse was [suggested](#) to him by a member of the “press” corps asking a question. Virtually every major news outlet reporting the changes in the official story promptly blamed “fog of war,” too.

An apologist reporter at *USA Today* [wrote](#) that “the administration did its best to get the story quickly,” adding “it’s common situation with military action.” The paper quoted a Pentagon spokesperson under the Bush administration to bolster its case.

The AP offered a similar excuse along with the “fog of combat” line offered by the White House. “The contradictions and misstatements reflect the fact that even in the case of a highly successful and popular mission, the confusion inherent in a fast-paced, unpredictable military raid conducted under intense pressure in a foreign country does not lend itself immediately to a tidy story line,” the reporter claimed, citing “some experts.”

Several excuses for the ever-changing story were offered by other publications, too. The possibility that they were deliberate lies or worse was virtually never addressed. But the U.K. *Independent* [noted](#): “The impression persists that the administration sought to cast the operation in the most heroic light possible, at the expense of the facts.”

Now, the President and his spokespeople and subordinates are refusing to offer more details or



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explanations. The government has also [announced](#) that it will not be releasing pictures or any other evidence to support its claims even as suspicions continue to mount.

But as analysts [pointed out](#), the newly revealed fact that there was no fire fight begs the question about where the “fog” may have come from. And even more importantly: Why, in the absence of a fire fight, would U.S. forces put a bullet through the brain supposedly containing the most valuable intelligence on the planet? What if bin Laden knew where that [alleged nuclear bomb in Europe](#) was located that was set to detonate after his capture or death? None of those questions have been addressed so far.

But prominent critics are sounding the alarm. “When such a foundational story as the demise of bin Laden cannot last 48 hours without acknowledged ‘discrepancies’ that require fundamental alternations to the story, there are grounds for suspicion in addition to the suspicions arising from the absence of a dead body, from the absence of any evidence that bin Laden was killed in the raid or that a raid even took place,” noted Paul Craig Roberts, a senior official in the former Reagan administration in a piece entitled [“The Agendas Behind the bin Laden News Event.”](#)

Roberts raised several important questions, too, as well as some comparisons. “The entire episode could just be another event like the August 4, 1964, Gulf of Tonkin event that never happened but succeeded in launching open warfare against North Vietnam at a huge cost to Americans and Vietnamese and enormous profits to the military/security complex,” he suggested, citing a series of government deceptions that have led to war based on lies and other atrocities.

Roberts suspects there are more lies about the bin Laden narrative than those exposed so far. And he’s certainly not alone. It emerged recently that the man who owned the house next to bin Laden’s supposed compound doesn’t even believe the story either. “To be honest, it’s not true,” he [told](#) Al Jazeera.

As the official story continues to be re-written by the administration and those in the media who simply re-package government press releases, critics and skeptics would seem to be justified in wondering what other lies and “fog of war” changes may emerge in the coming weeks and months. And perhaps even more importantly, we might also wonder if there are lies that may never be exposed in their entirety?

Photo: Supporters of a local social group Muthahida Shehri Mahaz rally to condemn the killing of al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden in Multan, Pakistan on May 6, 2011: AP Images

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