

Pakistan Paints Dismal Image Of Bin Laden's End

BY MUNIR AHMED AND SEBASTIAN ABBOT
Associated Press

ISLAMABAD — Pakistan's military paints a different picture than the United States of Osama bin Laden's final days: far from the terror mastermind still trying to strike America, he's seen as an aging terrorist hiding in barren rooms, short of money and struggling to maintain his grip on al-Qaida.

But the CIA is saying he was in touch with key members of al-Qaida, playing a strong role in planning and directing attacks by al-Qaida and its affiliates in Yemen and Somalia, senior U.S. officials said Friday, citing documents found during the Monday morning raid in which bin Laden was killed.

Three of bin Laden's wives were living with him in the compound and are being interrogated by Pakistani authorities, who took them into custody after Monday's raid, along with 13 children, eight of them bin Laden's.

Their accounts could help shed light on the U.S. military operation that killed the al-Qaida leader and reveal how he was able to avoid capture for nearly 10 years.

One of the wives, identified as Yemeni-born Amal Ahmed Abdullfattah, told interrogators she had been staying in bin Laden's hideout since 2006 and never left the upper floors of the large but sparsely furnished building, said a Pakistani intelligence official, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with the agency's policy.

The official did not indicate whether bin Laden was with her the whole time,

a period in which the Pakistani military says the al-Qaida chief's influence and financial status eroded.

Disputes over money between bin Laden and his No. 2, Ayman al-Zawahri, led the group to split into two factions five or six years ago, with the larger faction controlled by al-Zawahri, according to two senior Pakistani military officials. Bin Laden was "cash strapped" in his final days, they said.

The officers spoke to a small group of Pakistani reporters late Thursday, and their comments were confirmed for The Associated Press by another top military official, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issues. The officer didn't provide details or say how his agency knew about bin Laden's financial situation or the split with his deputy.

The image coming out of Washington based on information seized from bin Laden's compound was far different.

It shows that bin Laden was a lot more involved in directing al-Qaida personnel and operations than sometimes thought over the last decade, officials said. And it suggests bin Laden was "giving strategic direction" to al-Qaida affiliates in Somalia and Yemen, one defense official said.

U.S. counterterrorism officials have long debated how big a role bin Laden and core al-Qaida leaders were playing in the attacks launched by affiliated terror groups, particularly al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, which is based in Yemen, and al-Shabab in Somalia.

Bin Laden's first priority, an official said, was his own security. But the data

shows that he was far more active in providing guidance and telling affiliated groups in Yemen and Somalia what they should or should not be doing.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive material.

The confiscated materials revealed al-Qaida plans for derailing an American train on the upcoming 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks, U.S. counterterrorism officials say.

They believe the plot, which seemed to be formulated in February 2010, was only in the initial planning stages, and there was no recent intelligence about any active plan for such an attack. The FBI and Homeland Security issued an intelligence bulletin with details of the plan to law enforcement around the country. The bulletin, marked "for official use only," was obtained by the AP.

Already tense military and intelligence relations between the U.S. and Pakistan have been further strained by the raid that killed bin Laden.

Both countries have an interest in their version of bin Laden's hidden life.

A weak bin Laden would make Pakistan's failure to unearth his hiding place in Abbottabad, a military town just two-and-a-half hours' drive from the capital, seem less of a glaring embarrassment, while a menacing bin Laden would make the U.S. Navy SEAL raid that killed him a greater triumph.

The proximity of the al-Qaida chief's hideout to an elite military academy and the Pakistani capital has raised suspicions in Washington that bin Laden may have been protected by Pakistani security forces while on the run.

Pakistani officials have denied sheltering him and have criticized the U.S. operation as a violation of their country's sovereignty. Pakistan's army, a key U.S. ally in the Afghan war, threatened on Thursday to review cooperation with Washington if it stages any more attacks like the one that killed bin Laden. The army is considered the strongest institution in Pakistan, but its reputation has taken a beating in the wake of the raid.

Risking more tensions, a U.S. drone strike on Friday killed 15 people, including foreign militants, in North Waziristan, an al-Qaida and Taliban sanctuary close to Afghanistan, said Pakistani intelligence officials, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to the media.

Such attacks were routine last year, but their frequency has dropped this year amid opposition by the Pakistani security establishment and people on the street.

Hundreds of members of radical Islamic parties protested in several Pakistani cities Friday against the U.S. raid that killed bin Laden.

"America is celebrating Osama bin Laden's killing, but it will be a temporary celebration," said Abdullah Sittar Chishti, a member of the Jamiat Ulema Islam party who attended a rally in Khuchlak, a town in southwestern Baluchistan province.

"After the martyrdom of Osama, billions, trillions of Osamas will be born," Chishti said.

Some of the protesters expressed doubt that bin Laden was actually killed since the U.S. has refused to release pic-

tures of his body.

Al-Qaida confirmed bin Laden's death in an Internet statement Friday and warned that it would seek revenge by attacking the United States. And the Afghan Taliban issued a statement saying the al-Qaida leader's death would boost morale among insurgents battling the U.S. and NATO in Afghanistan.

Bin Laden and his associates did not offer significant resistance when the American commandos entered the compound, in part because "stun bombs" thrown by the U.S. forces had disoriented them, two Pakistani officials said late Thursday, citing accounts by bin Laden's wives and children.

Pakistani authorities found an AK-47 and a pistol in the house, with evidence that one bullet had been fired from the rifle, said one of the officials.

"That was the level of resistance" they put up, he said.

His account is roughly consistent with the most recent one given by U.S. officials, who now say only one of the five people killed in the raid was armed and fired any shots, a striking departure from the intense and prolonged firefight described earlier by the White House and others in the administration.

U.S. officials say three men and a woman were killed alongside bin Laden, including one of his sons.

Bin Laden's wife, Abdullfattah, was shot in the leg and did not witness her husband being killed, a Pakistani military official said. One of the al-Qaida leader's daughters did see the Americans kill her father, he said.

MMC

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contract."

Vogt didn't see the MMC choir's reaction to the news. "I didn't look around at the choir, but I could feel them smiling and feel the energy of being rewarded for all their hard work," he said.

MMC junior Heidi Swanke, a choir member, believes the announcement continues the program's upward swing.

"The new Vespers CD is a very exciting thing for Mount Marty College choirs," she said. "I have only been at MMC for three years, but in that short amount of time, I have seen Vespers grow from one piano accompanying us to a whole orchestra accompanying us."

Others had already suggested the CD, Swanke said.

"Every year after Vespers, my dad asks me, 'When are you guys going to make a CD of this?'" she said. "Every year I think, 'Dad, don't get your hopes up.' But this year, I finally get the pleasure of telling him that we will have a CD."

"Now that our choir has this CD, we can spread our voices with not only the Yankton community but the whole world."

Under the contract terms, MMC purchases a set number of CDs and keeps the proceeds, Vogt said. MMC will receive the CDs once production is finished. Down the line, the CD moves to other distribution outlets.

"There is not an official CD release date. We are still securing copyright and licensing with several of the composers," he said. "We hope people buy from us, because it's our first and only chance to make money off the project."

Jamie Ridgway, freelance graphic designer, created the Vespers program used for the CD design, Vogt said. The MMC college relations department used her design and adapted the layout for the CD.

The Benedictine Sisters of Sacred Heart Monastery and the MMC Music Department present their annual Vespers performance in Bishop Marty Chapel on the college campus. The two Vespers performances are performed on the first Sunday of Advent, about a month before Christmas.

"Vespers is an evening prayer service," Vogt said. "We use a more general, ecumenical format that would be comfortable for nearly any denomination. I have invited a rabbi to give the Genesis readings."

The 2010 Vespers featured a commissioned work by Grammy-nominated composer Gerald Custer. A professional orchestra accompanied the MMC choir as it performed both traditional and contemporary carols. Vespers concluded with a performance of "Silent Night" for the orchestra, congregation and choir.

Vogt arrived on the MMC campus during fall 2007, and he set a lofty goal of landing a recording contract for the choir.

"I knew I wanted a CD at the end of four years, or something along those lines," he said. "I wanted to make sure the program was competitive with other

collegiate programs."

Vogt turned to two nationally-recognized recording engineers during the course of the CD effort.

Chris Herles was going to work with the 2009 Vespers. When the recording was postponed a year, he wasn't available for the 2010 Vespers but remained an important part of securing the label. A second recording engineer, Fred Hohman, worked with the 2010 recording chosen for a contract.

MMC supporters stepped forward financially to make the recording a reality, Vogt said.

"It was an investment to bring a nationally recognized engineer here," he said. "I was able to do so through grants and private donations."

The Con Brio owners — spouses Carol Greenley and Edward Hollcraft — are professional musicians who specialize in recording classical music, Vogt said. He approached the label because he enjoyed and respected its recordings.

"I thought this might be the (work) that landed a contract. It contained not only the music but also the prayers and Scripture. It was a high-caliber worship experience," Vogt said.

"We sent one sound file from Vespers. Then (Con Brio) contacted us and said they were interested in the sound and wanted a few more sound files. It just took off."

Vogt and Hohman worked painstakingly on sending the perfect effort, bringing together the best from both the afternoon and evening Vespers performances. Then, they waited and waited — and finally received the good news of the contract.

BASKING IN THE GLOW

The CD represents a particular reward for the MMC seniors, Vogt said. "This year's seniors were with me all four years. I am very much goal-oriented, and I think that the students are as well," he said.

Joey Stahl, a graduating senior and outgoing choir president, said the program has made major strides during the past four years.

"The choir at Mount Marty has come a long way since I joined as a freshman," he said. "While being part of the choir, I have had the opportunity to sing with members of the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra several times with our Vespers performances and 'Christmas at the Cathedral' and with the Omaha Symphony for a 'Queen' (rock band) tribute concert."

The CD represents a pinnacle, Stahl said.

"To have our music placed on a CD label means a great deal to me," he said. "We have put in a lot of work over the years in class and outside of class with more and more challenging repertoire every year."

"Dr. Sean Vogt has been a great friend to me, and I am proud to say that I have been a part of Mount Marty Choir under his direction."

Johanna Scheich, a freshman and incoming choir president, said she "couldn't be more excited about the choir program."

"Coming to a small college, I was unsure how prominent the choir program would be," she said. "But knowing that we have a CD label and a trip to Europe in our near future, I have the confidence that I'm getting the same experiences — plus more — that any large university would offer."

Tyler Vela, a graduating senior and ROTC member, drew a comparison between his college life and choir experiences.

"To me, this program started out the same way I did (at college) — a little confused and a little nervous," he said. "But Dr. Vogt has always had a plan. He started out big with Vespers, and it keeps getting bigger."

Vela looks for even bigger and better things in the choir's future.

"I have no idea what the choir was like before I got here, but I know that for the last four years it has been one of the best experiences that I have had the pleasure of being a part of," he said.

"And even though I won't be here anymore, I know the program will continue to grow and continue to be under the great care of Dr. Vogt, doing even more amazing things for years to come."

Freshman Piper Wegener noted the huge accomplishments in her first year with the MMC choir.

"I couldn't have loved it more!" she said. "There were, of course, the ups and downs of learning new music and not being sure of what to expect. But as the year progressed, things went better and became more fun."

Wegener said she can hardly wait to see where the next three years will take the choir.

"Overall, when I think about the choir program, I can't help but smile when I think of the two words that sum up my feelings perfectly: Blessed and Family," she said. "This is my family, and I am very blessed to have the opportunity to participate in something so wonderful."

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

The MMC choir numbers have increased dramatically in four years, and landing an international CD label should drive the interest even higher, Vogt said.

"We started with 32 singers when I first arrived in fall 2007.

After Vespers, we hit 65 for the spring semester. The next fall, it was 90," he said. "This coming fall, we are at 75 to 80, and that doesn't include any incoming freshmen or transfers."

The 2011-12 school year marks MMC's 75th anniversary, Vogt said. The year-long celebration will culminate with the choir's performances in Germany and Switzerland. The tour includes the Maria-Rickenbach Monastery in Switzerland, which founded Sacred Heart Monastery in Yankton.

Also during the 2011-12 season, Vogt will make his New York

City conducting debut at Avery Fisher Hall with the New England Symphony Orchestra and Mid-America chorus.

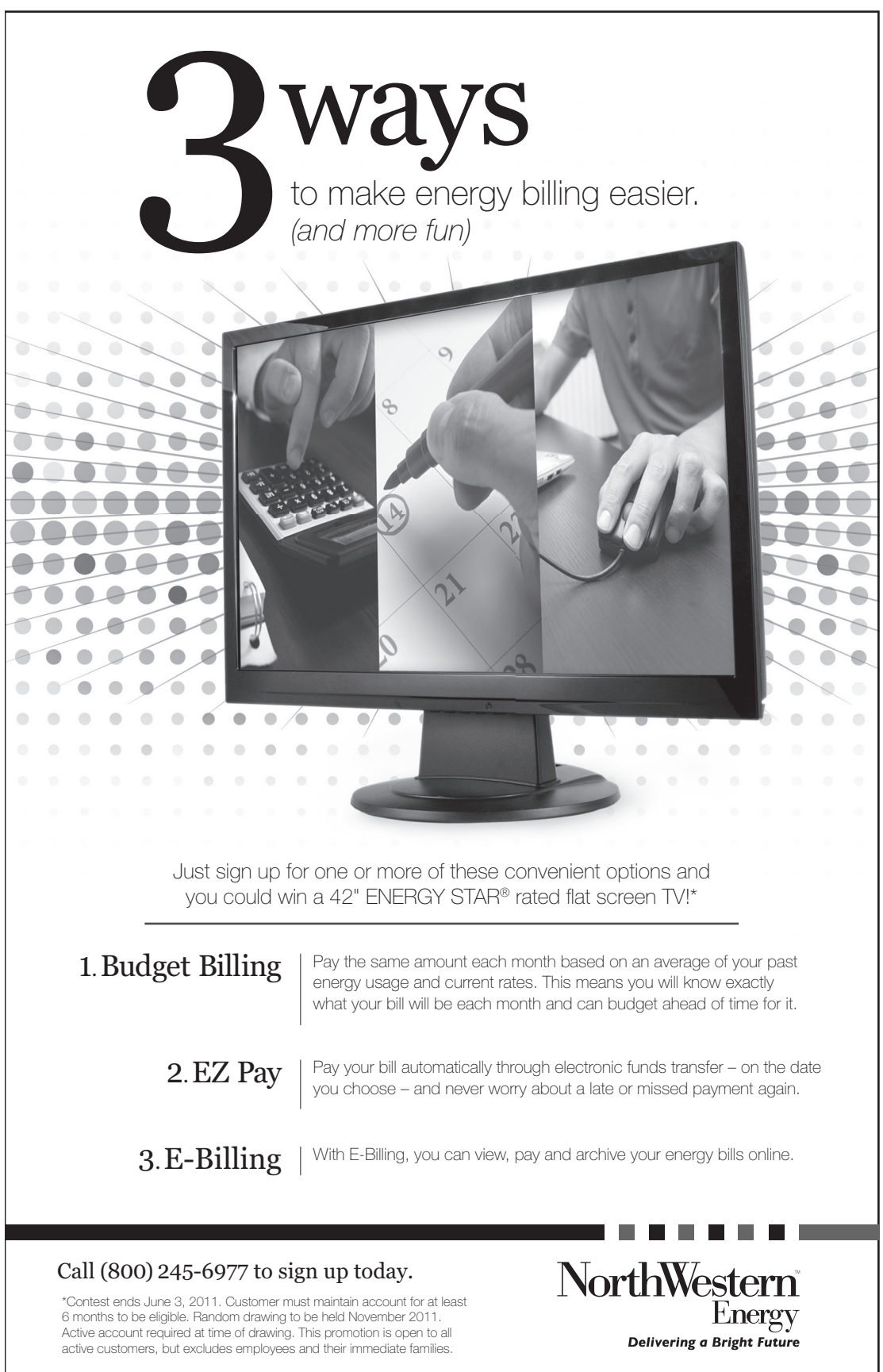
Vogt compared the CD label to a gold medal. "This is like the Olympics. You keep training, and you get better. Our goal is to keep going and keep growing as a choir," he said.

For the MMC choir, the CD means no turning back, Vogt said.

"We can't be good just once. We have to be good consistently," he said. "This (CD) is their trophy, and we hope to continue to build and grow on it."



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