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## Morning Security Brief: The Aftermath of Bin Laden's Death

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- ◆ *The New York Times* begins to fill in the details about how the United States finally killed al Qaeda leader, Osama bin Laden [1] (OBL). "For years, the agonizing search for Osama bin Laden kept coming up empty. Then last July, Pakistanis working for the Central Intelligence Agency drove up behind a white Suzuki navigating the bustling streets near Peshawar, Pakistan, and wrote down the car's license plate," reports the Times. "The man in the car was Bin Laden's most trusted courier, and over the next month C.I.A. operatives would track him throughout central Pakistan. Ultimately, administration officials said, he led them to a sprawling compound at the end of a long dirt road and surrounded by tall security fences in a wealthy hamlet 35 miles from the Pakistani capital." Eight months later, the United States would launch the daring nighttime raid that killed him nearly ten years after 9-11.
- ◆ The FBI and DHS worry that homegrown extremists could attack the United States in retaliation for OBL's death [2]. "The agencies issued a joint intelligence bulletin that said the core Al Qaeda group is less likely to carry out attacks against the United States in the immediate future, but its spinoff groups around the world could use bin Laden's death as an excuse to speed up plans for attacks," reports the Associated Press. "The intelligence community has no information of advanced terrorists' plots in the United States but believes American cities, aviation, mass transit, and government facilities will continue to be attractive targets for terrorists, according to the joint bulletin."
- ◆ *The New York Times* assesses what the death of OBL means for al Qaeda and its affiliates [3]. "If the impact of Bin Laden's removal is limited, that is in part because of his success in creating a decentralized global movement in which loosely coordinated groups are often linked by little more than a shared ideology. Affiliates of the old core of Al Qaeda are based in Yemen, North Africa and Somalia and have taken on a far more prominent role in recent years in plotting violence, including attacks aimed at the United States and Europe," reports the Times. "Counterterrorism officials now are watching to see whether groups such as Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, consisting mostly of Saudis and Yemenis, are distracted by the power struggle at home or move to fill the media vacuum left by Bin Laden's death. The American-born militant cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, now hiding in Yemen, could take on greater prominence as a result of Bin Laden's departure from the scene."
- ◆ Saudi Arabia, OBL's homeland, hopes his death will help dampen the allure for al Qaeda's brand of jihadist terrorism and its ideology [4]. "Saudi Arabia hopes that his death will be a step toward dismantling al-Qaeda 'as well as the elimination of deviant thought that stands behind it,' the Saudi news agency said, citing an unidentified official," according to Bloomberg.
- ◆ Amid all the fears that al Qaeda or a sympathetic militant could wage an attack on the United States or U.S. assets overseas, there is one area where al Qaeda is not considered a threat [5]. "Experts in and out of government who track al-Qaida don't see the terrorist organization as a cyberthreat. Jim Harper, director of information policy studies at The Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, said he has seen little evidence that terrorists are a significant threat to cybersecurity," reports Govinfo Security. According to Harper, "Osama bin Laden's killing will help strip away the veneer of invulnerability that he has helped create around terrorism. With that veneer gone, people will be less likely to imagine super-genius terrorists with access to cyberweapons."

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