

Taliban vows retaliation

US closes embassy, consulates in Pakistan, issues global alert

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's main Taliban faction has promised to avenge bin Laden's death and attack "American and Pakistani governments and their security forces".

Already a threat of revenge has surfaced against the United States, which carried out the mission to eliminate bin Laden.

"We are proud on the martyrdom of Osama," Ahsan Ullah Ahsan, spokesman for Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), said late Monday night. "We shall definitely take revenge (on) America."

When asked how the Pakistani Taliban organisation would carry out revenge on America, Ahsan said, "We already have our people in America, and we are sending more there."

A leaked cable released few days ago also revealed a nuclear bomb threat to Europe as it is hidden somewhere in Europe to be detonated if bin Laden is ever caught or killed.

Earlier, CIA Director Leon Panetta said in a message to agency employees

that terrorists "almost certainly" will attempt to avenge bin Laden's death.

US diplomatic facilities around the world have been placed on high alert following the announcement of bin Laden's death, a senior US official said, and the US State Department issued a "worldwide caution" for Americans.

The travel alert warned of the "enhanced potential for anti-American violence given recent counter-terrorism activity in Pakistan."

The United States closed two of its consulates in Pakistan to the public yesterday until further notice.

The US embassy in Islamabad and a third consulate in Karachi had earlier also been closed to the general public for routine business, but a decision was taken yesterday for them to re-open as normal, said an embassy spokesman.

Those closed are in the eastern city of Lahore and the northwestern city of Peshawar, which is close to the country's tribal belt that Washington has called the global headquarters of al-Qaeda.

A statement said the embassy and all consulates, however, would remain open for "other business and for emergency American citizen services".

It added that the warning would remain in effect until August 1.

Pakistan has already beefed up security across major cities, diplomatic installations and around the site of the killing in Abbottabad.

More troops were deployed in Islamabad to safeguard government offices and the city's diplomatic enclave, while in Lahore and Karachi, the two biggest cities, extra road blocks and barbed wire were laid around sensitive buildings.

Hundreds of people took to the streets on Monday in the southwestern city of Quetta, close to neighbouring Afghanistan, to denounce America, burn a US flag and pay homage to the al-Qaeda mastermind.

"His martyrdom will not end the movement, it will continue and thousands more bin Ladens will be born," said federal lawmaker Maulawi Asmatullah, who led the protest.



PHOTO: AFP

Pakistan Foreign Secretary, Salman Bashir (R), Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister, Jaweed Ludin (C) and US Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Marc Grossman join hands during a press conference in Islamabad yesterday.

CONTROVERSY OVER LADEN'S DEATH

US weighs release of slain Osama photos

Seizes data from raided house

AGENCIES, Washington

US officials weighed the pros and cons of releasing secret video and photos of Osama bin Laden, killed with a precision shot above his left eye, as fresh details emerged yesterday of an audacious American raid that netted potentially crucial al-Qaeda records as well as the body of the global terrorist leader.

White House counterterrorism adviser John Brennan said the US already was scouring items seized in the raid said to include hard drives, DVD's, documents and more that might tip US intelligence to al-Qaeda's operational details and perhaps lead the manhunt to the presumed next-in-command, Ayman al-Zawahiri.

As for publicly releasing photos and video, Brennan said in a series of appearances on morning television: "This needs to be done thoughtfully," with careful consideration given to what kind of reaction the images might provoke.

Conspiracy theories fanned by distrust of the United States raced like wildfire through a quiet Pakistani town after revelations Osama bin Laden had been killed on their doorstep.

Neighbours only realised something was wrong when helicopters roared overhead in the dead of night, followed by loud explosions and gunfire, jolting them from their sleep.

Bashir Qureshi, 61, who lives just a bean field away from where bin Laden was shot and whose windows were blown out in the raid, was dismissive.

"Nobody believes it. We've never seen any Arabs around here," he said laughing. "They (the US) said they had thrown his body to the sea! This is wrong, he was not here."

Even a policeman guarding the site questioned the motive for his posting.

"I don't believe he was there. We were called to come at 3:00am but we've seen nothing, the operation was already over," he said.

Shakil Ahmed, who works for a pharmaceutical company, said he believed that the US desire to pull 130,000 international troops out of Afghanistan and wrap up a 10-year war against the Taliban was a motive for peddling lies.

"The US wants to quit Afghanistan. They are saying Osama is dead so they can have an excuse. They have tried to defame the Pakistani army by cooking up this story," he said.

The conspiracy theories were firmly batted aside by visiting US regional envoy Marc Grossman following pre-arranged talks with Pakistani and Afghan officials in Islamabad.

"You can have as many conspiracies as you wish," he said at a news conference, before adding: "He's dead. It's good".

Laden's burial not in line with Islam: Clerics

REUTERS, Riyadh

Clerics in Saudi Arabia, a staunch US ally and the country of Laden's birth, dismissed Washington's assertions it observed Islamic rites in disposing of the al-Qaeda leader's body in the Arabian Sea.

Bin Laden was placed in a weighted bag and dropped into the north Arabian Sea from the deck of a US aircraft carrier, the Carl Vinson, the US military said.

But many Muslims in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the Gulf Arab region, including opponents to bin Laden's militant ideology, said the fact funeral rites were read for him did not diminish their shock at the way his body was disposed of.

In the past if a person died on ship and could not be buried on land for days, "then they would drop him into the sea with a weight," said Al-Obaikan, an adviser to the Saudi Royal Court.

"Today the case is different. We have airplanes, freezers, and it is not necessary to get rid of the body in the sea in such a way."

KILLING OF OSAMA

US's justification of war weakens in Afghanistan

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

The killing of Osama bin Laden is a major symbolic victory for the Obama administration, but is it a game changer for the US strategy in the "Greater Middle East"?

After 10 years of pursuing al-Qaeda's leader, responsible for the September 11, 2001 attacks, the US has closed a chapter, but not the book, in its war on al-Qaeda and "international terrorism".

Since the attacks on New York and Washington, "al-Qaeda central" which was being run from the Pakistani Afghan border, has mutated into a global network of affiliates.

They refer to it as SPIN (segmented, polycentric, ideologically networked) group, where al-Qaeda fighters in various parts of the world have increasingly acted on their own without direct orders or logistical and financial support from "al-Qaeda central".

Al-Qaeda is more of a global and post-modern phenomenon than a religious one.

While it has continued to invoke Islam and Jihad to rally support and to incite against non-Muslims, in reality its organisation and outreach, whether through the web or the use of modern technology, has been at the heart of its appeal as a global network.

Be that as it may, the physical death of bin Laden will no doubt lead to a serious psychological and inspirational setback for al-Qaeda fighters and their causes.

Laden was unarmed when killed

AFP, Washington

Al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden was unarmed when he was shot dead by US special forces, but he tried to resist and there was a "volatile firefight," the White House said yesterday.

The revelation, likely to stoke anger in parts of the Muslim world, came from President Barack Obama's spokesman Jay Carney as he provided the most detailed account yet of the Sunday night raid in Abbottabad, Pakistan.

"In the room with bin Laden, a woman -- bin Laden's wife -- rushed the US assaulter and was shot in the leg but not killed. Bin Laden was then shot and killed. He was not armed," Carney said.

The elite Navy SEALs came in on two helicopters.

When a journalist insisted: "He wasn't armed," Carney replied: "But there were many other people who were armed in the compound. There was a firefight."

NEWS IN brief

'Premature' to comment on bin Laden death: Afghan Taliban

AFP, Kabul

The Afghan Taliban said yesterday it was "premature" to comment on Osama bin Laden's death in Pakistan at the hands of US military operatives, posting a statement voicing doubt over his killing.

"Since the Americans have not provided convincing documents to prove their claim, and sources close to Sheikh Osama Bin Laden have not confirmed or denied the reports about his martyrdom yet... (we) see it as premature to issue a statement in this regard," the

12 killed in Iraq violence

AFP, Baghdad

Violence in Baghdad and northern Iraq yesterday killed 12 people, including nine who died when a car bomb exploded near a popular market, security officials said.

The car bomb exploded at around 8:15pm in the south Baghdad neighbourhood of Dora, killing nine people, an interior ministry official said.

A further 27 people were wounded in the blast.

Sub recovers second black box from Rio-Paris flight

AFP, Paris

A robot submarine has retrieved the second black box data recorder from an Air France plane that crashed mysteriously into the Atlantic in 2009 en route from Rio to Paris, killing all 228 people on board.

"The investigation team localised and identified the Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) at 2150 GMT on Monday 2 May, 2011," France's Bureau of Investigation and Analysis said in a statement.

The recorder which investigators hope will shed light on the flight's final moments, was "in good condition," BEA chief Jean-Paul Troadec told AFP, adding: "The chassis, the module and even the

Palestinian factions sign unity deal

AFP, Cairo

Palestinian factions signed a reconciliation deal in Cairo yesterday to end the divide between the West Bank and Gaza and hold elections in a year in an agreement Israel called a blow to peace.

Representatives of 13 factions, including Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas's Fatah party and its rival Hamas, as well as independent political figures, inked the deal following talks with Egyptian officials.

"All the Palestinian factions signed the document at a meeting with Egyptian intelligence officials," Bilal Qassem, politburo member of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), told AFP.

He said all factions were given the opportunity to discuss the document and air any reservations.

"We signed the deal despite several reservations. But we insisted on working for the higher national interest," said Walid al-Awad, a politburo member of the leftist Palestine People's Party.

"We have discussed all the reservations. Everyone has agreed to take these points into consideration," he told Egyptian state television without elaborating.

The agreement was immediately denounced by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as "a hard blow to peace process."

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