

Justice is done

Says Obama

AGENCIES

"Justice has been done," President Barack Obama declared in a dramatic televised address late Sunday, after Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden was shot dead deep inside Pakistan in a night-time helicopter raid by US covert forces.

Obama said he had directed US armed forces to attack a heavily-fortified compound in the Pakistani garrison town of Abbottabad, less than two hours' drive from Islamabad, after a tip-off that first emerged last August, reports AFP.

"A small team of Americans carried out the operation with extraordinary courage and capability," the president said. "After a firefight, they killed Laden and took custody of his body."

"It was nearly 10 years ago that a bright September day was darkened by the worst attack on the American people in our history. The images of 9/11 are seared into our national memory - hijacked planes cutting through a cloudless September sky; the Twin Towers collapsing to the ground; black smoke billowing up from the Pentagon; the wreckage of Flight 93 in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, where the actions of heroic citizens saved even more heart-break and destruction" he said.

"Let me say to the families who lost loved ones on 9/11 that we have never forgotten your loss, nor wavered in our commitment to see that we do whatever it takes to prevent another attack on our shores," Obama said, reports BBC.

George W Bush, who was US president at the time of the 9/11 attacks when about 3,000 people died, said Laden's death was a "victory for America" and congratulated Obama and US intelligence and military forces.

"The fight against terror goes on, but tonight America has sent an unmistakable message: No matter how long it takes, justice will be done," Bush said.

In a spontaneous eruption of joy, thousands gathered outside the gates of the White House, cheering, waving



US flags and shouting "USA, USA". Another large crowd gathered at Ground Zero in New York, singing "God Bless America".

Asked in an AFP interview about the extent of Pakistani cooperation, Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani said: "I don't know the details, I don't know minute details, but in short we have intelligence cooperation."

"We will not allow our soil to be used against any other country for terrorism and therefore I think it's a great victory, it's a success and I congratulate the success of this operation," Gilani said.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy congratulated the United States for its "tenacity" in hunting down Laden and British Prime Minister David Cameron said his death would bring "great relief" to people worldwide.

But as the US State Department warned of the potential for reprisal attacks against Americans around the globe, Sarkozy stressed: "The scourge of terrorism has suffered a historic defeat but it's not the end of Al-Qaeda."

Speaking by telephone from an undisclosed location, spokesman Ehsanullah Ehsan also told AFP: "If he has become a martyr, it is a great victory for us because martyrdom is the aim of all of us."

Diane Massaroli, whose husband

Michael was working on the 101st floor of New York's World Trade Center when the Al-Qaeda planes struck, said it was a "bitter-sweet" moment.

"I'm missing him all the time, but I feel that justice is done and that's a great feeling for me. And I do feel some overall calm, that I haven't felt in almost 10 years," she told CNN.

Senior US officials said two brothers believed to be Laden's couriers and one of his adult sons were also killed in the raid, while a woman who was used as a human shield perished.

"Everything we saw, the extremely elaborate operational security, the brothers' background and their behaviour, and the location and the design of the compound itself, was perfectly consistent with what our experts expected Laden's hideout to look like," one senior US official said.

On yesterday after the raid, Pakistani security forces deployed en masse around the middle-class neighbourhood of Abbottabad where Laden was killed.

An AFP reporter at the scene said the imposing house appeared to be a three-storey building surrounded by towering perimeter walls.

US officials made clear that Pakistan was not informed about the operation in advance, and Islamabad authorities had nothing to say in response to the killing for four hours before a carefully worded foreign ministry statement.

Born in Riyadh in 1957, Laden was the son of a construction tycoon whose riches enabled the future Al-Qaeda leader to fund Islamic fighters waging war against the Soviet occupiers of Afghanistan in the 1980s.

He went on to build a many-tentacled extremist group that earned global notoriety by bombing US embassies in East Africa in 1998.

But both in 1998 and after 9/11, Laden was unrepentant about what he called his divinely ordained mission against the United States and Israel.

"Jihad will continue," he said not long after September 11, 2001. "Even if I am not around."



Clockwise (from top) People gather at the White House in Washington DC to celebrate the announcement of the death of Osama bin Laden. Germano Riviera waves an American flag near the World Trade Centre in New York. People who lost family during the terrorist attacks on 9/11 speak at a news conference at the law offices of Norman Karasik in New York City. People wave V sign in Times Square, New York. A crashed military helicopter is seen near the hideout in Abbottabad, Pakistan yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Twitter user reports live on Laden raid

CNN.COM

A Pakistani provided live Twitter updates on the raid that killed Osama bin Laden, without realizing it.

IT consultant Sohaib Athar took to Twitter in the early hours yesterday local time when he heard helicopters in the night sky above his home close to the compound where bin Laden was cornered and killed by U.S. forces.

Posting as @ReallyVirtual, Athar wrote, "Helicopter hovering above Abbottabad at 1AM (is a rare event)."

Minutes later he reported, "A huge window shaking bang here in Abbottabad Cantt. I hope its not the start of something nasty."

Athar went on to describe gunfire, explosions and the sound of a helicopter crashing as the raid continued. He estimated he was around two miles away from the firefight.

It was only hours after the raid took place that he eventually connected the explosions to an announcement by President Barack Obama that a US military team killed bin Laden in strike at a mansion in Abbottabad.

"There goes the neighborhood," Athar tweeted. "Uh oh, now I'm the guy who live-blogged the Osama raid without knowing it."

After his unknowing reportage, Athar was being followed by more than 17,000 Twitter users as he tried to play down his role, "I am JUST a tweeter, awake at the time of the crash. Not many twitter users in Abbottabad, these guys are more into facebook. That's all."

In the US, the news of bin Laden's death was broken reportedly not by the established news media but by the chief of staff for former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Keith Urbahn.

Shortly before President Obama announced the news to the world late Sunday, Urbahn tweeted, "So I'm told by a reputable person they have killed Osama bin Laden. Hot damn." News organizations began reporting the rumor shortly afterwards. Urbahn quickly picked up more than 3,000 new followers.

San Francisco-based Twitter said more than 4,000 tweets per second were being sent at the beginning and end of the President's speech.

DNA tests confirm Laden's death

AFP, Washington

DNA tests have confirmed that Osama bin Laden is dead, a senior US official said yesterday, a day after a daring raid by US special forces on the Al-Qaeda leader's compound in Pakistan.

The official confirmed on condition of anonymity that a DNA match had been established with bin Laden's body before it was buried at sea after the raid.

Another official said they were convinced the US operation had indeed killed bin Laden.

"Bin Laden's DNA has been matched to several family members. And there is at least 99 percent certainty that the DNA matches that of Osama Bin Laden," the second official told AFP.

Laden's death will not mute Jihad call

Say militant Islamist forums

REUTERS, Dubai

Members of militant Islamist forums said yesterday they prayed the news of Laden's death was not true and hinted at retaliation if it was.

President Barack Obama announced US forces had killed Laden in a raid on his hideout in Pakistan after a nearly 10-year hunt for the mastermind of the September 11 attacks.

"Oh God, please make this news not true... God curse you Obama," said one message on an Arabic language forum. "Oh Americans... it is still legal for us to cut your necks."

His killing, in a mansion outside of the Pakistani city of Islamabad, dealt a symbolic blow to the global militant network, although Islamist forum posters said the strike would not change their commitment to fighting Western powers.

"Osama may be killed but his message of Jihad will never die. Brothers

and sisters, wait and see, his death will be a blessing in disguise," said a poster on another Islamist forum.

Another forum member pointed to the irony of Laden's location, contrasting with long-time rumors that he was hiding in caves. "So after 10 years of hiding in mountains, he ends up getting killed in a mansion outside of Islamabad. Interesting."

But the prevailing sentiment was one of grief.

A poster on the Arabic-language Ansar forum said: "God's revenge on you, you Roman dog, God's revenge on you crusaders... this is a tragedy brothers, a tragedy."

Online forums for militant Islamists have been the key means of passing messages from Laden and his second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri, as well as al Qaeda's regional branches, such as al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula in Yemen.

"Forums play a role in communica-

tions and ideas for al Qaeda followers, similar to the way Facebook and Twitter were used by democracy protesters in the Arab revolutions of 2011. It's a powerful medium," said Theodore Karasik, a Dubai-based security analyst for the INEGMA group.

Militants also commonly use the forums to pass tips for making explosives, discuss methods of attacks or voice their opinions on world events.

Many said they should not believe news of the death until it was confirmed online by militant news sources.

"The source of news that we trust is that which comes from the mujahideen (holy warrior)," a message on Ansar forum said. "Be patient and don't spread rumors... we've asked this repeatedly, so please do not write anything on the subject."

Hours later, several of the threads discussing Laden's death had been shutdown.

Osama bin Laden

Al-Qaeda leader who has put Islamist "holy war" on the global agenda of the 21st century



Key dates

1984	Travels to Afghanistan to fight Soviet invasion	Sept 13	Bin Laden named principal suspect for the 9/11 attacks
1988	Believed to be year in which bin Laden founded Al-Qaeda (The Base)	Sept 23	Washington offers US\$25 million reward for any information leading to his arrest
1991	Declares jihad against US	Oct	US-led strikes on Afghanistan begin, aimed at forcing Taliban to hand over bin Laden
1992	Moves to Sudan after being expelled from Saudi Arabia	Dec	Believed to have fled to remote Tora Bora mountains in the east
1996	Leaves Sudan and resurfaces in Afghanistan, where he found support in the hardline Taliban		US releases video recording in which bin Laden claims responsibility for 9/11 attacks
1998	Al-Qaeda's attack on US embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam kill 244 people	2002	Series of claims, denials and reports on Bin Laden's whereabouts surface
1999	US Federal Bureau of Investigation places bin Laden on its "10th most wanted" list	2003-2010	Releases series of statements on the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, threats of more attacks and offers of truce with US
Sept 11, 2001	Two hijacked US airliners crash into twin towers of World Trade Centre in New York, third hijacked jet crashes into Pentagon while a fourth crashes in Pennsylvania; about 3,000 people killed	May 1 2011	US forces kill bin Laden in a covert operation in Abbottabad, Pakistan

■ Born in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in 1957; son of a construction magnate

AFP

WANTED POSTER FBI slaps 'Deceased' on Laden

AFP, Washington

The FBI updated its "most wanted terrorists" list within hours of the killing of Osama bin Laden, slapping a red banner under his picture with the word "Deceased."

The wanted poster on the agency's online website still notes that a 25 million dollar reward had been offered for information leading directly to his capture or conviction.

In a statement yesterday, the FBI quoted President Barack Obama's tribute to "the countless intelligence and counterterrorism professionals who've worked tirelessly to achieve this outcome."

"The American people do not see their work, not know their names. But tonight, they feel the satisfaction of their work and the result of their pursuit of justice," he said.

Pakistan helped lead US to bin Laden hideout

Says Hillary Clinton

AFP, Washington

Cooperation with Pakistan helped lead the United States to the hideout where Osama bin Laden was killed by US forces, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said yesterday.

The chief US diplomat played up Washington's cooperation with Islamabad despite doubts she and other US officials have voiced in the past about Pakistani willingness to work with the United States to root out Al-Qaeda.

It is "important to note that our counterterrorism cooperation over a number of years now with Pakistan contributed greatly to our efforts to dismantle Al-Qaeda," Clinton told reporters.

"In fact, cooperation with Pakistan helped lead us to bin Laden and the compound in which he was hiding," Clinton said.

Doubts about Pakistan's commitment to fighting Al-Qaeda were revived after US forces shot and killed Bin Laden in a heavily-fortified villa in the heart of Abbottabad, a garrison city two hours by road north of Islamabad.

But a senior US intelligence official said: "We have no indications that the Pakistanis were aware that Osama bin Laden was at the compound in Abbottabad."

Clinton stirred outrage during a visit to Pakistan in October 2009 when she took issue with Islamabad's position that the Al-Qaeda leadership is not in Pakistan.

"Al-Qaeda has had safe haven in Pakistan since 2002," Clinton told senior Pakistani newspaper editors in the country's cultural capital, Lahore.

"I find it hard to believe that nobody in your government knows where they are and couldn't get them if they really wanted to," she added.

However, Clinton put the emphasis here yesterday on the common cause made by both the United States and Pakistan.

"Bin Laden declared war on Pakistan a few years ago," she said, adding he "was an enemy of the United States and an enemy of Pakistan."

"It was important for us to work as closely as we could with our Pakistani counterparts and it remains so," Clinton said.