



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on December 1, 2009

Donald Rumsfeld Let bin Laden Escape into Pakistan

Donald Rumsfeld could have given the order to kill or capture Osama bin Laden, but he let him escape to Pakistan because he was afraid of angering U.S. allies in Afghanistan. This shocking report was published Sunday in the New York Times and several other outlets and is culled from information revealed in a detailed analysis released by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee of the crucial days in December 2001 when bin Laden and his top lieutenant, Ayman al-Zawahiri, were pinned down in caves high up in the White Mountains in eastern Afghanistan.



The Committee's report is informed by several inside sources and field dispatches filed by CIA operatives and the Special Operations soldiers serving with them in and around bin Laden's Tora Bora hideout. In 2007, the United States Army Special Operations Command released its history of the Tora Bora campaign and surmises that the failure of American military and civilian leadership to overpower bin Laden's al-Qaeda force is a significant contributing factor to the current Taliban resurgence in Afghanistan and the emergence of Osama bin Laden as a "malignant influence over events in the region and nearly 60 countries where his followers have established extremist groups."

Apart from the Special Operations Command's official version of events in December 2001, in preparing its report the Committee gleaned insight from several previously published accounts of the events in the region, two books published by former CIA agents operating in the theatre, and one account penned by a commander in the super-secret Delta Force under the pseudonym "Dalton Fury." All of these sources cite the same primary reason for the successful escape of bin Laden — inexplicable tactical errors on the part of then Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, and the former commander of the United States Central Command, the American military leader in the Middle East.

Various journalists note that by the time the American and Afghan forces had bin Laden and his al-Qaeda entourage pinned down in caves, Rumsfeld had already switched his focus to an impending invasion of Iraq and was more concerned with mounting a successful "regime change" in that nation than in capturing the man roundly blamed for the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. As for Franks, in official reports, he questioned whether or not bin Laden was actually still hiding out in Tora Bora in December 2001, despite reliable field reports all but guaranteeing that he most certainly was bunkered there.

One of the most trustworthy and reputable witnesses of bin Laden's precise whereabouts during the weeks in question is an operative code named "Jalal." Dalton Fury describes Jalal as "the foremost expert on bin Laden's voice" that daily intercepted radio communication to and from Osama bin Laden. Jalal had studied bin Laden's voice for seven years and he identified bin Laden's voice coming from the mountain. "To him [Jalal]," says Fury, "it was very clear that bin Laden was there on the mountain."



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The particulars of bin Laden's disappearance from Tora Bora illuminate inexcusable delinquency and obstinacy on the part of General Franks and his civilian boss at the Pentagon. The study published by the Foreign Relations Committee asserts that "with reasonable certainty" it can be stated that Osama bin Laden was ensconced in the high altitude caves dotting the Tora Bora district and that senior U.S. shot callers (principally Rumsfeld and Franks) adamantly refused, despite frantic and frequent requests from field officers, to commit more resources to the area and as a result, the 100 or so American troops were simply insufficient to thwart bin Laden's flight to the relative security of the rugged Pakistani frontier.

Whereas the report concludes that neither the apprehension nor elimination of bin Laden and his deputy would have quashed the threat of global terrorism, it almost certainly "laid the foundation for today's protracted Afghan insurgency and inflaming the internal strife now endangering Pakistan."

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