

Jihad journal: Bin Laden kept list of ways to kill Americans

Terminology

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BY KEN DILANIAN
AND BRIAN BENNETT
Tribune Washington bureau

WASHINGTON — Osama bin Laden kept a personal journal in which he contemplated how to kill as many Americans as possible, including possible terrorist attacks against Los Angeles, Chicago and Washington, D.C., according to U.S. officials.

The handwritten journal was discovered in a vast cache of digital and printed material that was hauled away from bin Laden's hideout after U.S. Navy SEALs killed him last week in Abbottabad, Pakistan. One official said Wednesday that the trove provided "terabytes" of new information about al-Qaida.

The official described the private journal as full of planning ideas and outlines of potential operations, "aspirational guidance" on how to kill the maximum number of people, rather than specific proposals or plots that were under way.

In one unnerving passage, al-Rahman, officials said.

bin Laden wondered how many Americans would have to die in U.S. cities to force the U.S. government to withdraw from the Arab world. He concluded it would require another mass murder on the scale of the Sept. 11 attacks, a U.S. official said.

The officials declined to provide details about potential plots in Los Angeles and Chicago. Bin Laden discussed an operation in Washington, D.C., one official said, "because of its iconic value."

A CIA-led multiagency task force continues to scrutinize data from five computers, dozens of plug-in storage devices called flash drives, and other devices taken from bin Laden's walled compound. The analysts have not found evidence of an imminent threat of an attack by al-Qaida or its affiliates, officials said.

But the initial analysis has determined that bin Laden was in regular communication with several deputies, including al-Qaida's putative operations chief, Ayman Abd al-Rahman, officials said.

The messages were sent primarily by couriers, the official said.

Discovery of the journal was not entirely unexpected. Bin Laden's fourth son, Omar, described his father in a 2009 memoir, "Growing Up bin Laden," as regularly recording his thoughts and plans.

The messages to al-Rahman, a Libyan in his mid-30s, have drawn special interest.

He joined bin Laden in Afghanistan as a teenager in the 1980s and "since then, he has gained considerable stature in al-Qaida as an explosives expert and Islamic scholar," according to a State Department website that offers a \$1 million reward for information leading to him.

U.S. officials believe al-Rahman took over the role as al-Qaida's No. 3 figure after Sheikh Said al-Masri was killed in a missile strike from a CIA drone in Pakistan's tribal area in May 2010, a former Pentagon official said.

Al-Rahman is believed to be in Pakistan.

id Birdwell 206-464-8268 dbirdwell@seattletimes.com | Copy editing, Karen Cater 206-464-8975 kcater@seattletimes.com