

OPINION

Osama' Death a Moment for Reflection

Our prayers will be a fitting response

BY GEOFFREY A. BLACK



The news that the U. S. military located and killed Osama bin Laden at his compound in Pakistan comes as the nation prepares to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and the downing of United Airlines Flight 93 over Pennsylvania.

These tragic events left Americans and people throughout the world in shock and griev-

ing the senseless loss of life resulting from this intentional assault planned and carried out by al-Qaida under the leadership of Osama bin Laden.

From that moment there were those in this country who felt a need for revenge that could only be satisfied by bringing bin Laden to justice, which in the minds of many meant killing him. As of today, that goal has been achieved.

Yet, while many celebrate this event and feel that it has provided the nation with a fitting response to the horrific and brutal attack on American citizens, there are others who see no reason to rejoice and instead feel a deep sense of disquiet and

unease.

For the past 10 years we have mourned the loss of those who perished in the 9/11 attacks. We mourn, too, the thousands around the world—Muslims, Christians, Jews and others—killed in numerous indiscriminate attacks by al-Qaida.

We've been made all too aware of the cost of waging the "war on terror" both in human lives lost in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the financial toll it has taken on our country. We lament that our troops often have returned to lackluster care for the healing of their physical and emotional wounds.

Few, if any of us, are without a personal story of loss that connects us to this conflict.

If nothing else, Osama bin

Laden was an enemy of the United States and other governments around the world. His death at the hands of our military brings his life as an adversary to an end, but it does not bring us any closer to our ultimate goal—a just peace, healing of the human spirit and reconciliation between human beings and with God.

We know that revenge does not lead to healing and reconciliation. It does not move us any closer to peace.

We now have an opportunity to pursue a troop withdrawal and end to combat operations in Afghanistan; the continued hope of a just resolution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians; engaging in meaningful relation-

ships with people of other faith communities, including Muslims; and to use the gained political capital to promote a just peace on many fronts.

Above all else, it is a moment for prayerful reflection.

God promises courage in the struggle for justice and peace. For people of faith committed to seeking peace with justice in our nation and the world, turning to God in prayer is most appropriate.

I believe our prayers will be a fitting response to the violent death of an enemy, whose cause still lives as a challenge and a threat.

The Rev. Geoffrey A. Black is the General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ.

Good Riddance to a Ruthless Mass Murderer

We have yet to recover from bin Laden's blow

BY DONALD KAUL

I don't like to exult in the death of people, not even people I don't like. I think it's bad form.



I'm making an exception in the case of Osama bin Laden, however. From the point of view of a comfortable middle-class American (which I certainly am), he was evil incarnate—a ruthless mass murderer who inspired the massacre of thousands of innocent men, women, and children without a trace of remorse. He was our implacable enemy and I'm glad he is dead.

To many on the other side of reality, however—a stateless Palestinian or an aggrieved Arab nationalist—he was a great hero. This was no tin-pot dictator lining his pockets with money stolen from the Arab people, after all.

No, he was a rich kid, a billionaire's son, who forsook the easy life to dedi-

cate himself and his fortune to returning the Islamic world to its former glory. His worldview called for accomplishing this by crushing Israel, driving Western "Crusaders" from Muslim soil, and resurrecting an Islamic caliphate that harkened back to the Middle Ages.

There are many street-corner imams in the Middle East who want the same things, but they don't have what Osama bin Laden had:

Money, which he spent to finance paramilitary operations and training centers around the world.

9-11.

If the War on Terror is really a war, then September 11, 2001 marks one of the most brilliant and successful military attacks in the history of warfare.

In a single stroke, an army of less than two-dozen barely trained troops, armed mainly with box cutters, brought the world's greatest military power to its knees.

It wasn't merely that the attack took the lives of nearly 3,000 Americans. Nor, astonishingly, that it utterly destroyed the most iconic symbol of our

capitalist system. It wasn't even that it struck a blow at the very citadel of our military might.

It was that it attacked our self-confidence and delivered a blow to our sense of well being from which we have yet to recover, a decade later.

Many Americans now find themselves insecure and nervous in the presence of people who look like they might be Muslims. We allow ourselves to be subjected to all manner of indignities at airports in the name of security. We go to war without hesitation and spill endless blood and treasure in an attempt to ensure it won't happen again.

We are afraid as once we were not, not even in the darkest days of World War II when the Nazi monster threatened us.

That was what bin Laden accomplished, his life's work. If he wasn't the mastermind of the 9-11 assaults, he certainly was its animating force. And that is why I'm glad he's dead.

Will his demise end the Global War on Terror? I very much doubt it. But he was the global face of terrorism and, as such,

a powerful symbol. That symbol is no more.

Certainly, there will be retaliation. But you can't fight a war by being afraid of retaliation.

I was much amused by the response of many Republican presidential candidates to bin Laden's assassination. They praised the work of our troops, of course, but it was hard to find the name of President Obama in their statements. It was as though the troops had done it all on their own, without leadership.

As much as they would have it otherwise, Barack Obama is the president of the United States and our commander in chief. He deserves full marks for his leadership. He made his Republican rivals look like the pipsqueaks they are. Just a few days before, he had taken the air out of the "birther" movement by releasing his long-form birth certificate, proving to all who respond to proof that he's a natural-born American.

It was a bad week for Republican politicians. It was a good week for the rest of us.

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