

Manhunt: From 9/11 to Abbottabad – The Ten Year Search for
Osama Bin Laden by Peter Bergen.
Bodley Head 2012.

There can be little doubt that the killing of Osama bin Laden by US Navy SEALs was one of the biggest stories of 2011, and the event itself one of the most significant so far of the second decade of the third millennium.

Under the Presidency of Barack Obama, and after the incredibly hard work of the CIA, justice was brought direct to the instigator of 9/11 and a catalogue of other horrendous acts of terrorism.

Several books have already been published about the mission to kill Bin Laden, but there can be little doubt that Peter Bergen's is the must-read text. Why? Because Bergen has already written three authoritative books on Islamist terror and the struggle to defeat it, is one of the very few people to have interviewed Osama bin Laden, and has had unprecedented access to key individuals in the US administration and military as well as in Pakistan.

Manhunt is divided into 14 chapters with a prologue and epilogue. Bergen takes the reader through the real story of Al Qaeda after 9/11, ground covered in previous books, but then changes tack with the commencement of the effort to track Bin Laden down. As each chapter unfolds the tension rises, and that of the penultimate chapter, Don't Turn On the Light, is almost palpable even though the outcome is already known.

As well as telling an extraordinary story, Bergen finds time and space to reflect on the life of Bin Laden, to assess his enduring significance, and to consider the status of the terror network he left behind. This is a compelling book by a fine writer and journalist and will stand the test of time as a definitive account of America's bringing of retribution to the inspirer of 9/11.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh