

US Commits a Perfect Murder in Kabul. “The Reliability of Biden’s Version”

“Washington has not provided the public with any evidence of the elimination of this terrorist.”

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Global Research, August 14, 2022

[Indian Punchline](#) 12 August 2022

Region: [Asia](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Terrorism](#)

In-depth Report: [AFGHANISTAN](#)

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Eleven days after the US President Joe Biden’s dramatic [announcement](#) of August 1 regarding the killing of the emir of al Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Moscow has broken its silence. Ten days back, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova had replied to a query that Moscow was yet to “get the details” on what had happened on July 31.

Revisiting the topic during [yesterday’s MFA press briefing](#), in response to a follow-up question, the deputy spokesperson Ivan Nechayev has stated:

“We do not undertake to confirm the authenticity (‘dostovernost’ — достоверность) about the destruction in Kabul on July 31 this year as a result of a drone strike of the leader of Al-Qaeda, A. Zawahiri.”

No doubt, this is a very carefully worded Russian statement that focuses on the reliability of Biden’s version. Indeed, Biden got away scot-free since he made the announcement from the White House without taking any questions from the media.

Nechayev pointed out that “Washington has not provided the public with any evidence of the elimination of this terrorist.” And he merely took note of media reports that the apartment building hit by the Americans in Kabul belonged to the “Haqqani clan”.

However, curiously, Nechayev offered that some “first conclusions can be drawn” on the basis of the official comments of the authorities in Kabul — namely, “that they have no information about A. Zawahiri’s stay in the Afghan capital.”

Russia has traditionally kept a robust intelligence system working on Afghanistan providing

real time inputs to Moscow, including during the Taliban rule from 1996-2001, when the Russian embassy and consulates remained closed.

In fact, Russian sources were far ahead of others in sharing the details of former Ashraf Ghani's hasty evacuation from Kabul on August 15 last year amidst the chaotic arrival of the Taliban in the city. (Ghani apparently chose to keep even his hand-picked vice-president and super spy Amrullah Saleh in the dark that he was fleeing with his wife and then national security advisor Hamdullah Mohib.)

Therefore, it is a reasonable surmise that Nechayev probably spoke on what security experts would call a "need-to-know" basis. That makes his remarks doubting the authenticity of Biden's remarks truly astounding. It is as good as saying that Moscow has received conflicting reports! (Interestingly, [Tass highlighted](#) Nechayev's remarks in a special report yesterday.)

However, Nechayev plunged the knife deep and raised some very pertinent questions in this strange case of a murder without evidence. He commented that "such aggressive actions of the US Air Force, which invaded the sovereign territory of Afghanistan, raise a number of serious questions." Nechayev posed two questions: "For example, who provided the airspace for the airstrike on Kabul? Who will be responsible in case of collateral civilian casualties during such actions?"

They are indeed big questions. Afghanistan shares its borders with only six countries — Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, China and Pakistan. It is a safe bet that Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and China wouldn't have got involved in such a murderous act by the Americans in violation of international law and UN Charter. As for Tajikistan, its airspace is under Russian control. That leaves Pakistan as the only plausible culprit here.

Perhaps, Biden Administration refuses to provide "evidence" for fear it might put Rawalpindi in a tight spot at a time when the incumbent army chief is a strategic asset for Washington? There are no easy answers. All we know is that the present army chief Gen. Bajwa is known to take a hands-on role in all major issues and most minor issues in Pakistan-US relations.

He even reached out to Wendy Sherman, the US Deputy Secretary of State, with a [request seeking her intervention](#) with the IMF to release the pending tranche of financial bail-out for Pakistan.

Significantly, Nechayev alluded to "attempts to use a real threat to cover up their (US') own geopolitical ambitions." He concluded: "Washington, judging by this incident, prefers to act as it pleases, following strictly in line with its foreign policy benefits, regardless of international law and the national sovereignty of other states."

What could be the "foreign policy benefits" here? There are three ways to look at the question. First and foremost, Biden burnishes his image as a decisive leader when his incoherent public behaviour on numerous occasions lately came to be widely noticed within the US and abroad. Indeed, Biden's August 1 remarks were peppered with large dollops of self-praise taking credit for the decapitation of the dreaded al-Qaeda. He projected himself as a "hands-on" president.

Second, the US has created a precedent by this act of July 31 — underscoring its prerogative to act as it chooses on Afghanistan. Simply put, the Rubicon has been crossed and the US

military might has “returned” to Afghanistan, now that Washington claims that al-Qaeda is very much active in Afghanistan.

Of course, it is a humiliating blow for the Taliban whose two-decade long “resistance” was all about regaining Afghanistan’s sovereignty. Furthermore, the door has been firmly shut on any US-Taliban engagement for a foreseeable future, now that Washington doesn’t have to look beyond that to allege a continuing Taliban-al Qaeda nexus.

Logically, the US can even justify joining hands henceforth with the UK (and France) to extend support to the Panjshiris’ armed rebellion against the Taliban. The Taliban faces a pincer move from Pakistani military and the Biden Administration at a time when, ironically, its best supporter, Imran Khan, is also being defanged systematically in a nutcracker by the civilian government in Islamabad and the so-called “powers that be.”

Of course, keeping Afghanistan in turmoil would serve the US and Nato interests at the present juncture when Russia, the provider of security for Central Asia, is preoccupied with the Ukraine conflict, and China is brooding over Taiwan’s reunification.

Third, the timing: Biden struck when only about 24 hrs were left for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s plane to descend on Taipei. The fiction that Washington propagated to the effect that the Administration had no control over the Speaker had, ironically, boomeranged, casting Biden in a poor light as a commander-in-chief who could not even order a military plane to change direction.

Suffice to say, the theatrics of the July 31 airstrike in Kabul momentarily at least distracted attention from the miserable picture Biden drew for himself as a weak, ineffectual POTUS.

The most interesting part is that alongside Nechayev’s remarks in Moscow, the Russian embassy in Washington has since voiced support for a group of more than 70 economists from the United States and other countries with a call to unfreeze all international reserves of the Central Bank of Afghanistan, in an August 10 [appeal published by the Center for Economic and Policy Research](#), Europe’s leading network of Economic Policy Researchers.

The Russian embassy says: “We fully support this appeal. Considering unacceptable the situation in which the American authorities illegally withhold financial resources belonging to the Afghan people. At the same time, we believe that their bargaining with Kabul regarding the conditions for allocating half of the amount to it is cynical ... Washington’s actions are exacerbating the suffering of innocent Afghans...”

Moscow implies that the alibi of an alleged Taliban-al Qaeda nexus to block the engagement with the Taliban by the regional states is unacceptable. In sum, Russia rejects the American version of the murder in Kabul as substantiating anything.

All in all, this indeed becomes “a perfect murder”, worthy of being a sequel to the Michael Douglas-Gwyneth Paltrow crime thriller on a murder that left no clue to trace the perpetrators. By the way, the pleasurable 1998 film also had two alternate endings on the original Blu-ray disc release. The viewer was at liberty to choose which version was found more agreeable.

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Featured image: An Al-Jazeera TV image of Osama bin Laden (R) listening as his top deputy Ayman al-Zawahri speaks at an undisclosed location circa 2002. (Source: Al Jazeera)

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