Osama bin Laden was one of the founders of al-Qaeda, an Islamic terrorist group. He is also considered the main man behind the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States in New York City. During a covert mission on May 2, 2011, bin Laden was shot and killed by a US soldier during the raid to retrieve him from his home in Abbottabad, Pakistan. This fatality was morally justified due to the known details of the raid, justice for his victims, and for respecting Islamic traditions enough to give him a proper burial. Osama bin Laden’s death was judged merely on feasible consequences, without this judgement bin Laden could have killed many more people than he did.

After years of acquiring intel on bin Laden and his possible location, the US intelligence receives information that helps identify where bin Laden is living. Starting on March 14, 2011 and ending on April 28, 2011, President Barrack Obama leads five different National Security Council meetings that are solely to deliberate on a possible operation to blitz the possible home of Osama bin Laden to capture him. After these meetings, President Obama eventually decides to storm the house. On May 2, 2011, bin Laden’s home is raided and he is ultimately killed during this attack along with a handful of other people. Overtime it is released that those killed were either killed in the crossfire or, in bin Laden’s case, killed due to resisting. This is morally justified due to the fact that he was only killed because he put up a resistance to the soldiers there
to extract him. By doing this, many other lives were possibly saved. If he was not shot and killed then he could have harmed someone during the raid. Basing this on the outlook of a Consequentialist, it is more important to do the option that saves the most people (Stalnaker). By killing Osama bin Laden, many people were saved as the outcome, including people there at the raid and those who could have been killed in future possible attacks.

Bin Laden was in charge of the attacks on the World Trade center that killed 2,996 people and injured over 6,000 on September 11, 2001. Many people called for justice for this horrid attack on US soil. For years, people who were associated with Islam were brutally judged and affected from this act that they had no correlation too. To make it worse, people who weren’t even associated with Islam were affected too, these were the people that looked or had attributes associated to the stereotypical look of an Islamic person, males with beards, females that wore clothes that covered their entire body, and people that had a similar skin tone to what an Islam is similar portrayed as were all people that were judged. Not only were all the above judged, but they were also shunned and abused. This physical and social abuse was unfair due to the fact that they didn’t do anything and had no part in the 9/11 attacks. The people who lost loved ones and the people who were wrongly judged both called for some type of redemption. This redemption was finally received almost ten years after the fact by the killing of bin Laden (“Cases, Rules, and Guidelines”). This could be considered as a kind of reversed consequentialism with the fact that although many people died, the one in charge was eventually killed too. By this death many people were able to finally let go and start to heal from the pain and lose they received ten years previous.
Islam follows many strict laws and has certain criteria for burials. When Osama bin Laden planned the 9/11 attacks, he didn’t think of morals, ethics, or justifications. However, the United States special forces that raided his home had enough respect for Islamic traditions that they properly buried him. He was buried within 24 hours of his death and had a ceremony that lasted over an hour and was carried out based on Islamic law (CNN Library). He was then buried at sea. Although, people argue that bin Laden wasn’t actually killed during the attack on his home. Some believe that he was only captured and the government is stern on keeping it a secret. These assumptions come from conflicting sources about how many people died during the raid and the fact that the government won’t release a lot of the information from May 2, 2011. The government argues that the presumptions are groundless. By May 6, 2011, Al Qaeda, the terrorist group ran by bin Laden, confirmed his death at the hands of the US. Since this death was proven by the group Osama bin Laden founded, then the information about the United States’ hospitality to Islamic traditions stand. Therefore, this shows how the US respected a terrorist that killed many on American soil enough to give him a proper burial and regarded his religion. This ultimately shows the US morals and how they believed he was entitled to a proper burial.

The United States’ goal was to successfully capture the terrorist known to cause a very deadly day for Americans. Although, his death was a consequence of this mission. As said by Glenn Greenwald of salon.com, “Nuremberg is so pre-9/11” (“Cases, Rules, and Guidelines”). This shows how this act, caused by bin Laden, has affected the US tremendously. When Greenwald says this, he saying that due to the vents of 9/11, the US has changed it’s outlooks on trial as a war criminal. This may show the ideology of American exceptionalism, but wouldn’t all countries in this case call for a similar type of action? It has been almost 75 years since these
trials and time changes society. These trials also affected a lot more people than the killing of Osama bin Laden did. Therefore, one cannot compare the two scenarios.

In regards to Just War thinking, this act of killing bin Laden wasn’t one that justifies just war traditions. This raid doesn’t fit the criteria for when to go to war (just cause, right intention, legitimate authority, last resort, proportionality in regards to destruction, reasonable chance of success, and relative justice) or how to wage war (proportionality in regards to the risks of noncombatants and discrimination). Although, a revision of the Just War Theory is much needed due to the changing of natural warfare. These changes include high tech weaponry, insurgency, weapons of mass destruction, and especially in this case study, terrorism. And in regards to “total war” and “holy war,” this attack is one of a “war on terror” rather than a war that has everyone contributing to it and a war between good and evil. This was only a small action on behalf of this “war of terror” since it was only the killing of a single person, rather than a large group of terrorists. Therefore, the US wasn’t trying to start a war of religion or totality, it was trying to bring a means to the justice the United States desperately needed. This was an act of prevention, but this strike against the terrorist that killed so many US civilians was one that was meant to end with the capture of Osama bin Laden, not the killing of him (Stalnaker).

The world may never know what exactly happened on May 2, 2011 at Osama bin Laden’s home in Pakistan, but there have been a decent amount of information that has been released over time to prove that this was an action based on ethical stances. The US didn’t intend on a “total war” or a “holy war” and neither of those happen, they merely wanted the redemption they deserved. The US also treated this situation with a consequentialist outlook, with a respect to Islamic traditions, and as a way for the people of the US to heal. This raid wasn’t meant to end in
the death of Osama bin Laden, it was supposed to end with his capture, but he resisted therefore
causing his death. The United States was justified with their actions because they based
everything off practical results and outcomes of what could have happened if they didn’t raid bin
Laden’s home on May 2, 2011.
Works Cited


