

Afghanistan Coverup – Call Sign Extortion 17

Taliban: Revenge against Seal Team Six

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U.S. Army CH-47 Chinook

On May 2, 2011, members of Seal Team Six tracked down and killed Osama Bin Laden in his hideout in Pakistan. Seal Team Six had launched their highly secret special operation by helicopter from Afghanistan. Bin Laden was the Al-Qaeda mastermind of the terrorist air attack on New York City and the Pentagon in Washington that killed over 3,000 Americans on September 11, 2001. Bin Laden was operating from Afghanistan at the time and protected by the Taliban. President Obama and the Defense Department had agreed that Seal Team Six would not be named in press releases. However, a few weeks later, Vice President Biden openly praised Seal Team Six in giving the Obama Administration credit for the operation. The Taliban swore to take vengeance on the United States and specially on Seal Team Six.

In the next three months, the Taliban made a special effort to take down U.S. helicopters. There were four attacks using RPGs (Rocket Propelled Grenades), resulting in one helicopter loss but no fatalities.

Seal Team Six is still the common name for the Naval Special Warfare Development Group. It is the Navy component of the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) established in 1980. It is one of the most elite fighting forces in the world. There are presently about 1,300 military members of Seal Team Six.

On August 6, 2011, very early in the morning, two CH-47D Army National Guard helicopters headed southwest from a small base near Kabul, Afghanistan, carrying two platoons of Army Rangers. The huge twin-engine, two-blade CH-47Ds were the transport workhorses of U.S. forces in Afghanistan. Ninety-nine feet long with a 60-foot wingspan, the usual load for CH-47Ds was a crew of three and 32 fully armed soldiers. Their mission was to capture or kill a Taliban terrorist leader, Qari Tahir, reported to be in their target area. Their Call Signs were Extortion 16 and Extortion 17. They dropped off the Ranger platoons about a mile and a half from the “hot” area. The mission was precise and smooth, and the two choppers returned to base to await further

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Instructions for picking up the Rangers when needed.

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By Mike Scruggs
They had not been back to base 30 minutes, when Extortion 17 was immediately assigned a new mission. In addition to three Army National Guard crewmembers, 17 Seal Team Six troopers were loaded on the helicopter along with an Afghan interpreter and 10 additional Army, Navy, Marine,

and Air Force Special Operations personnel. At the last minute, seven Afghan soldiers were loaded on. These Afghan soldiers were not the Afghan soldiers originally on the manifest. The total on board would be 38, with 30 Americans and eight Afghans.

Apparently, a new intelligence report indicated that the Taliban leader sought had been confirmed at another location, not far from the Rangers, but in the dangerous and Taliban-active Tangi River Valley stretching southwest from Kabul. The Seals would have preferred one of the Special Operations modified MH-47s for the more dangerous mission, because it could sweep in at lower levels, was more heavily armed, and more maneuverable. However, Extortion 17 would be accompanied by two Apache AH-64D attack helicopters, each with two pilots in tandem, and an AC-130 gunship coordinating from about 7,000 feet.

Extortion 17 reported the planned six-minutes-out check exactly on time. But then something must have gone wrong. The three-minute check was nearly four minutes late, and the pilot seemed confused about the landing zone. It was dark, but the CH-47D had sophisticated GPS that had worked precisely when it landed the Rangers. Both pilot and co-pilot were experienced but had limited combat experience. The radio transmissions were presumed to be from the pilot. He asked the AC-130 for some illumination, but not with the proper words. Meanwhile the CH-47D seemed to be hovering in place over the landing zone. The Apache gunships noted the presence of “squirters,” (hostile Taliban). The Rules of Engagement did not permit pre-assault fire on the landing zone to clear enemy combatants without permission from a higher headquarters. The Apache gunships were becoming concerned. The AC-130 asked twice to blast the landing zone, but permission was denied by a higher headquarters.. Meanwhile the AC-130 beamed down the illumination requested for one minute and 41 seconds, which had the disadvantage of making the CH-47D an easier target for the Taliban.

As Extortion 17 descended close to 100 feet over the landing zone, the Apache gunships saw three RPGs fired, and at least one of them hit Extortion 17, which fell to the ground within five seconds and exploded into a ball of fire, followed by several secondary explosions. An independent investigator and former Navy JAG officer and Justice Department special attorney, Don Brown, author of *Call Sign Extortion 17*, published in 2015, estimated that the RPG was fired from only 120 to 180 feet away. The Apache gunships immediately attacked the perimeter of the landing zone to keep enemy soldiers away from the landing site. They did not ask permission.

Two British newspapers, the Telegraph, and the Daily Mail, citing Taliban sources, reported that the Taliban had the flight plan of Extortion 17, and the shoot-down was a planned deception and ambush. It was U.S. policy that high ranking Afghan political and military officials were kept aware of and had veto power over all special operations missions.

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Category: [Marine General James Mattis](#), [Central Command](#), [Commander](#), [August 11, 2011](#), [ordered an investigation](#), [He appointed Army Brigadier General Jeffrey Colt as chief investigator with a report due in 30 days](#). Although Mattis ordered a thorough investigation, he hedged his instructions to allow for some flexibility on sensitive issues. It was obvious to many officers and NCOs involved in the investigation that some political issues took precedence over important facts. General Colt's 1,500-page report was thorough in many ways but utterly ignored tremendously important questions.

The most glaring omission was that the 1,500-page report contained only part of a sentence, dismissively cut off by a senior officer, referring to the seven unidentified Afghan soldiers that boarded Extortion 17 at the last minute. The immense importance of this cutoff sentence was revealed to a Seal Team parent by a senior Army NCO 18 months after the shoot-down. The issue was not mentioned in either General Colt's or General Mattis's summaries. This was despite the fact that Taliban infiltration and sympathy in the Afghan Army were a major cause of American and NATO casualties. The official Defense Department estimate was that it could be the cause of about 10 percent of American and Coalition casualties. However, USMC General John R. Allen, Centcom Commander from June 2010 until replaced by Mattis on August 11, 2011, believed direct and indirect consequences of Taliban infiltration and sympathy in the Afghan Army could be the cause of as much as 25 percent of casualties. Afghanistan Ambassador Ryan Crocker, serving in Afghanistan in 2011 and 2012, believed it might be even higher.

Eight identifiable American bodies had been thrown clear of the burning helicopter, and the autopsy recovered bullets in two bodies, which could not reasonably be dismissed as "cook-off" rounds resulting from the fire. Two others were identified by dental records. Yet the official military position was that none of the remains could be identified, and the bodies of all were cremated at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware within a week. This included the seven unidentified Afghan soldiers that boarded at the last minute. Thus, all DNA evidence for their identity was destroyed.

No Afghans were interviewed during the investigation. No investigation of the British newspaper accounts of the ambush was made. Before the bodies left Afghanistan, a Muslim clergyman offered a prayer over *all* the remains being flown to Dover. It was a praise of Islam and condemnation of non-Muslim infidels.

No "Black Box" (actually orange box) was officially recovered from the CH-47D. This would have provided flight and cockpit voice data, which would be very relevant to interpreting strange movements of the aircraft in the last four minutes and the issue of Afghan infiltration and a possible firefight within the aircraft before shoot-down. Black Box responders are usually easy to find because they emit a signal that can be detected even at great depths of the ocean. The initial narrative was that it was washed away by a flooding rain within 30 minutes of the crash. This was later replaced by the ridiculous assertion that CH-47Ds had analog instrumentation and not digital instrumentation, and therefore had no Black Box. But Pathfinder platoons recovered black boxes from 13 other CH-47Ds shot down in Afghanistan from 2002 through 2011. However, a Joint Special Operations team called Lima Bravo or 1B arrived 30 minutes before the Pathfinder platoon.

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Investigator Denis Brown has reason to believe they carried the Black Box away on a reportedly obscure path. Neither Colt's nor Mattis's summary report addresses this highly significant issue. If it still exists, its recordings and information are doubtlessly classified far above Top Secret.
By Mike Scruggs

Another hardly addressed issue of the reports is whether unreasonable Rules of Engagement preventing pre-assault fire on the obviously "hot" landing zone essentially cost 30 American lives. Probably related to this Rules of Engagement controversy is the obviously false assertion in the Colt Report that the Taliban RPG that brought down Extortion 17 was fired from 720 feet away. This was beyond the effective range of the RPG that hit the aircraft.

The command to coverup the unidentified Afghan soldiers, Black Box, and other issues by security classification or other means probably came from President Barack Obama, the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and cabinet level intelligence agencies. General Mattis's summary report found no blame except the fog of war.

The coverup of the Extortion 17 issues is related to a much greater issue touched on by Chinese General Sun Tzu's ancient writings on *The Art of War*. Sun Tzu warns us that successful military and political leaders must "**know their enemy.**" Yet in Afghanistan and other predominantly Muslim regions, we have followed modern fashions of political correctness and refused to know the truth about Islam. Many Muslims may prefer peace and tolerance to strife, but the doctrines of Islam found in the Koran and teachings of Muhammad are far from peace and tolerance. To faithful fundamentalist Muslims, non-Muslims are infidel enemies that are the continuous object of Jihad. We should not be surprised that Afghan Muslims would choose the Taliban over American and Western "infidels," especially since we signaled our commitment to them was weak and short-term.