

# CT Communications Analysis

Friday May 13<sup>th</sup> 2011



*This weekly paper is for Government departments and statutory organisations dealing with counter-terrorism. It is intended to inform on CT issues that have been covered in the domestic, overseas and online media during the week. It provides background and context to issues covered in the CT Talking Points but also covers additional issues which have been prominent in the media.*

## Overview

There has been heavy media coverage of CT related issues in the past week with Usama Bin Laden's (UBL) death and the 7/7 inquest dominating. These have featured during a week in which the Coalition's one-year anniversary and NHS reforms have also received coverage. The main CT stories have featured as follows:

- **UBL:** Media coverage has been predominantly speculative with a focus on Pakistan's role, the future of Al Qa'ida (AQ) and the impact of his death on NATO's role in Afghanistan. There is some feeling in UK BAME media that the death of UBL will usher in a new chapter of better relations between Muslims and other communities in Britain.
- **7/7 inquest:** There has been disappointment at the verdict in the media and amongst victims' families, but the inquest itself has been described as "thoughtful".

## Detail

### Aftermath of the death of Usama Bin Laden

- UK mainstream media

In an interview on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> May, President Obama said that Pakistan's role needed more investigation. The High Commissioner to the UK for Pakistan and Pakistan Prime Minister, Yousaf Raza Gilani denounced accusations of complicity in the sheltering of UBL. Gilani said that a senior army officer, Lt-Gen Javed Iqbal, would conduct an investigation into how UBL had been able to live in Abbottabad.

The predominant sentiment amongst CT commentators in the media on what his death means for AQ is that while his death is a major blow to the group, it does not mean an end to the global terrorist threat and it may actually strengthen the trend toward a more decentralised network. An assessment in The Guardian added that the attention may now turn to AQ's ideology and the social movement it has created. There has also been widespread media speculation about who will replace UBL. Ayman al-Zawahiri (second in command in AQ behind UBL) is widely reported to lack the "charisma" and sufficient popularity to take over. Instead, three names referenced in the media as likely successors include Anwar al-Awlaki, Abu Yahya al-Libi and Attiya Allah.

There is significant commentary around the impact of UBL's death on NATO's role in Afghanistan. The predominant feeling is that his death provides Britain and the US with the opportunity to reduce their presence in Afghanistan, given that a supposed threat has been eliminated. However, the second in command of the International Security and Assistance Force (Isaf) in Afghanistan, General James Bucknall, said that the West must state clearly that it will not abandon Afghanistan after the handover of security to local forces in 2014 or risk further fighting in the region from an emboldened Taliban. A Gallup poll in the US, reported in UK media outlets, found that the majority of people in the US (60%) believe that the US "has accomplished its mission in Afghanistan and should bring its troops home".

## ➤ UK BAME media

General coverage has declined this week but there have been several more considered editorial pieces. The Eastern Eye featured a two page spread on the “positive outcomes” of his death. It reported that there is a strong feeling among Muslim Community leaders that the death of UBL will usher in a new chapter of better relations between Muslims and other communities in Britain. Other editorials highlighted fear of a backlash towards Pakistan amid reports of how much the country knew about UBL's whereabouts and whether it is doing enough to combat international terrorism.

## ➤ Blogs and forums

On some of the harder edged English language Muslim forums there has been discussion around an alleged increase in islamophobia in the UK and US since UBL's death and criticism of “US propaganda” in the debate around the release of five UBL videos found in the compound by the US.

According to MPACUK, islamophobic tendencies have risen in the past week. It cites the example of BBC news reporter Mishal Husain's children being racially abused in a supermarket as just another of the latest “acceptable forms of bigotry” left. It also claims that there has been a rise in hate crimes against Muslims in the US and cites two examples.

This week the US released five “home videos” of UBL, seized from the compound in Abbottabad. Online debate, primarily on Islamic Awakening, centres on whether the videos are genuine. A vast number believe that the videos are fake and a symbol of American “lies” and “US propaganda”. Some also question the accusations that he was living in a “million pound house” and suggest that the video does not seem to portray this. Online comments also suggested that US attempts to humiliate UBL will fail. Numerous users attempted to provide justification for the video which shows UBL watching himself on TV; users predominantly agree that this is something he needed to do so as to be able to refute allegations made against him.

## 7/7 Inquest

## ➤ UK mainstream media

The inquest picked up widespread coverage at the weekend with a focus on the Coroners statement that MI5 could have conducted a more rigorous investigation into the leader of the July 7 attacks. Security Services also came under heavy criticism from families of victims who called for a public inquiry. The other notable point in the verdict related to health and safety regulations for emergency services. Sir Paul Stephenson, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner told The Telegraph that the emergency services should be free to risk their lives without being concerned about health and safety law. The Coroner also commented that London is “woefully” unprepared for a terrorist attack on the 2012 Olympics because of a chronic shortage of air ambulance crews and other fast response teams.

## ➤ UK BAME media

There has been no coverage in the UK BAME media. This reflects the limited attention that the inquest has received in the BAME media since the Inquest began.