

Hunting down Osama bin Laden

The raid that killed al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden took shape after detainees identified a bin Laden courier.

First information

- After 9/11, CIA chases leads about bin Laden's inner circle
- Detainees repeatedly mention one courier's pseudonym, identifying him as one of the few trusted by bin Laden; true name, location unknown
- Courier's true identity learned in 2007
- Two years later, locations where courier and his brother operate in Pakistan are learned

Narrowing in

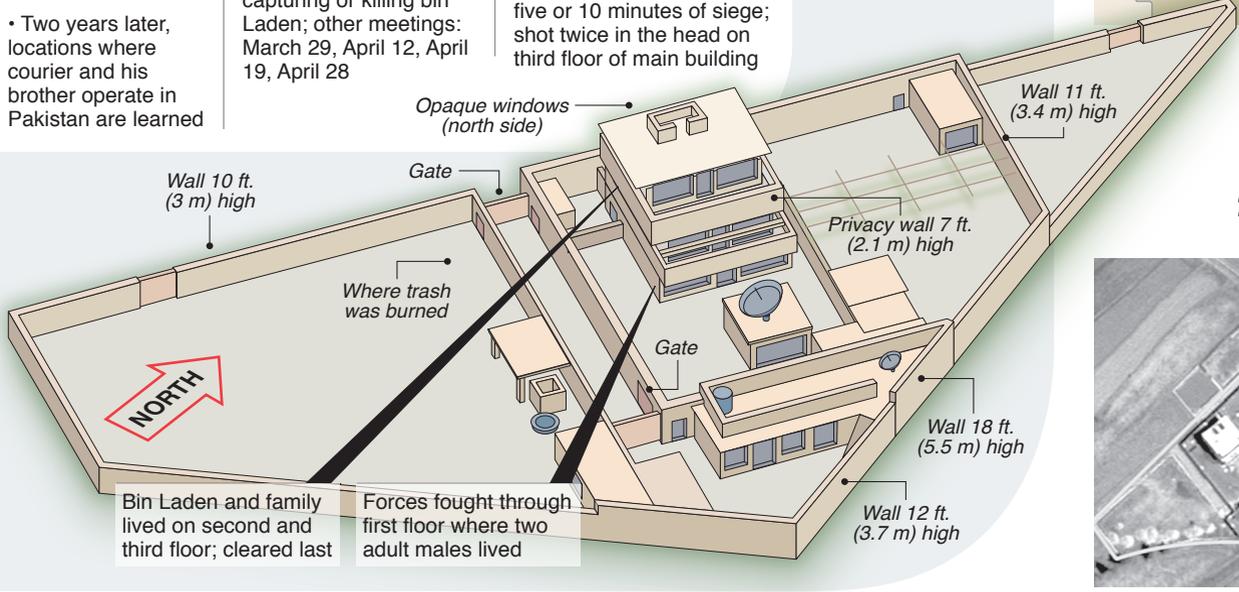
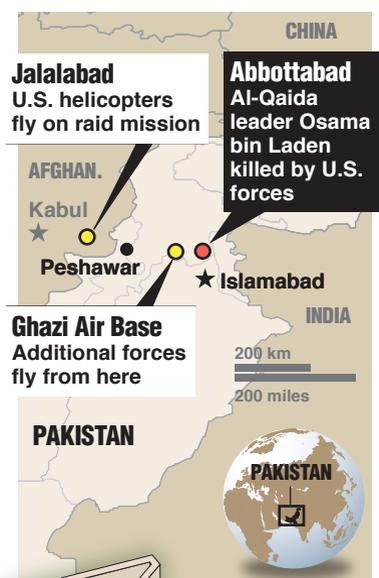
- **August 2010** Courier's residence found: high-security compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan
- **September 2010** U.S. thinks bin Laden may be hiding in compound
- **February 2011** U.S. thinks intelligence is strong enough to begin developing plan for going after bin Laden
- **March 2011** First of five National Security Council meetings on capturing or killing bin Laden; other meetings: March 29, April 12, April 19, April 28

The operation

- **April 29, 2011, 8:20 a.m. EDT** Obama authorizes operation
- **May 1, 1 p.m.** Top advisers gather at White House
- **Around 3 p.m. (midnight in Pakistan)** Helicopters heard over Abbottabad
- Two dozen Navy SEALs drop into high-walled compound; inside for 40 minutes
- Bin Laden killed in last five or 10 minutes of siege; shot twice in the head on third floor of main building

Inside the compound in Abbottabad

- Built in 2005; about 3,000 sq. ft. (279 sq. m) of space; but no telephone or Internet service to avoid detection
- Two men lived on first floor
- Exterior walls topped with barbed wire



2005 aerial image of the compound



Outcome and aftermath All times EDT

- One U.S. helicopter lost because of mechanical failure; destroyed for security purposes
- Along with bin Laden, three adult males killed: bin Laden's son and two al-Qaida facilitators
- Woman identified as bin Laden's wife used as human shield, killed; two others injured
- **3:32 p.m.** Obama returns for update
- **3:50 p.m.** Obama told bin Laden appears to be one of those killed during raid
- **11:35 p.m.** After confirmation, Obama announces in televised address that U.S. forces killed bin Laden and are in custody of his body
- Bin Laden's body put aboard the USS Carl Vinson, then placed in the North Arabian Sea