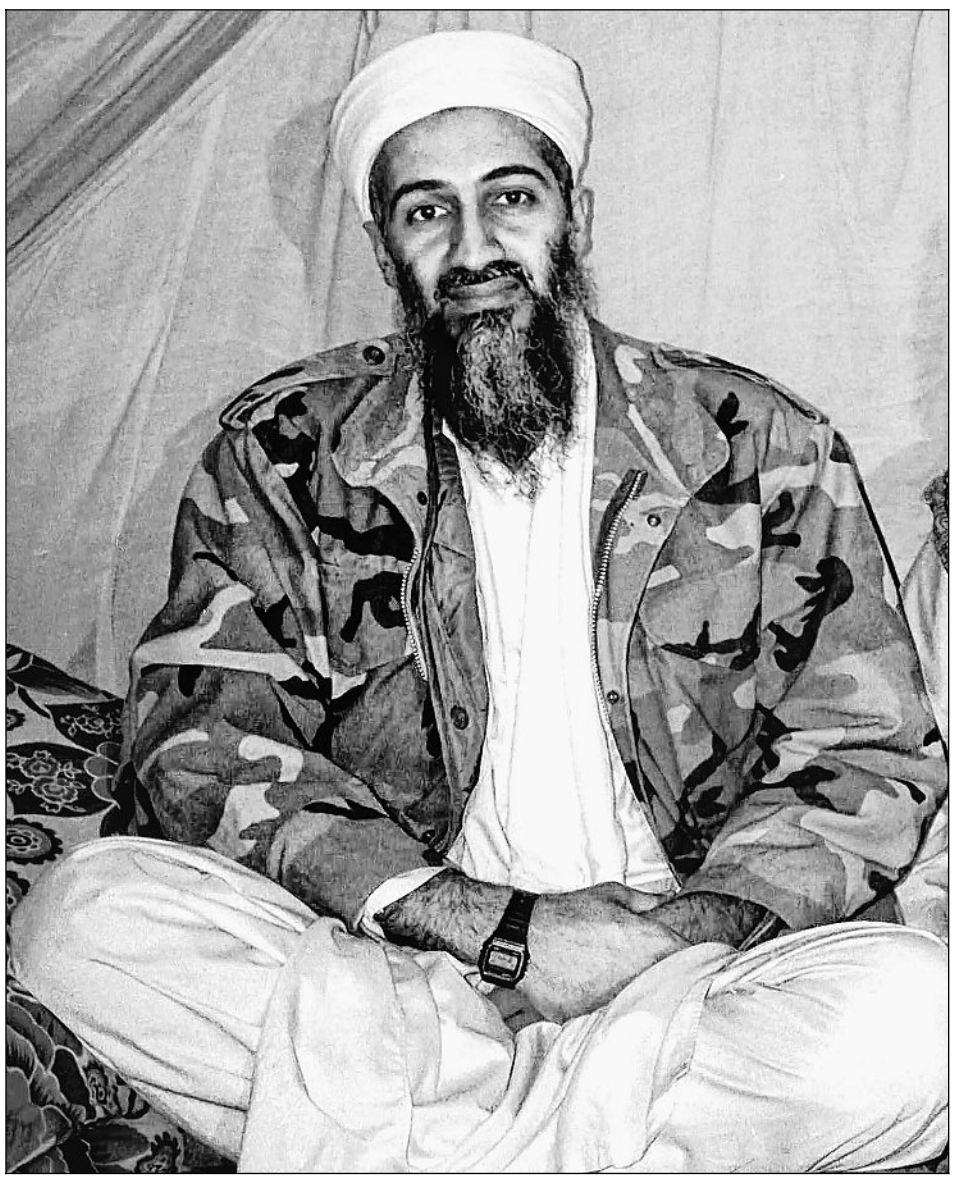
Book raises questions about bin Laden raid

Contradicts original story, threat risk

By Kimberly Dozier
Associated Press


Osama bin Laden

WASHINGTON — A first-hand account of the Navy SEAL raid that killed Osama bin Laden contradicts previous accounts, raising questions as to whether the terror mastermind presented a clear threat when SEALs first fired upon him.

Bin Laden apparently was shot in the head when he looked out of his bedroom door into the top-floor hallway of his compound as SEALs rushed up a narrow stairwell in his direction, according to former Navy SEAL Matt Bissonnette, writing under the pseudonym Mark Owen in "No Easy Day." The book is to be published next week by Penguin Group (USA)'s Dutton imprint.

Bissonnette says he was directly behind a point man going up the stairs in the pitch-black hallway. Near the top, he said, he heard two shots, but the book doesn't make it clear who fired them. He wrote that the point man had seen a man peeking out of a door on the right side of the hallway.

The author writes that the man ducked back into his bedroom and the SEALs followed, only to find the man crumpled on the floor in a pool of blood with a hole visible on the right side of his head and two women wailing over his body. Once they wiped the blood off his face, they were certain it was bin Laden.

Bissonnette says the point man pulled the two women out of the way and shoved them into a corner. He and the other SEALs trained their guns' laser sights on bin Laden's still-twitching body, shooting him several times until he lay motionless. The SEALs later found two weapons stored by the doorway, untouched, the author said.

Administration officials briefing reporters in the days after the May 2011 raid in Pakistan said the SEALs shot bin Laden only after he ducked back into the bedroom because they assumed he might be reaching for a weapon.

National Security Council spokesman Tommy Vietor would not comment on the apparent contradiction late Tuesday. But he said in an email Wednesday, "As President Obama said on the night that justice was brought to Osama bin Laden, 'We give thanks for the men who carried out this operation, for they exemplify the professionalism, patriotism and unparalleled courage of those who serve our country.' "

"No Easy Day" was due out Sept. 11, but Dutton announced the book would be available a week early, Sept. 4, because of a surge of orders due to advance publicity that drove the book to the top of the Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble best-seller lists.

The Associated Press purchased a copy of the book Tuesday.

The account is sure to renew questions about whether the raid was intended to capture or simply to kill bin Laden. Bissonnette writes that during a pre-raid briefing, an administration lawyer told them that they were not on an assassination mission. According to Bissonnette, the lawyer said that if bin Laden was "naked with his hands up," they should not engage him. If bin Laden did not pose a threat, they should detain him.

A former deputy judge advocate general for the Air Force said the shooting was understandable according to the orders the SEALs had.

"It wasn't unreasonable for the SEALs to shoot the individual who stuck his head out," said retired Maj. Gen. Charlie Dunlap, who now teaches at the Duke University law school.

In another possibly uncomfortable revelation for U.S. officials who say bin Laden's body was treated with dignity before being given a full Muslim burial at sea, the author reveals that in the cramped helicopter flight out of the compound, one of the SEALs was sitting on bin Laden's chest as the body lay at the author's feet in the middle of the cabin, for the short flight to a refueling stop inside Pakistan where a third helicopter was waiting.

This is common practice, as U.S. troops sometimes must sit on their own war dead in packed helicopters. Space was cramped because one of the helicopters had crashed in the initial assault, leaving little space for the roughly two dozen commandos in the two aircraft that remained. When the commandos reached the third aircraft, bin Laden's body was moved to it.

Officials from the Pentagon and the CIA, which commanded the mission, are examining the manuscript for possible disclosure of classified information and could take legal action against the author.

$7.5M approved for hotel's renovation

By Jeff Bollier
of The Northwestern

The Oshkosh Common Council unanimously approved a request Tuesday to use tax-exempt bonds to help fund the renovation of the former Park Plaza hotel in downtown Oshkosh.

Oshkosh Investors LLC, the partnership that includes the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh Foundation and hoteliers Rich Batley and John Pfefferle, requested approval to sell $7.5 million in Midwestern Disaster Area Bonds to help finance renovation of the 176-unit hotel located at 1 N. Main St.

The cost to renovate the 25-year-old hotel has increased to an estimated $14 million as the group continues to demolish parts of the property. Renovation of hotel rooms and other interior spaces is expected to begin soon.

Oshkosh Investors anticipates re-opening the hotel sometime in the first quarter of 2013.

The bonds are tax-exempt and local developers have tapped them as a source of long-term financing for projects at a time when long-term, bank-provided financing remains tight.

Though the bonds must be approved by the council, the city cannot be held liable for their repayment if Oshkosh Investors would default on them, Oshkosh Finance Director Peggy Steeno said.

Congress approved millions of dollars in disaster area bonds for counties hit hard by floods in June 2008. Storms caused significant flooding in parts of Oshkosh, Winnebago County and Wisconsin.

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Judge puts off wolf hunt injunction ruling

Associated Press

MADISON — A Dane County judge has postponed until Friday a ruling on a request to block hunters from training dogs to go after wolves.

A coalition of humane societies has filed a lawsuit challenging the hunt. The coalition wants Judge Peter C. Anderson to issue a temporary order blocking the Department of Natural Resources from issuing permits unless the agency notifies hunters they can't train dogs to go after wolves.

Ryan

Continued from Page A1

along the nearby northern Gulf Coast.

"We will not duck the tough issues; we will lead," Ryan said, adding that President Barack Obama and the Democrats "have run out of ideas. Their moment came and went. Fear and division is all they've got left."

To the cheers of the delegates, he pledged Republicans would save Medicare from looming bankruptcy, despite constant accusations from Democrats that the GOP approach would shred the program that provides health care to more than 30 million seniors.

"Our nation needs this debate. We want this debate. We will win this debate, we will win this debate," Ryan declared. He offered no details of the remedy Republicans would propose.

Romney accused Obama of backing "reckless defense cuts" amounting to $1 trillion. Addressing the American Legion in Indianapolis, he said, "There are plenty of places to cut in a federal budget that now totals over $3 trillion. But defense is not one of them."

In Tampa, the Romney team scripted an economy-and-veterans-themed program and kept a wary eye on Isaac. The storm remained a threat to levees in the New Orleans area seven years after Hurricane Katrina.

Inside the convention hall, delegates cheered a parade of party leaders past, present and — possibly — future.

The presidents Bush, George H.W., elected in 1988, and his son, George W., winner in 2000 and 2004, were featured in an evocative video. Arizona Sen. John McCain, the party's 2008 nominee, spoke on his 76th birthday and said he wished he'd been there under different circumstances. And an array of ambitious younger elected officials preceded Ryan to the podium, Sens. Rand Paul of Kentucky and John Thune of South Dakota among them.

Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice praised the Republican ticket in a speech that made no overt mention of Obama. "Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan will rebuild us at home and inspire us to lead abroad. They will provide an answer to the question, 'Where does America stand?'"

Ryan said in excerpts released in advance that he was accepting "the calling of my generation to give our children the America that was given to us."

He added, "The present administration has made its choices. And Mitt Romney and I have made ours: Before the math and the momentum overwhelm us all, we are going to solve this nation's economic problems.

"And I'm going to level with you: We don't have much time."

As he spoke a pair of electronic boards tallied the nation's growing national debt, approaching $16 trillion overall and more than $5 billion since the convention opened.

Ryan's vice presidential acceptance speech marked a prime-time national debut by a relatively young lawmaker lauded by fellow Republicans for his understanding of the complexities of the nation's budget.

Romney tapped Ryan this month as his running mate, a selection that cheered conservatives who have doubted the presidential candidate's own commitment to their cause.

As chairman of the House Budget Committee, Ryan is the architect of a plan to curb long-term deficits by reducing taxes and making deep cuts in accounts ranging from farm programs to education.

He also advocates saving billions from remaking Medicare and Medicaid.

The Medicare changes, in particular, are potentially incendiary in an election campaign. Democrats say that Romney, with his selection of Ryan, has accepted political ownership of a plan that would turn the program from one in which seniors' medical bills are automatically paid into one in which the government would give them checks to purchase coverage.

Romney delivers his own nationally televised acceptance speech tonight. The political attention then shifts to the Democrats, who open their own convention on Tuesday.

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