

**COUNTERING
VIOLENT EXTREMISM**
OPEN SOURCE INTELLIGENCE, SOCIAL MEDIA
& STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

Pre-conference workshop:
 20th June 2017
 Main Conference Dates:
 21st - 22nd June 2017
 London, UK

[View the Agenda](#)

90,000+
 Defence IQ Members

Become a
 Member and
 Join the
 Community

</user/register>

Home (/) » Air, Land and Sea Defence Services (/air-land-and-sea-defence-services) » Articles (/all/air-land-and-sea-defence-services/articles)

How Will Al-Qaeda Survive the Death of Osama Bin Laden?

Contributor: Bruno Vanasse (<http://www.defenceiq.com/contributors/15646-bruno-vanasse>)

Posted: 05/03/2011



Favourite this! (/flag/flag/favourites/12735?destination=node/12735&token=ap4fSxKKcLDp7syGjUDlxTLNk5LazNtnuDn)

Tags: Osama Bin Laden (/tags/osamabinladen) | death (/tags/death) | Al Qaeda (/tags/alqaeda) | Taliban (/tags/taliban) | Pakistan (/tags/pakistan) | Afghanistan (/tags/afghanistan) | Tora Bora (/tags/torabora) | special forces (/tags/specialforces) | Information Operations (/tags/informationoperations) | PSYOPS (/tags/psyops) | Tunisia (/tags/tunisia) | Syria (/tags/syria) | Bahrain (/tags/bahrain) | Egypt (/tags/egypt) | Islam (/tags/islam) | terrorism (/tags/terrorism) | Bruno Vanasse (/tags/brunovanasse)

On the night of 1 May 2011, US President Obama announced the death (<http://www.defenceiq.com/press-releases/the-white-house-blog-osama-bin-laden-dead/>) of the leader of Al Qaeda, Osama Bin Laden, who was killed during a US forces raid on a mansion in Abbottabad, a Pakistani town 150 kilometres north of the capital Islamabad. Bin Laden's death does not put an end to Al Qaeda or to the actions of violent Islamist groups. In the short term, hasty retaliation attacks are possible by the Pakistani Taliban, the Afghan-Pakistani cross-border Haqqani network, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), among others, and have the ability to create violent instability. Beyond this, Bin Laden's death carries with it the weight of paradigm shift – and the momentum to smash the symbolic, the strategic and the political sacred images of Islamic terrorism. This is a heroic feat, yet the stark reality is that it will register as nothing more than a seismic tremor on the enemy's Richter scale of front-line operational capability.



President Obama issued the news of bin Laden's death just before midnight EST

Representation versus reality

The world is, without a shadow of a doubt, in better stead with Bin Laden permanently silenced. The truth remains he was never, nor purported to be, an operational leader. Rather, he spearheaded Al Qaeda's ideology and strategic narrative, as perceived by his followers, with his charisma and his Jihadist credentials. As there does not seem to be a clear credible replacement leader for Al Qaeda and Affiliated Movements (AQAM), his death will likely have a second order negative effect on the Al Qaeda brand and its

2ND ANNUAL
DIRECTED ENERGY
 & NEXT GENERATION MUNITIONS

June 26-28, 2017
 Washington, D.C.

Click Here to
Learn More

www.DistributedLethality.com

EVENTS OF INTEREST



(<https://www.defenceiq.com/air-land-and-sea-defence-services/articles/how-will-al-qaeda-survive-the-death-of-osama-bin-laden-1>)

mac=DFIQ_Articles_EOI_Image_Listing)
 5th Annual C4ISR Summit

(<https://www.defenceiq.com/air-land-and-sea-defence-services/articles/how-will-al-qaeda-survive-the-death-of-osama-bin-laden-1>)

mac=DFIQ_Articles_EOI_Title_Listing)

Armed Forces Officers Club, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
 May 8 - 9, 2017

Register Now (<http://c4isr.iqpc.ae/srspricing>)

mac=DFIQ_Articles_EOI_Register_Listing) |

View Agenda | Learn More (<http://c4isr.iqpc.ae/>)

utm_medium=portal&mac=DFIQ_Articles_EOI_Learn_Listing)



(<https://www.defenceiq.com/air-land-and-sea-defence-services/articles/how-will-al-qaeda-survive-the-death-of-osama-bin-laden-1>)

mac=DFIQ_Articles_EOI_Image_Listing)

Future Artillery

(<https://www.defenceiq.com/air-land-and-sea-defence-services/articles/how-will-al-qaeda-survive-the-death-of-osama-bin-laden-1>)

ability to mobilise disaffected Muslims and inspire violent Islamist groups in-the-making. It is also likely that AQAM will try, in a myth building enterprise, to transmogrify Bin Laden from man to martyr - and attempt to stave off any harmful effects of this loss on their troops by using his iconic status to stimulate recruitment of new followers. This leaderless situation will likely accelerate the ongoing transformation of the movement from its relatively centralised early years to an even more dispersed, independent and potentially more fractious movement. What is fascinating is that his death will have a profound psychological impact on Western societies and its leaders in terms of dealing with global Islamist terror networks.

The quest to kill or capture Bin Laden and dismantle his terror network was both necessary and legitimate. Al Qaeda's ability in provoking inordinate responses from the West in far-away Muslim lands has been disproportionate to its real and potential threat. Because of the trauma of 9/11, the unmet desire for justice in relation to Bin Laden and his Afghan hosts, the Taliban, underpinned national security policies in dealing with the threat. With Bin Laden's 'sacred cow' aura having been removed from the picture, it is quite possible that Western powers may perceive the threat and shape the response, with this psychological pressure lifted, toward a more rational (and hopefully more effective) answer to Islamist terrorism.



US special operations forces worked on limited intelligence in the raid on bin Laden's home in Pakistan
Al Qaeda on a path to irrelevancy?

The demise of the Taliban in Afghanistan in late 2001, the following successive targeted drone campaigns (<http://www.defenceiq.com/air-forces-and-military-aircraft/articles/is-pakistan-looking-the-other-way-on-us-drone-str/>) in the Pakistani tribal areas and the continued counter-terrorist policing actions since then have severely diminished Al Qaeda central. The threat has evolved to a more decentralised, regional power with a smattering of Al Qaeda-inspired independent home-grown Islamist terrorist cells in Western countries. Al Qaeda has also shown adaptation and development from leaning directly in local spheres, where it is attempting to work through local proxies and exploit their political grievances for their greater cause. A stellar example of this is writ large in the form of Somali rebel group Al-Shabab.

Evidence also points to dwindling support in the larger Muslim world for Bin Laden and his ilk, a trend that has been intensifying in recent years. While Muslims generally ignored his religious discourse, his political message targeted against Western military operations (<http://www.defenceiq.com/air-land-and-sea-defence-services/articles/us-department-of-defense-announces-sentence-for-de/>) in Muslim regions resonated in many quarters. Al Qaeda's objective of provoking over-reaction from governments through prosecuting spectacular acts of terrorism has always been their calling card and the impetus fuelling the recruitment of many "accidental terrorists". Above all else, it was the exaggerated Western reaction to Al Qaeda terror that swung support for Bin Laden in the Muslim world, rather than Al Qaeda's radical political agenda.

Ultimately, Al Qaeda has defeat written in its DNA, a fatal kind of genetic flaw stemming from its lack of a coherent political strategy. The objective of a pan-Muslim clerical-based Caliphate and its associated tactic of eliminating dissidents have both been rejected by the Muslim masses. The simple fact is Al Qaeda ruthlessly murdered many more Muslims than non-Muslims. For this and for the group's complete lack of any constructive political and economic strategy to uplift those they see as their target audience has left them much diminished and, in the long term, on the path to utter irrelevancy.

The world witnessed the best example of this in the recent Arab Spring that resulted in a mix of protests, uprisings and revolts (in some cases outright civil war) in Tunisia, Egypt (<http://www.defenceiq.com/air-land-and-sea-defence-services/articles/egyptian-opposition-says-talks-were-positive-but-i/>), Syria (<http://www.defenceiq.com/articles/un-chief-calls-for-probe-into-syria-killings/>), Yemen, Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco and elsewhere. We observed the almost complete sidelining of Islamist and Al Qaeda affiliated groups and instead took note of those rather familiar political aspirations: nationalism coupled with the desire for political and economic freedoms. This, as opposed to the age old struggle between Arab Islamists and autocrats. The Al Qaeda prime objective of pan-Islamic uprising toward a grand Caliphate and our fears of falling dominoes across borders in the Arab World have not and will never materialise. Instead, each nation is confronted by its own local tribal, religious, ethnic and political contingencies, and this is precisely what we

mac=DFIQ_Articles_EOI_Title_Listing)
Millennium Gloucester Hotel &
Conference Centre, London, United
Kingdom

May 21 - 23, 2017

Register Now

([http://futureartillery.iqpc.co.uk/srspricing?](http://futureartillery.iqpc.co.uk/srspricing?mac=DFIQ_Articles_EOI_Register_Listing)

mac=DFIQ_Articles_EOI_Register_Listing) |

View Agenda| Learn More

([http://futureartillery.iqpc.co.uk/?](http://futureartillery.iqpc.co.uk/?utm_medium=portal&mac=DFIQ_Articles_EOI_Learn_Listing)

utm_medium=portal&mac=DFIQ_Articles_EOI_Learn_Listing)



([https://www.defenceiq.com/air-land-and-sea-defence-services/articles/how-will-al-qaeda-survive-the-death-of-osama-bin-l#?](https://www.defenceiq.com/air-land-and-sea-defence-services/articles/how-will-al-qaeda-survive-the-death-of-osama-bin-l#?mac=DFIQ_Articles_EOI_Image_Listing)

mac=DFIQ_Articles_EOI_Image_Listing)
Counter-UAS

([https://www.defenceiq.com/air-land-and-sea-defence-services/articles/how-will-al-qaeda-survive-the-death-of-osama-bin-l#?](https://www.defenceiq.com/air-land-and-sea-defence-services/articles/how-will-al-qaeda-survive-the-death-of-osama-bin-l#?mac=DFIQ_Articles_EOI_Title_Listing)

mac=DFIQ_Articles_EOI_Title_Listing)
London, UK

May 22 - 24, 2017

Register Now

([http://counteruas.iqpc.co.uk/srspricing?](http://counteruas.iqpc.co.uk/srspricing?mac=DFIQ_Articles_EOI_Register_Listing)

mac=DFIQ_Articles_EOI_Register_Listing) |

View Agenda| Learn More

([http://counteruas.iqpc.co.uk/?](http://counteruas.iqpc.co.uk/?utm_medium=portal&mac=DFIQ_Articles_EOI_Learn_Listing)

utm_medium=portal&mac=DFIQ_Articles_EOI_Learn_Listing)

**COUNTERING
VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

OPEN SOURCE INTELLIGENCE, SOCIAL MEDIA
& STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

Pre-conference workshop:
20th June 2017
Main Conference Dates:
21st - 22nd June 2017
London, UK

View the Agenda

RECENT ACTIVITY

Hello, I have a question about EMP.
I am doing a documentary about
the dangers of differen...
(/questions/hello-i-have-a-question-
about-emp-i-am-doing-a)

What does the Marine Corps do
exactly? (/questions/what-does-the-
marine-corps-do-exactly)

What kind of headset is for
policeman communication?
Besides throat mic headset, is
there... (/questions/what-kind-of-

should have expected from the onset. These countries are much more complex than the early post 9/11 apocalyptic visions.



On-going protests in Syria have gravitated towards a predominantly democratic message
What next for Afghanistan and Pakistan?

The main rationale for the recent surge of 30,000 US troops (<http://www.defenceiq.com/army-and-land-forces/podcasts/interview-with-command-sergeant-major-charles-v-sa/>)(following in the shadow of the lengthy US strategic review) was to ensure that Afghanistan would not become a safe haven for Al Qaeda. As exemplified in successful and thwarted terrorist activities since 9/11, Al Qaeda clearly does not require territorial sanctuary to launch terrorist operations. In any case, for Afghanistan, Al Qaeda is and has been for some time virtually out of the country and has instead concentrated its few active members in Pakistan. This, coupled with the recent success against the leader of Al Qaeda, is apt to lend significant momentum to Western policymakers in support a more limited engagement in Afghanistan and further accelerate the drawdown of foreign forces from this theatre of operations. The case for foreign intervention will be the opposite for Pakistan, where the arguments for the same or even increased levels of military and intelligence operations will have much more support - now that we have a measurable result of a successful unilateral raid on Pakistani soil (especially considering Bin Laden's less than low-profile at the time).

The quest for a political solution in Afghanistan that would enable an expedited withdrawal, while enabling a more stable situation in the country, will soon take centre stage in strategic discussions for the future of the region. This will require pressuring Pakistan to change their relationship with the Taliban leadership by either stepping up military operations against the Afghan Taliban within their borders or delivering the necessary political compromise from the Quetta Shura Taliban leadership. In parallel, the US and its allies must seek an alternative national political architecture in Afghanistan, which may include seeking more reliable and legitimate local allies in Afghanistan.

A set of national security challenges

In the aftermath of Bin Laden's death, it would serve us well to apply the lessons from recent conflicts in reassessing the West's current commitments. Beyond this and the realigning of priorities in the face of Islamist terrorism, there is a set of national security priorities that need serious attention. From a North American perspective, several important national security challenges will become priorities in coming years: the threatening rise in regional instability from narco-trafficking in Central America (<http://www.defenceiq.com/air-forces-and-military-aircraft/articles/the-good-the-bad-and-the-ugly-uavs-report-for-bord/>), the securing and assurance of sustainable natural resources – energy, minerals, and clean water – and, most importantly, our competence in shoring up our nations' long-term fiscal and economic positions in the face of rising competitors like China (<http://www.defenceiq.com/air-forces-and-military-aircraft/articles/ruling-china-into-the-global-military-might-equati/>).

Editor's Note:

These are all big ticket items, to be sure, but the formulation of a successful working strategy begins with intelligence gathering (a strong suit for the traditional G-7 nations) is maintained by visibility, buy-in and pressure from the highest political levels (as opposed to middle level operational creep) and is concluded when the original objective – and only the original objective – is actually achieved. The successful targeting and neutralisation of Osama bin Laden has always been dependent on the rigorous follow-through of policy and strategy. It is fitting that none other than the President of the United States, in the flesh, proclaimed the news of 1 May, and did so in first person. It is also telling that Pakistan's official response was dramatically delayed and any similar official response from remaining Al Qaeda leadership has been heretofore glaringly absent. The roots of this silence, this opportunity to exert control through information, comes from what can only be described as the lack of a coherent message – a deficiency that dates back to Al Qaeda's earliest

headset-is-for-policeman-communicatio)

days.

Bruno Vanasse (<http://www.defenceiq.com/contributors/1516-bruno-vanasse/>) is an Army Intelligence Lieutenant-Colonel in the Canadian Army Reserves, currently working full-time as a senior staff officer for Land Forces Western Area Headquarters.

The views expressed here and on his website (<http://brunovanasse.com/>) are his own.



Contributor: Bruno Vanasse (<http://www.defenceiq.com/contributors/15646-bruno-vanasse>)



UK General Election: How parties compare on defence (/air-land-and-sea-defence-services/articles/uk-general-election-how-parties-compare-on-defence)



Is British defence policy and posture still fit for purpose? [Op-Ed] (/air-land-and-sea-defence-services/articles/british-defence-policy-and-posture-debate)



Credible Voices: How to Empower and Deploy (/air-land-and-sea-defence-services/articles/credible-voices-how-to-empower-and-deploy)



Advice for the Ambitious (/air-land-and-sea-defence-services/articles/advice-for-the-ambitious)



A Review: US FY 2017 Budget Breakdown for Veterans Affairs (/air-land-and-sea-defence-services/articles/a-review-us-fy-2017-budget-breakdown-for-veterans)



What next for the British Army post-2020 withdrawal from Germany? [Op-Ed] (/air-land-and-sea-defence-services/articles/what-next-for-the-british-army-post-2020)



US taking 'Big Stick' diplomacy with Russia [Op-Ed] (/air-land-and-sea-defence-services/articles/us-taking-big-stick-diplomacy-with-russia-op-

ed)



Mattis NATO ultimatum stutters European collective defence moods (/air-land-and-sea-defence-services/articles/mattis-nato-ultimatums-disrupt-europe-defense)



Deploying and sustaining EU military operations (/air-land-and-sea-defence-services/articles/deploying-and-sustaining-eu-military-operations)



Defence IQ: 2016 in Review (/air-land-and-sea-defence-services/articles/defence-iq-2016-in-review)

0 Comments

defenceiq

1 Login

Recommend

Share

Sort by Newest

Start the discussion...

Be the first to comment.

ALSO ON DEFENCEIQ

Chinese Military Capabilities Demands in the Next 20 Years

1 comment • 9 months ago*

CharlieSeattle — Don't like China's rise? To bad, China is exactly what we have allowed it to become.Bill Clinton's administration worked to ...

US grappling with counter-UAS technology challenges

1 comment • 8 months ago*

M&S — It seems to me that the easiest way to sustain positive airspace control without /inducing/ flight safety risks (4-10lb object, falling from ...

General Mike Flynn would prioritise 'partnerships and interoperability'

1 comment • 6 months ago*

Scott LaCoss — LTG Flynn is a man of vision and principles. Make no mistake that he will press hard to deliver on his core beliefs and that he will ...

Airborne SAR: Priorities and Insight from Portugal's Rescue Coordination Centre

1 comment • a year ago*

Volker Niebergall — The link to above Search and Rescue conference, taking place in Copenhagen, Denmark, from 7 – 9 June 2016 does not work :-(

Subscribe

Add Disqus to your siteAdd DisqusAdd

Privacy

DISQUS

Topics

Air Forces & Military Aircraft (/air-forces-and-military-aircraft)

Air, Land and Sea Defence Services (/air-land-and-sea-defence-services)

Armoured Vehicles (/armoured-vehicles)

Army & Land Forces (/army-and-land-forces)

Cyber Defence and Security (/cyber-defence)

Defence Technology (/defence-technology)

Naval & Maritime Defence (/naval-and-maritime-defence)

Drucker Management (<http://www.managementmattersnetwork.com>)

Resources

Articles (/articles)

Industry News Releases (/press-releases)

Market Reports (/white-papers)

Defence Industry Bulletin (<http://defenceindustrybulletin.weebly.com/>)

Defence Industry Division of IQPC (/about-iqpc)

Defence Industry Press Release (/defence-industry-press-release)

Defence Industry Bulletin (/defence-industry-bulletin)

About Us (/about-us) | Contact Us (/contact-us) | About Us (/about-us) | Cookie Policy (/cookie-policy)

My Account (/user)

Sign Out (/user/logout)

Advertise With Us (/media-kit)

Partner With Us (/partners)

Contribute For Us (/become-a-contributor)

Advertise With Us

Reach Defence professionals through cost-effective marketing opportunities to deliver your message, position yourself as a thought leader, and introduce new products, techniques and strategies to the market.

Learn More » (/media-kit)

Join the Defence IQ

Join today and interact with a vibrant network of defence professionals, keeping up to date with the defence industry by accessing our wealth of Defence articles, videos, live conferences and more.

Sign Up Today! (/user/register)

<https://www.defenceiq.com/air-land-and-sea-defence-services/articles/how-will-al-qaeda-survive-the-death-of-osama-bin-l>

Page 5 of 5