

# US special forces assault on Osama bin Laden: Where are the other five?

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**Five to seven persons managed to flee the attack, which was launched on a tree-lined, high-walled compound near Abbottabad.**

As many as five to seven persons are believed to have escaped either before or after the US special forces helicopter-borne assault on a closely guarded compound in Abbottabad, 30 miles north-east of Islamabad, on Sunday night, in which the world's most wanted fugitive Osama bin Laden was killed.

Moments after the news of the killing of Bin Laden was broken by the US President Obama, some of the foreign television channels expressed suspicion that some of the aides of Osama managed to escape the assault. To be precise, some of the newspapers reported that around five to seven peoples, mostly foreigners having Arab background, escaped the US commandos attack.

There had been years of speculation that Bin Laden was hiding in the remote tribal areas of Pakistan or across the border in Afghanistan. But the town where he was found, Kakul, lies a short distance from Islamabad and is home to the country's main military training institution, the Pakistan Military Academy. It is several hundred miles from Waziristan, where the CIA drone strike campaign has been concentrated.

The killing of mastermind of the 11 September 2001 attacks and the world's most wanted man, in an urban area of Pakistan will raise questions about how the six-foot-four fugitive, one of the most famous faces in the world, managed to survive there for so long.

According to some reports, three persons managed to flee the attack, which was launched on a tree-lined, high-walled compound near Abbottabad, a town in the foothills of the Himalayas two hours' drive north of Islamabad.

"Atleast three persons, who were among the trusted aides of Bin Laden, have escaped the attack," said a well-placed source requesting not to be named, adding that the Pakistan's intelligence and military agencies are on their toes to nab them at the earliest. "The event is definitely a game changer. The future is very tough for Pakistan, particularly for its secret agencies," the source said, adding that all the suspicions so far raised about Pakistan had got a strong justification after the killing of Osama on its land.

Those killed in the attack included Ibrar Khan, Ibrahim, Khalid (one of the sons of Bin Laden), Osama bin Laden and yet an unidentified militant. Two women and four children of Bin Laden who sustained wounds in the attack are in the custody of Pakistani security agencies.

After the gunfire, U.S. forces swept bin Laden's fortified compound in Pakistan and left with a trove of hard drives, DVDs and other documents that officials said the CIA was already poring over. The hope: clues leading to his presumed successor, al-Qaida No. 2 Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Within 40 minutes, the operation was over, and the SEALs flew out — minus one helicopter, which had malfunctioned and had to be destroyed. Bin Laden's remains were flown to the USS Carl Vinson, then lowered into the North Arabian Sea.

“Two persons namely Zain Muhammad resident of Bagh in Azad Kashmir and Shamraiz resident of Abbottabad have been taken into custody and shifted to undisclosed location for interrogation,” said the source, adding that the injured are getting medical aid in the supervision of Pakistan's security agencies.

The compound, which was constructed by a Pushto speaking Arshad Khan resident of Charsada, was eight times bigger than neighbouring residences and the walls were between three and six metres high, topped with barbed wire. Access was highly restricted. Although valued at over US\$1m, the residence had no phone or internet connection.

Bin Laden's death came 15 years after he declared war on the United States. Al-Qaida was also blamed for the 1998 bombings of two US embassies in Africa that killed 224 people and the 2000 attack on the USS Cole that killed 17 American sailors in Yemen, as well as countless other plots, some successful and some foiled.

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