

DID “THE SHOOTER” TAKE 7 SOUVENIR PICTURES OF OSAMA BIN LADEN?

On Tuesday, I noted that, between the draft and the final, DOD’s Inspector General removed this language referring to Admiral William McRaven purging SOCOM’s network of pictures of Osama bin Laden after CIA exposed the members of SEAL Team 6.

This effort included purging these records to another Government Agency.

But there was also telling new language introduced in the final (which would have been introduced between late last year and last week). The draft included this sentence.

ADM McRaven also directed that the names and photographs associated with the raid not be released.

The final changed that language to read,

ADM McRaven also directed personnel to forego releasing names of operators and photographs associated with the raid.

The use of the word “personnel” is ambiguous, as it’s not clear whether it refers to the SEAL Team members mentioned earlier in the paragraph or to DOD staffers who handle SOCOM’s archives (or to CIA personnel who now purportedly have the photos).

But I find it telling, given another detail about Judicial Watch’s FOIA for these photos.

Recall that on February 15, 2013, DOJ informed Judicial Watch that CIA had found 7 more photos responsive to their FOIA. That happened just 4 days after Esquire published a splashy story

about the guy who claimed to have been the SEAL who actually killed OBL. The current version includes this line.

In the compound, I thought about getting my camera, and I knew we needed to take pictures and ID him.

I had made the connection at the time, and I have a distinct suspicion the language was slightly different in the original (Esquire was making factual corrections along the way but the original is not on Internet Archive), making it clear that the Shooter and possibly others did take pictures, though perhaps not for operational purposes.

What kind of amped up warrior who had just helped kill the bogeyman could resist taking souvenir pictures? Could you blame them, if so?

In any case, I suspected at the time that the reason CIA “located” new photos was because they read about another set of photos in the possession in one of the guys who participated in the op, if not shot the lethal bullet. The ambiguity in the description of McRaven’s order seems to support that.

That is, what SOCOM and CIA appear to be protecting are – in significant part – the personal photos taken by the guys who did the operation.