

Killing Bin Laden: The Television Series

by stephen hastings-king

At the end of every episode Osama bin Laden is killed again like Kenny.

Every episode begins with a story told by the Retired Analyst:

Certain basic realities have escaped us. This is a good time to remember.

Contemporary war is not about human beings. It is not about ideologies or clashes of or between anything and anything else.

Contemporary war is about procurement and logistics.

Procurement: every gun and bullet for every gun comes from somewhere.

Logistics: every gun and every bullet for every gun has to be moved from one place to another.

Multiply that so it reaches a scale that includes all aspects of fighting. Multiply that again to reach a scale that includes all aspects of moving, sheltering, feeding, clothing and entertaining an armed force.

Procurement and logistics are the primary functions of the vast machine that drives the American economy.

Contemporary war introduces a principle of expenditure alongside the principles of planned obsolescence and breakdown. It is an acceleration of turnover in orders for goods.

Of course war itself is a commodity as well. It is the product of a manufacturing. And it must be moved about.

The idea of a hunt for Bin Laden was central to the definition of the war commodity. Any actual hunting was entirely incidental. A decade ago, we sent a letter to the government of Pakistan. Dear Government of Pakistan. We know where Bin Laden is. We have always known where he is. When it suits us, we will come get him. You will, of course, protest. Thank you.

From there we looked for him carefully everywhere he was not. We rarely ventured outside of where he was not because when we did the danger increased that we would accidentally find him. We expended considerable energy preventing accidental discovery.

Sometimes where he was not was quite close to where he was. Don't be next door to here, we would say. Don't make us come over there and look.

Bin Laden's importance as a focal point presupposed this absence of events.

He was a ghost from the beginning.

The actual killing of Bin Laden marks the end of a phase of accelerated procurement.

I assume it happened by mistake.

Viewers get to put together the parts.

