

Why The Media Is Right To Focus on Osama Bin Laden The Man

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A lot of sensible people are telling us not to assume that Al Qaeda is fatally damaged now that it's most prominent leader has been killed. They worry that if we focus in on the man, we may ignore the wider terrorist movement. The media often gets accused of personalising issues and it's clear from the [American newspaper front pages](#) and public protests in the States that this is happening. Osama Bin Laden has come to embody this whole period of the so-called War On Terror as a pariah or hero.

Personalising this complex set of issues might well over-simplify things but here's some reasons why I think today is a moment to focus on this individual and the impact his death might have.

1. In news terms it really is a most extraordinary set of events. The precise personal details are dramatic and compelling.
2. The circumstances of his death say a lot about his importance politically to America and the geo-political sensitivity of other parts of the world to the manner of this death (and disposal)
3. He himself created a cult of personality and was a figure-head for what was a disparate ideology and network. He was what gave it coherence. He was of great (if declining) operational importance, too.
4. News narratives need characters for us to understand them. News narratives also need a human dimension so we can relate emotionally to the issues.

So, please give us lots of context and a sense of the wider picture. But I also want to know much more about this man and every bloody detail of his going.

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