

Osama Bin Laden: Dead Or Alive?

The Eight-Year-Long Psychological Operation. Review of a new book by David Ray Griffin

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Theme: [Terrorism](#)

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[Osama Bin Laden: Dead Or Alive?](#) by David Ray Griffin is a crucially important and timely examination of the whole range of evidence bearing on the question, is Osama bin Laden still alive? The importance of this question for the present comes from the fact that the United States under its new president is escalating its offensive in Afghanistan and expanding the war into Pakistan, and has claimed that the “hunt for bin Laden” is one of its principal motivations for doing so. Either explicitly or implicitly, the US government and major media outlets such as *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* continue to assert that bin Laden is alive, hiding in the tribal territories on the “AfPak” border, posing an undiminished threat to US security.

In his gripping new book, Griffin strikes at the root of this pretext for war by closely examining all the evidence that has come out since September 11, 2001, either indicating that bin Laden is still alive or that he is in fact dead. His conclusion is that bin Laden is certainly dead, and that in all likelihood he died in very late 2001. Griffin shows that many US experts in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency came to this very same conclusion long ago, but their views, which do not support the continuation of what President Obama, borrowing the term from Dick Cheney, calls “the long war,” have received very little media attention. Were they to do so, one of the main props for the war regime would be undermined.

In Chapter 1, “Evidence that Osama bin Laden is Dead”, Griffin surveys in detail the many different indications published in the major media in late 2001 and early 2002 that bin Laden had been very ill and had died. These included a December, 2001 video in which he appeared to be at death’s door (as admitted by a Bush administration spokesperson), analyses by medical experts of the grave state of his health, the sudden and total cessation in December, 2001 of any surveillance intercepts of communications from him, and even reports of his funeral. In this early period, various high-level officials in the US and Pakistani governments, including Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and President Pervez Musharraf, speculated that he was dead. By mid-2002 many experts had concluded that he was dead, including FBI counterterrorism official Dale Watson, President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan, and Israeli intelligence officials. The conviction that he died in 2001 is held today by former intelligence operatives Robert Baer and Angelo Codevilla.

In Chapter 2, “Two Fake bin Laden Videos in 2001?”, Griffin shows that two videos which purportedly showed bin Laden taking credit for the attacks of 9/11 and thus established his guilt for them, were not only very conveniently timed for the Bush and Blair administrations’ legislative and military agendas, but also were highly suspect for other reasons. One of

them was never actually released, but simply claimed by the Blair government. The other showed a bin Laden who did not physically resemble the genuine bin Laden of earlier videos, in which he in fact denied responsibility for the 9/11 attacks. Griffin presents strong arguments that both claimed videos were faked, suggests likely motivations behind such a risky undertaking, and cites the opinions of experts (including the FBI) who came to this conclusion long ago.

In Chapter 3, "Purported bin Laden Messages After 2001", Griffin argues that if fake bin Laden videos were produced in this early period, when he was probably still alive, then there is even stronger reason to be suspicious of "bin Laden videos" or other claimed "messages" that were released later, after all communications intercepts from him had ceased and many experts had concluded that he was dead. Yet, in subsequent years, a long series of such dubious "bin Laden messages" were released. Griffin presents an exhaustive survey of 19 of these, from an "email message" of March, 2002 to the "bin Laden audiotape" of January 14, 2009. For each and every one, Griffin identifies key indications of fakery or strong reasons to be suspicious of its authenticity. In the course of the discussion of the messages, he establishes that the technical capability to fabricate fake messages of the different types already existed.

In Chapter 4, Griffin turns to the important question "Who Might Have Been Motivated To Fabricate Messages?" He shows that the US military in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003 employed a psychological operations unit to produce bogus evidence of a link between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda, as a pretext for the invasion. The psyops unit produced a "letter" from a Jordanian in Iraq, Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, that was then "intercepted", purportedly enroute to Al Qaeda leaders in Afghanistan. The psyop was advanced after the invasion by the New York Times reporter Dexter Filkins, who wrote front-page stories presenting the "evidence" as genuine. Journalists at other organizations, including *Newsweek* magazine and *The Telegraph* of London, however, thought it highly likely at the time that the letter was bogus. Griffin concludes that the target of the psychological operation was the US public. He asks, could something very similar have been going on with the "bin Laden messages"? Does the US government desire to expand its war operations anywhere, say into the precise places it claims bin Laden is still living in? Based on the evidence Griffin presents, there is no reason to assume that comparable psyops would not be utilized to achieve this goal.

In Chapter 5, "The Convenient Timing of Many of the Messages", Griffin shows that another reason to suspect the inauthenticity of the "bin Laden messages" is that they frequently were released at key moments when they would benefit the Bush administration in the pursuit of particular objectives. In other words, the "messages" were almost always objectively detrimental to the enemies of the US, and beneficial to the Bush administration or the Blair government. Griffin lists 11 specific instances of this unusual characteristic of the "messages."

[Osama Bin Laden: Dead Or Alive?](#) by David Ray Griffin is a book to rally around – that is, a basis on which we can mobilize and organize resistance to yet another incalculably bloody war of aggression by the predatory military-industrial-financial elite that runs this country, and is running it into the abyss. Griffin has placed a strong weapon of truth in our hands with which to stop the brutal war in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Let's use it!

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