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Revoke Obama's Nobel Peace Prize

By Nat Hentoff and Nick Hentoff
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Last week, President Obama passed an important historic milestone. The occasion was not marked with ceremony, and no statements were issued by the White House. In spite of its significance, most of the national media allowed the occasion to pass with little comment or in-depth analysis. Which is why you may not be aware that Obama now has the ignominious distinction of being continuously at war longer than any other American president in U.S. history.

The New York Times noted the irony that the longest-serving wartime president was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize only nine months into his first term in office. Yet the article characterized Obama as a reluctant warrior laboring under a heavy burden inherited from his predecessor. The article also focused on Obama's efforts to transform the nature of how the United States wages war, relying more on drone strikes and targeted special forces operations than traditional intervention with ground forces. But in doing so, the Times told only half of the story.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee said it awarded the 2009 Peace Prize to President Obama because "(h)is diplomacy is founded in the concept that those who are to lead the world must do so on the basis of values and attitudes that are shared by the majority."

Four years later, Christof Heyns, the United Nations special rapporteur on extrajudicial killings, summary or arbitrary executions, told a conference in Geneva that President Obama's drone

strike program threatens 50 years of international law by encouraging other states to violate long-standing human rights standards.

The extent to which Obama's drone strike program has institutionalized the practice of extrajudicial killings — in violation of international law — is documented in *The Assassination Complex: Inside the Government's Secret Drone Warfare Program*, a new book by Jeremy Scahill and the staff of the online news publication *The Intercept*.

Appearing on *Democracy Now!* to discuss the book, Jeremy Scahill rejected the Obama administration's absurd claim that drone strikes are a cleaner, more humane way of waging war.

“Obama has codified assassination as a central official component of American foreign policy,” Scahill said. “This is a global assassination program that is authorized and run under what amounts to a parallel legal system ... where the president and his advisers serve as the judge, jury and executioner of people across the globe.”

One of the most startling revelations in *The Assassination Complex* involves the disclosure of secret government documents on Operation Haymaker, a drone strike program operating in northeastern Afghanistan. According to the government's own documents, nearly 90 percent of the people killed in U.S. airstrikes during one five-month period were not the intended targets.

The New York Times also reported that President Obama has taken military action in a total of seven countries — Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen — without the authorization of Congress. If you include covert military actions taken by special operations forces, the list is longer and the impact much broader.

The metastasizing of U.S. military force under the Joint Special Operations Command was first documented in Scahill's 2013 book and documentary film *Dirty Wars: The World is a Battlefield*.

Nick Turse has done additional reporting on the issue for *The Nation* magazine.

“During the fiscal year that ended on Sept. 30, 2014, U.S. Special Operations forces (SOF) deployed to 133 countries — roughly 70 percent of the nations on the planet — according to Army Lt. Col. Robert Bockholt, a public affairs officer with U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM),” Turse reported in a January 2015 article in *The Nation*. “This capped a three-year span in which the country's most elite forces were active in more than 150 different countries around the world, conducting missions ranging from kill/capture night raids to training exercises.”

In a second article, published in April 2015, Turse reported that “(i)n 2014, the United States carried out 674 military activities across Africa, nearly two missions per day, an almost 300 percent jump in the number of annual operations, exercises, and military-to-military training activities since U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) was established in 2008.”

Awarding a Nobel Peace Prize on the basis of expectations was unprecedented. But after eight years of continuous warfare, the Nobel Committee should take another unprecedented action: It should revoke Obama's peace prize and demand repayment of the prize money.