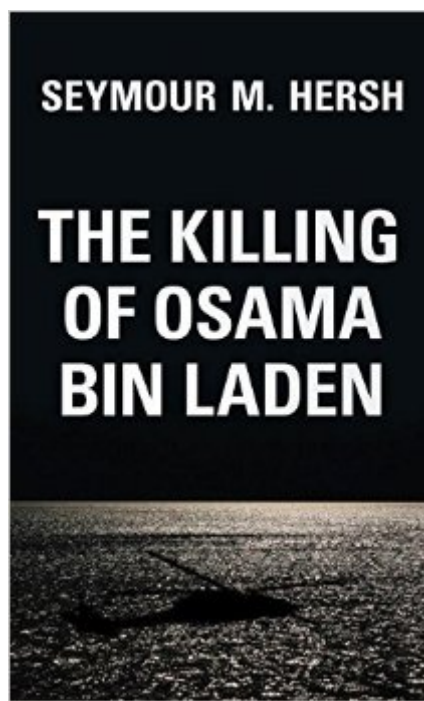


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The Killing Of Osama Bin Laden



Synopsis

Electrifying investigation of White House lies about the assassination of Osama bin Laden In 2011, an elite group of US Navy SEALs stormed an enclosure in the Pakistani city of Abbottabad and killed Osama bin Laden, the man the United States had begun chasing before the devastating attacks of 9/11. The news did much to boost President Obama's first term and played a major part in his reelection victory of the following year. But much of the story of that night, as presented to the world, was incomplete, or a lie. The evidence of what actually went on remains hidden. At the same time, the full story of the United States' involvement in the Syrian civil war has been kept behind a diplomatic curtain, concealed by doublespeak. It is a policy of obfuscation that has compelled the White House to turn a blind eye to Turkey's involvement in supporting ISIS and its predecessors in Syria. This investigation, which began as a series of essays in the London Review of Books, has ignited a firestorm of controversy in the world media. In his introduction, Hersh asks what will be the legacy of Obama's time in office. Was it an era of "a change we can believe in" or a season of lies and compromises that continued George W. Bush's misconceived War on Terror? How did he lose the confidence of the general in charge of America's forces who acted in direct contradiction to the White House? What else do we not know?

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Customer Reviews

Seymour Hersh's "The Killing of Osama bin Laden" goes beyond talking about bin Laden, digging further into the war against ISIS, Benghazi and concerns with Iraq, Turkey, Russia, China, and Syria. For readers of the London Review of Books, much of this small book is from Hersh's

articles spanning May 21, 2015 to January 7, 2016. Though I'd read them as they were published, it was helpful to read them together in this 124 page brief on the current state of the War in the Middle East. A quote from a consultant to the special operation community sums up the US's (West's) strategy for the War on Terror. "It's all about tactics and nobody, Republican or Democrat, has advanced a strategic vision. We've had an abject failure of military and political leadership." (page 11). This quote from the intro sets up Hersh's narrative, which shows a web of incompetence, rash decisions, shortsightedness, and bad bedfellows. What do we learn from Hersh? The Pakistani military and government knew bin Laden's whereabouts, and even helped protect him. Later, the CIA used the Pakistani military to assist in the execution of bin Laden. "The Pakistanis agreed to permit a four-man American cell—a Navy SEAL, a CIA case officer and two communications specialists—to set up a liaison office at Tarbela Ghazi for the coming assault." (page 23). Later, we learn that the ISI guards (Pakistani guards) used to protect bin Laden's compound, left just prior to the SEALs arrival. In fact, "an ISI liaison officer flying with the SEALs guided them into the darkened house and up a staircase to bin Laden's quarters." (page 28) Hersh unravels more scandals and surprises, including the burial of bin Laden at sea perhaps.

Although Seymour Hersh's new book is called *The Killing of Osama Bin Laden*, that's only a small part of its subject matter. It's really a critical indictment of the Obama administration's middle east foreign policy, especially concerning Syria and Turkey. It's also about US relations with Vladimir Putin's Russia. In each of these areas Hersh writes about how US policy is either flawed because of lack of planning, blinding idealism, failure to recognize who the real enemy is, political motives instead of moral ones, and in some cases even outright lies. Among the controversial assertions that Hersh makes in the book, he alleges that Osama bin Laden was never in hiding plotting future acts of terror, but rather was a sort of prisoner of the Pakistani government, and that his capture was done with co-operation from the Pakistanis, even though the spin was that they were concealing the fact that they knew where Bin Laden was the whole time. He accuses the Obama administration of double-crossing the Pakistanis that they were working with by announcing the kill ahead of schedule, at a time when it was advantageous for Obama's re-election chances, but dangerous to the Pakistani generals who cooperated with the administration. He also asserts that bin Laden's body was never buried at sea, and that the PR campaign to win points off of the announcement was riddled with falsehoods. Much of the book is a criticism of Obama's policy in Syria. He argues that Turkish president Recep Erdogan is the real villain of the piece and that Erdogan was complicit in

chemical attacks on Syrians in an attempt to incite the US to depose Syrian leader Assad. He also claims that Erdogan is aiding Syrian rebels who are more of a threat to US interests than Assad. It's not that Hersh is pro-Assad.

We once again owe the great reporter Seymour Hersh a serious debt for his reporting, in this case for his London Review of Books articles on President Barack Obama's war making, now published as a book called *The Killing of Osama bin Laden*. Despite the title, three of the four articles are about Syria. But there is a shortcoming in how Hersh tells history, as in how many reporters do. I've watched Hersh do interviews about the topic on Democracy Now and never once heard him mention the U.S. public. In his book, the public gets one mention: "The proposed American missile attack on Syria never won public support, and Obama turned quickly to the UN and the Russian proposal for dismantling the Syrian chemical warfare complex." Taken in isolation, that sentence suggests what I think is an important causal relationship. Taken in the context of a book that spends many pages offering other explanations for Obama's decision, that one sentence seems to be simply stating two unrelated incidents in chronological order. A few sentences later, Hersh writes that Obama had claimed to have evidence of Bashar al Assad's guilt in a chemical weapons attack, but then turned to Congress for a vote and accepted Assad's offer to give up chemical weapons. From this, Hersh concludes that Obama must have been made aware of evidence contradicting his claim. (In fact, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper supposedly rather pointedly told Obama that his claim was "not a slam dunk.") Elsewhere Hersh credits Obama's decision not to bomb Syria to "military leaders who thought that going to war was both unjustified and potentially dangerous.

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