

Why US couldn't detect Laden's email

AP, Washington

Using intermediaries and inexpensive computer disks, Osama bin Laden managed to send emails while in hiding, without leaving a digital fingerprint for United States eavesdroppers to find.

His system was painstaking and slow, but it worked, and it allowed him to become a prolific email writer despite not having Internet or phone lines running to his compound.

His methods, described in new detail to The Associated Press by a counterterrorism official and a second person briefed on the US investigation, frustrated Western efforts to trace him through cyberspace.

Bin Laden's system was built on discipline and trust. At that location, the courier would plug the memory drive into a computer, copy bin Laden's message into an email and send it. Reversing the process, the courier would copy any incoming email to the flash drive and return to the compound, where bin Laden would read his messages offline.

It was a slow, toilsome process. And it was so meticulous that even veteran intelligence officials have marvelled at bin Laden's ability to maintain it for so long.

Navy SEALs hauled away roughly 100 flash memory drives after they killed bin Laden. It also left behind an extensive archive of email exchanges for the US to scour. Al-Qaeda operatives are known to change email addresses, so it's unclear how many are still active since bin Laden's death.

Indian PM backs Afghan peace talks

AFP, Kabul

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh yesterday backed efforts to bring peace to Afghanistan through negotiations with Taliban-led rebels, delivering a key-note address to the parliament in Kabul.

"Afghanistan has embarked upon a process of national reconciliation. We wish you well in this enterprise," said Singh, who was given the rare opportunity for a foreign leader to address parliament.

He said that Afghan MPs should make decisions about the country's future "without outside interference".

"India will respect the choices you make," he said.

"Our only interest is to see a stable, peaceful and independent Afghanistan living in peace with its neighbours."



Activists of Pakistan Tehreek Insaf shout anti-government and military slogans over the Osama bin Laden crisis during the joint sitting of parliament in Islamabad yesterday.

US drones continue to pound Pakistan

Pak PM suggests drone share deal

AFP, Miranshah

A US drone fired two missiles into a vehicle in Pakistan's tribal district of North Waziristan on Friday, killing at least three militants in a Taliban and al-Qaeda stronghold, officials said.

The attack took place in the Kharkamar area, 40 kilometres west of Miranshah, a stronghold of the Taliban and militants linked to al-Qaeda, whose leader Osama bin Laden was killed by US forces in Pakistan on May 2.

"A US drone fired two missiles targeting a militant vehicle, killing at least three militants," a security official told AFP.

It was the fourth such attack reported in Pakistan's tribal badlands on the Afghan border since US Navy SEALs killed bin Laden.

The new attack coincided with a joint sitting of parliament in Islamabad, where Pakistan's intelligence chief Ahmad Shuja Pasha and army chief of staff Ashfaq Kayani were briefing lawmakers on the bin Laden operation.

At least five rebels were killed in a similar US strike that targeted a militants' vehicle in the Datta Khel area of North Waziristan on Thursday.

Washington does not confirm drone attacks, but its military and the CIA operating in Afghanistan are the only forces that deploy them in the region.

US drone strikes inflame anti-American feeling in Pakistan, which has worsened since a CIA contractor shot dead two Pakistani men in a busy Lahore street in January, and over the perceived impunity of the bin Laden raid.

Meanwhile Pakistani Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani offered to support US drone attacks on its soil if Pakistan is let in on the decision-making and allowed to share the technology.

"No one can win a war without the support of the public," he said. "I say that this is my war, but when drones strike, the people ask, 'Whose war is this, then?' Gilani said in an interview with Time magazine.

"A drone strategy can be worked out," Gilani said. "If drone strikes are effective, then we should evolve a common strategy to win over public opinion. Our position is that the technology should be transferred to us."

The CIA could continue drone strikes "under our supervision," the Pakistani prime minister suggested.

LADEN KILLING AFTERMATH

Dalai Lama 'sad' about bin Laden killing

AFP, Newark, New Jersey

The Dalai Lama said Thursday he was saddened by the killing of Osama bin Laden by US commandos, which he likened to the 2006 hanging of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

"I feel it is rather sad," the Tibetan spiritual leader said at a press conference in New Jersey. "I think this is wrong. It is like for Saddam Hussein when he was hung. I felt very sad."



Dalai Lama

The Dalai Lama's comments appeared to contradict an impression he had given last week in Los Angeles -- that the most wanted man in the world had deserved to die.

The Dalai Lama, who left Tibet in 1959 after a Tibetan uprising was crushed by the Chinese, is on a teaching tour in the United States.

Obama to give Middle East speech Thursday

AFP, Washington

US President Barack Obama will give his long-awaited speech on uprisings in the Arab world and North Africa and the wider Middle East next Thursday at the State Department, an official said.

Obama's address will come amid region-wide reverberations from the killing by US special forces of Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and in a week in which the president will meet the leaders of Israel and Jordan at the White House.

It will also coincide with new questions about the viability of Obama's push for peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

Torture did not lead US to al-Qaeda chief: McCain

AFP, Washington

Senior US Senator John McCain on Thursday flatly disputed claims that harsh interrogations that met international definitions of torture led US forces to Osama bin Laden.

"It was not torture or cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment of detainees that got us the major leads that ultimately enabled our intelligence community to find Osama bin Laden," McCain said in an impassioned speech.

The senator, who spent five and a half years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam, accused former US attorney general Michael Mukasey of incorrectly crediting the waterboarding of senior al-Qaeda figure Khalid Sheikh Mohammed for yielding critical information in the hunt for bin Laden.

NEWS IN brief

Five Yemeni soldiers killed in suspected Qaeda ambush

AFP, Sanaa

Suspected al-Qaeda rebels ambushed an army vehicle and killed five soldiers near the Yemeni town of Marib, east of the capital Sanaa yesterday, a security official told AFP.

"The vehicle was ambushed with an RPG (rocket-propelled grenade) and all five soldiers inside died," the official said. "Al-Qaeda is suspected of carrying out this attack."

The Saudi and Yemeni al-Qaeda branches merged in January 2009 to form the Yemen-based al-Qaeda of the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

Egypt holds Mubarak wife in 'illegal wealth' probe

AFP, Cairo

The wife of ousted Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak was remanded in custody yesterday pending investigations into the illegal acquisition of wealth, the official MENA news agency reported.

"The head of the Illicit Gains Authority, Assem al-Gohari, has ordered the 15-day detention of Suzanne Thabet pending investigation over accusations she abused her position for the illegal acquisition of wealth," MENA reported.

Ukraine expels 2 Czech diplomats

AFP, Kiev

Ukraine is expelling two employees of the Czech embassy's military attaché section for spying, the foreign ministry said yesterday.

A note was handed to the charge d'affaires of the Czech Republic's embassy in Kiev.

"The Ukrainian foreign ministry has pointed to the incompatibility of their diplomatic status with their activities to collect information which is considered to be a Ukrainian state secret," said a statement.

48 rapes per hour in Congo: Study

BBC ONLINE

A study by US scientists has concluded yesterday that an average of 48 women and girls are raped every hour in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The study, in the American Journal of Public Health, found that 400,000 females aged 15-49 were raped over a 12-month period in 2006 and 2007.

That rate is significantly higher than the previous estimate of 16,000 rapes reported in one year by the UN.

Libya's Gaddafi may be 'wounded, on the run'

ICC to issue warrant soon

AFP, Tripoli

Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini yesterday said he believed Muammar Gaddafi had fled Tripoli, adding that reports that the Libyan leader had been wounded during the conflict were credible.

"I tend to think of as credible comments by the bishop of Tripoli monsignor Martinelli who told us that Gaddafi is very probably outside of Tripoli and probably also injured. But we don't know where he is," Frattini told reporters.

He earlier told Corriere della Sera daily in an interview: "I am of the view that he has probably fled from Tripoli but not from the country."

He also accused Gaddafi's regime of deliberately sending boats crammed with refugees towards Italy, saying this was "a criminal instrument" that should be taken up by prosecutors from the International Criminal Court (ICC).

ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo also yesterday said he would seek arrest warrants on Monday for three people considered most responsible for crimes against humanity in Libya, one of whom is believed to be Gaddafi.

Judges at the court, based in The Hague in the Netherlands, can then decide whether to accept the application, reject it or ask for additional information.

Meanwhile, sixteen "civilians" have been killed in a Nato air strike on Brega, to the east of the Libyan capital, state TV yesterday quoted a military source as saying.

Both Al-Libya and Al-Jamahiriya channels carried the report, which could not be independently verified.

WIKILEAKS

Race to carve up Arctic

BBC ONLINE

Secret US embassy cables released by WikiLeaks show nations are racing to "carve up" Arctic resources - oil, gas and even rubies - as the ice retreats.

They suggest that Arctic states, including the US and Russia, are all pushing to stake a claim.

The opportunity to exploit resources has come because of a dramatic fall in the amount of ice in the Arctic.

The US Geological Survey estimates oil reserves off Greenland are as big as those in the North Sea.

The cables were released by the WikiLeaks whistleblower website as foreign ministers from the eight Arctic Council member states - Russia, the United States, Canada, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Sweden and Iceland - met in Nuuk, Greenland on Thursday to sign a treaty on international search-and-rescue in the Arctic and discuss the region's future challenges.

The cables claim the Danish Foreign

Minister Per Stig Moeller joked with the Americans saying "if you stay out, then the rest of us will have more to carve up in the Arctic".

Greenland is an autonomous Danish dependent territory with limited self-government however, the cables show that US diplomats believe Greenland "is on a clear track to independence" and see this as "a unique opportunity" for American gas and oil companies to get a foothold.

The then-US Ambassador to Denmark James P Cain said in the cables that he introduced Greenland's government to New York financiers "to help the Greenlanders secure the investments needed for such exploitation".

The grab for the Arctic accelerated in 2007 when polar explorer Artur Chilingarov used a submarine to plant a Russian flag on the seabed under the North Pole.

The US embassy cables also expose US concerns about Canada's territorial claims to the North West passage and to "seabed resources that extend to the edge of the continental shelf".

YEMEN UNREST

Saleh rejects US quick departure call

AFP, Sanaa

Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh vowed yesterday to stay on and defend his people "by all means" after the US insisted he agree to a transition plan "now" and end months of political violence.

"We will defend ourselves with all our forces and by all means," he told a large crowd of loyalists in the capital where tens of thousands of opposition activists also rallied to demand his ouster.

Saleh made no direct reference to the United States, but the remarks came a day after Washington, his long-time backer, asked the Yemeni president to sign "now" a Gulf-led initiative that would see him out of power within a month.

Syrians killed in rallies despite no-shoot order

AFP, Damascus

At least three protesters were shot dead in Syria yesterday despite an order from President Bashar al-Assad for security forces not to open fire on demonstrators, rights activists said.

The continuing repression came as the government announced plans to launch a "national dialogue" in response to the anti-regime protests that have rocked the country since March 15.

And Britain summoned the Syrian ambassador in coordination with other European nations, warning of "further measures" if it fails to stop the crackdown on protesters.

Activist Nawar al-Omar said Fuad Rajab, 40, was hit by a bullet to the head when security forces fired to break up a demonstration in the central city of Homs. Two others were also killed, but there were no immediate details.

Protest also held all across Syria in the potentially the deadliest day in the Arab revolution, the Friday.

Louai Hussein, a writer and leading activist, said earlier the protests would go ahead as planned following midday prayers in mosques, after Assad's office promised him that security forces would not shoot at demonstrators.

The army started to pull out of the coastal province of Banias where it deployed in force last week to curb anti-regime protests, Information Minister Adnan Msaid.

The regime has routinely blamed the deadly violence on "armed terrorist gangs."

MAMATA BANERJEE:

India's street fighter 'Didi'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

From fiery politician from an ordinary middle class to the chief minister-designate of West Bengal -- it has been a long and arduous journey for Mamata Banerjee, the stormy petrel of state politics who has single handedly demolished the Marxist bastion.

The feisty 56-year-old Banerjee, who is the founder and chairperson of the Trinamool Congress set up in 1998 after falling out with Congress party, is now savouring the victory of a war she has fought so steadfastly often risking her own life.

For years the most credible face of the Opposition in West Bengal, Banerjee, known to her supporters as 'Didi' (sister), has been the nemesis of CPI(M)-led Left Front over the last 23 years and has earned the reputation of being a street-fighter.

A firebrand orator, coined a catchy slogan "Ma, Mati o Manush" and "paribartan" before last year's Lok Sabha, has successfully sold a vision of development, cashing in on the widespread resentment among the middle classes and unemployed youths, promising jobs and development.

It has not been an easy journey though for Mamata to translate her call for "paribartan" into reality.

Born in January 1955 into a lower middle class family and daughter of freedom fighter Promileswar Banerjee, she entered politics by joining the Chhatra Parishad, the student wing of Congress, while studying at the Jognmaya Debi College in Kolkata in 1970s.



Mamata Banerjee

Graduating to party politics, Mamata was general secretary of West Bengal women's Congress unit in 1979-80 and subsequently held other posts in Congress.

Banerjee's first tryst with the corridors of power came in 1991 when she became federal minister of state for Human Resources Development, Youth Affairs and Sports and Women and Child Development in the Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao government.

In 1998 and 1999, Banerjee's party won eight and seven seats in the Lok Sabha polls respectively and joined hands with BJP, seen in party circles as a disastrous move in hindsight.

During NDA rule under the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government, Banerjee was Railway Minister in 1999 and for Coal and Mines in 2004. She was also a minister without portfolio for a brief period in 2003-4.

A relentless fighter against the CPIM, Banerjee never gave up and bided her time. Her opportunity came when the controversial land acquisition issue in Nandigram and Singur in West