

The decade-long hunt for Osama bin Laden

2002: Under harsh interrogation – including water-boarding – Al Qaeda detainees reveal existence of courier known as **Abu Ahmed al-Kuwaiti**

2004: Al Qaeda member **Hassan Ghul**, captured in Iraq, confirms al-Kuwaiti is “trusted assistant” of senior Al Qaeda planner **Abu Faraj al-Libi** (below)

1 2003: **Khalid Sheikh Mohammed**, (right) alleged mastermind of 9/11, captured in Karachi. During interrogation at Guantanamo Bay he admits knowing of courier but does not reveal name



2 2005: Al-Libi captured in Mardan. Under CIA interrogation Libi reveals that courier carries messages from **Osama bin Laden** to outside world every two months

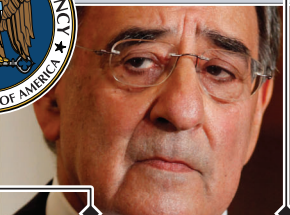


2007: CIA agents scour Pakistan and Afghanistan for evidence of al-Kuwaiti’s whereabouts. His family is traced, phones and e-mails are monitored. Courier’s identity established as Kuwaiti-born Pakistani **Sheikh Abu Ahmed**

3 2009: Calls made by courier to Al Qaeda members in cities of Charsada and Kohat monitored by **National Security Agency**. CIA track down courier to Peshawar



4 Aug 2010: Agents follow courier’s Suzuki to secure compound in Abbottabad. Analysts conclude it is shelter of “high-value target”, perhaps bin Laden. CIA Director **Leon Panetta** (below) briefs **President Barack Obama** and senior national security aides



2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010



JAN

FEB

MAR

APR

MAY

Feb 2011: Panetta asks **Vice Admiral William McRaven** (left), chief of **Joint Special Operations Command**, to plan attack

Mar: McRaven suggests three options – bombing raid by B-2 bombers, attack with cruise missiles or commando assault using helicopters. Commando assault emerges as favourite – U.S. Navy SEAL team begins preparation

Apr 28: Panetta tells president and national security advisers he is 60-80% confident that bin Laden is in Abbottabad compound. Obama holds off committal

Apr 29: “It’s a go” – Obama orders senior aides to proceed with helicopter assault

May 1: **SEAL Team Six** commandos raid compound at midnight local time

May 2, 03:35GMT: Obama announces that **Osama bin Laden** is dead



Modified **Blackhawk MH-60** helicopter

