

Osama Bin Laden: Everyone Is Missing the Big Picture

By [Washington's Blog](#)

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Region: [USA](#)
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Obama and Romney Are Both Ignoring the Real Issue with Killing Bin Laden

The anniversary of Bin Laden's death is [big news](#).

Obama is bragging about how he whacked Bin Laden, [accusing Romney](#) of being too soft to take out bad guys.

Romney supporters accuse Obama of "spiking the football" and inappropriately [showing off to score political points](#).

Both sides are missing the big picture. Specifically, we [noted](#) last year:

I'm as happy as the next red-blooded American that Bin Laden is dead.

For more than a decade, the government has said that Bin Laden is the world's worst terrorist, a terrorist kingpin, the head of the worst terrorist group in the world.

But if we captured and interrogated him, he could have spilled a lot of beans which would help prevent future terrorist attacks.

Right?

But as the Atlantic [reports](#) today:

There's one option the administration appears to have never seriously considered: taking bin Laden alive.

The administration had made clear to the military's clandestine Joint Special Operations Command that it wanted bin Laden dead, according to a senior U.S. official with knowledge of the discussions. A high-ranking military officer briefed on the assault said the SEALs knew their mission was not to take him alive. ***

And Gareth Porter [reported](#) yesterday that the U.S. didn't even consider capturing Bin Laden as part of its Afghanistan war strategy:

The absence of any military planning to catch bin Laden was a

function of Bush's national security team, led by Vice-President Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld, which had firmly opposed any military operation in Afghanistan that would have had any possibility of catching bin Laden and his lieutenants. Rumsfeld and the second-ranking official at the Pentagon, Paul Wolfowitz, had dismissed CIA warnings of an al Qaeda terrorist attack against the United States in the summer of 2001, and even after 9/11 had continued to question the CIA's conclusion that bin Laden and al Qaeda were behind the attacks.

Cheney and Rumsfeld were determined not to allow a focus on bin Laden to interfere with their plan for a U.S. invasion of Iraq to overthrow the Saddam Hussein regime.

Even after Bush decided in favour of an Afghan campaign, CENTCOM commander Tommy Franks, who was responsible for the war in Afghanistan, was not directed to have a plan for bin Laden's capture or to block his escape to Pakistan. [[Background](#).]

We tortured a bunch of [innocent farmers, children, grandparents and reporters](#) ... supposedly to get information about Bin Laden. But it doesn't seem like the government was very interested in actually interrogating Bin Laden himself.

We pointed [out](#) the next day:

The Christian Science Monitor [reports](#) today:

Some US military intelligence officials also lament that bin Laden was not taken alive – and privately wonder whether concerns about the political “headaches” involved in trying detainees may have led the Obama administration to favor killing rather than capturing the architect of 9/11.

The opportunity to glean valuable intelligence from the leader of a powerful terrorist organization was lost, says retired Army Col. Stuart Herrington, a military intelligence specialist who interrogated generals under the command of Saddam Hussein and evaluated US detention operations at Guantánamo.

It is a misconception that ideologues don't talk, he says. “The opinion that, ‘Oh, he's such a fanatic, he won't tell us anything’ – that's uninformed blathering by people who don't understand the business,” Herrington adds.

The Christian Science Monitor article also confirms that [torture doesn't work to produce actionable intelligence](#), and points out that even Bin Laden could have been made to talk if other interrogation techniques were used.

The ranking Republican on the Senate Intelligence Committee. – Senator Chambliss – [says](#) that the executive order stated that Bin Laden should be killed

As we [noted](#) in 2008, Bin Laden was useful to the U.S. as a prop in the [so-called](#) war on

terror:

Former deputy national intelligence officer for transnational threats, a 23-year senior CIA analyst, who “drafted or was involved in many of the government’s most senior assessments of the threats facing our country [and who] devoted years to understanding and combating the jihadist threat”, writes today in the [Washington Post](#) that the neocons have whipped us into an irrational fear of the terrorism. In reality, “Osama bin Laden and his disciples are small men and secondary threats whose shadows are made large by our fears” and our leaders.

This is no surprise to anyone who has been paying attention. The BBC produced a documentary called [The Power of Nightmares](#) in 2005 that showed that politicians were greatly exaggerating the terrorist threat for political ends.

Indeed, we [noted](#) in 2009:

A United States Congressman [claims](#) that the Bush administration intentionally let Bin Laden escape in order to justify the Iraq war.

Many people claim that Bin Laden died a long time ago. According to [Israeli intelligence](#), [Pakistani intelligence](#), and other sources, [Bin Laden is dead](#).

According to [video experts](#) and [top Bin Laden experts](#), recent Bin Laden videos are fake.

So if Bin Laden is alive, American leaders have to explain why they have repeatedly chosen not to pull the trigger.

And if he is dead, they have to explain why they are claiming that he’s alive and authenticating his videos.

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