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**Has the death of Osama bin Laden made the
US safer (Strategic Insights, Summer 2011)**

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<http://hdl.handle.net/10945/25415>

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Point/Counterpoint:

Has the death of Osama bin Laden made the US safer?

Editors' Introduction

The editors of *Strategic Insights* are pleased to present the first installment of what we hope will become a regular feature: Point/Counterpoint. With this feature, we invite readers to consider opposing positions and arguments on contentious issues of the day.

On May 1, 2011, US President Barack Obama announced that US Special Forces had successfully killed Osama bin Laden, mastermind of the 9/11 attacks. Crowds gathered publicly in cities across the United States to celebrate the news, waving flags, lighting fireworks, and chanting "U-S-A!" Over 56.5 million Americans watched President Obama's announcement on television, giving him his largest audience since he won the 2008 election.

Despite attaining this long-held goal, the US still faces the legacy of 9/11. US troops continue to serve in Afghanistan and Iraq; US intelligence agencies are still heavily organized against the threat of international terrorism; US relations with Muslim-majority states are still heavily influenced by reaction to the 9/11 attacks. How might these change with the death of the man who provoked the United States into two wars? What might the post-9/11 world look like post-Bin Laden? And, perhaps most importantly in the minds of Americans, has the death of Osama bin Laden made the United States safer?

In the following pages, graduate students from the Naval Postgraduate School will examine that question. While we originally intended to publish two opposing arguments, we received three thought-provoking essays that each tackled the question from a different vantage point. First, USAF Major Jeremy Reeves argues that Osama bin Laden's death has inspired others to continue his legacy, reinvigorating the terrorist threat he posed to the United States. In contrast, USMC Captain Seamus M. Quinn argues that Bin Laden's death at the hands of US soldiers will demoralize his supporters, making them less likely to follow his example, while the raid of Bin Laden's compound has also provided valuable intelligence about the operations of al Qaeda that will seriously weaken the organization. Finally, Jerry Guo posits that bin Laden's death has had no effect on attacks against US soldiers in Afghanistan, and has even destabilized Pakistan, creating a potentially more dangerous scenario for the United States and its allies. Each analysis argues different threat levels and sources and thus suggests different policy options.

We hope our readers will find these arguments thought provoking and will look forward to future installments of Point/Counterpoint. The editors welcome comments and suggestions as we develop this forum for debate.

Please note: the opinions expressed in these pages are the authors' own, and do not reflect any official position of the Naval Postgraduate School, the US Department of Defense, or the United States Government.