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## Obama's legacy doesn't live up to the terms of his Nobel Prize

By Chris Pleasance  
6/11/2012

“The Norwegian Nobel Committee has decided that the Nobel Peace Prize for 2009 is to be awarded to President Barack Obama for his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples.”

So spoke the Nobel Committee as it decided to pass the prestigious Peace Prize to President Obama after just ten months in the job. He said the award was going to be “a call to action” and was being used “to give momentum to a set of causes” that he, at the time, embodied.

As Obama nears the end of his first term as President, he has done little to live up to the terms of the award. The conflict in Afghanistan, which the UN estimates has killed nearly 12,000 civilians so far, continues under his watch. He has overseen the continued operation of Guantanamo Bay, which he pledged to close within the first year of his Presidency, and which still houses 172 inmates. He has brought the conflict in Iraq to an end, but only after the deaths of over 100,000 Iraqi civilians, and with the country still divided and war-torn. Now he is personally approving targets for a covert drone operation in Pakistan which has killed an estimated 27 people in the last three days alone.

Far from ‘strengthening international diplomacy’, this campaign has only served to [deepen diplomatic rifts between the US and Pakistan](#). Pakistan views the drone attacks as a violation of its sovereignty and has summoned the US envoy to lodge a formal protest. This comes after Pakistan has already closed supply routes to Nato soldiers fighting in neighbouring Afghanistan after a Nato airstrike accidentally killed 24 Pakistani soldiers.

The US claims that the drone strikes are an important tool in the fight against terrorism. On Tuesday morning they proudly announced that they believe they have [killed Abu Yahya al-Libi](#), al-Qaida’s second in command. They neglect to mention, however, that 15 others were also killed in the assault. On Sunday ten more “suspected militants” were killed after drones fired missiles into crowd gathered to mourn the deaths of two other “suspected militants”, killed in drone strikes the previous day.

All together, this makes me hugely uncomfortable. Whilst it cannot be denied that al-Libi, if he proves to be among the dead, justifies a legitimate target for US strikes, the fact that further strikes can be justified on merely the suspicion of terrorist involvement is highly morally dubious. The definition of what constitutes a ‘militant’ seems to have become laughably broad: namely [anyone of fighting age who happens to be killed in a drone strike area](#). The fact that these strikes are being carried out on foreign soil, against the wishes of the government and people of that nation, flies in the face of international democracy and the right of a people to self-determination, rights which the US claims to espouse.

The fact that the whole operation is being personally overseen by a man supposed to embody Earth’s best attempts at achieving peace beggars belief.

Obama needs to concentrate less on trying to score election points against Romney by appealing to US conservatives baying for terrorist blood, and more on encouraging the “cooperation between peoples” that his Nobel Prize was awarded for.