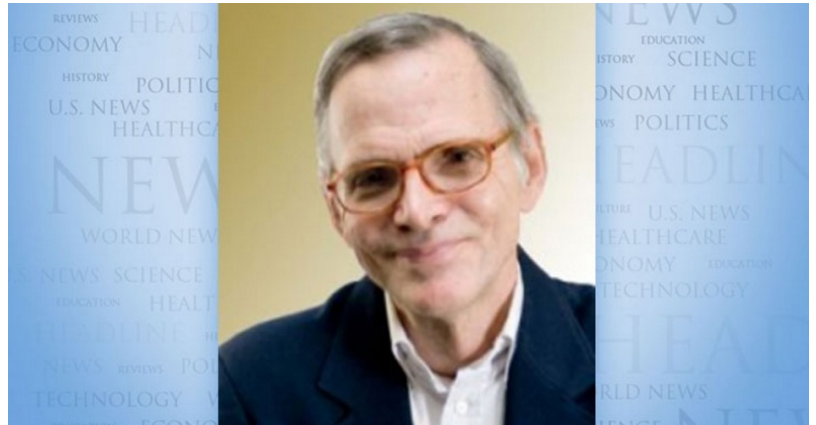




Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on May 1, 2012

Obama Policies Inspire “Blowback”

Just a little over four years ago, Hillary Clinton, then running for President, ran a controversial ad strongly suggesting that Democratic rival Barack Obama was not ready to take that “3 a.m.” phone call in the White House when “something is happening in the world.” America needs a President who “knows the military” and is “tested and ready to lead,” the ad warned. Now Clinton is Obama’s Secretary of State and the President last week gave an interview in the Situation Room at the White House to discuss the decision he made one year ago to send Navy SEALs on the mission that resulted in killing of al Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden. And less that three years after Obama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, he is winning praise as the “Warrior in Chief” carrying on a “militarily aggressive” foreign policy.



As the Obama campaign prepares to formally begin the reelection drive on Saturday, May 5, with appearances in the key states of Ohio and Virginia, campaign spokesman are describing the President as defender of the middle class and the foe of tax cuts for the wealthiest “one percent” of Americans. But in the past several days, with the anniversary of the May 1 killing of bin Laden at hand, administration spokesmen and Obama campaign supporters have been talking up last year’s raid on bin Laden’s home in Abbottabad, Pakistan, as not only a major victory for the United States, but also as evidence that Obama is a tough and decisive leader. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said last week that the slaying of bin Laden, along with the killing of other al Qaeda leaders over the past few years, “has prevented them from having the command and control capability to be able to put together an attack similar to 9/11.”

Vice President Joe Biden, conflating the bailout of the auto industry in 2009 and the killing of the bin Laden two years later, suggested a bumper sticker for the campaign might read, “Bin Laden is dead and General Motors is alive.” And a video celebrating the anniversary on the campaign web site has angered supporters of the apparent Republican nominee Mitt Romney. It features former President Bill Clinton, who campaigned with his wife against Obama in the 2008 presidential primaries, praising the President for nailing bin Laden. “He took the harder and more honorable path and the one that produced, in my opinion, the best result,” Clinton said. An on-screen graphic then poses the question, “Which path would Mitt Romney have taken?” and displays a statement Romney made about the pursuit of bin Laden in 2007: “It’s not worth moving heaven and earth, spending billions of dollars just trying to catch one person.”

GOP strategist Nancy Pfotenhauer told [Fox News](#) the video “politicizes something that shouldn’t have been politicized” and is a sign of how “nasty” the 2012 campaign will become. Senator John McCain of



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Arizona, Obama's Republican opponent four years ago, accused the President of turning "the one decision he got right into a pathetic, political act of self-congratulation.... Shame on Barack Obama for diminishing the memory of September 11th and the killing of Osama bin Laden by turning it into a cheap political attack ad." Democrats voiced similar criticism in 2004 when the George W. Bush reelection campaign used images from the "Ground Zero" at the World Trade Center in a campaign ad, and when vice President took Dick Cheney suggested the election of Democratic candidate, Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts, might result in another terrorist attack.

Obama campaign advisor and former White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said on NBC's *Meet the Press* Sunday told the *New York Times* that raising the question of whether Romney would have authorized the raid that killed bin Laden is "fair game."

"Maybe the comments he made a few years ago he admits are wrong, or he's flip-flopped on yet another issue," Gibbs said. Indeed, Romney, in a December 2011 interview with Chris Wallace on Fox News credited Obama for the raid in words that appear to contradict his 2007 [statement](#).

"We're delighted that he gave the order to take out Osama bin Laden," Romney said at that time. "Any president would have done that, but this one did, and that's a good thing. I'm not going to say everything he's done is wrong."

Republicans have also criticized Obama's decision to use the White House crisis center known as the Situation Room as the setting for the interview with NBC's Brian Williams about the bin Laden raid. "I don't believe it ever would have occurred to us to conduct an interview in the Situation Room and don't believe we would considered it appropriate," said [Tony Fratto](#), deputy press secretary to President George W. Bush.

The President and his political advisors have clearly had it in mind for the past several months to highlight the bin Laden s a sign of the President's toughness in dealing with the nation's enemies. The Obama campaign had posted a video about the raid earlier this year and the President talked about it in both the opening and closing passages of his State of the Union address in January. In December of last year, Obama responded to a question about Republican charges that he has been appeasing America's enemies by saying: "Ask Osama bin Laden and the 22 out of 30 top Al Qaeda leaders who have been taken off the field whether I engage in appeasement."

In an [opinion piece published in Sunday's New York Times](#), Peter Bergen, a director of the non-partisan think tank, The New America Foundation, described Obama as the "Warrior In Chief" who has overcome the "Vietnam syndrome" that plagued previous Democratic aspirants to the White House and has shown himself to be "more like Teddy Roosevelt than Jimmy Carter." Obama, said Bergen wrote, "has turned out to be one of the most militarily aggressive American leaders in decades."

"Mr. Obama decimated Al Qaeda's leadership," Bergen wrote. "He overthrew the Libyan dictator. He ramped up drone attacks in Pakistan, waged effective covert wars in Yemen and Somalia and authorized a threefold increase in the number of American troops in Afghanistan. He became the first president to authorize the assassination of a United States citizen, Anwar al-Awlaki, who was born in New Mexico and played an operational role in Al Qaeda, and was killed in an American drone strike in Yemen. And, of course, Mr. Obama ordered and oversaw the Navy SEAL raid that killed Osama bin Laden."

Bergen made no mention of the constitutional issues involved in launching military attacks on countries with whom we are not at war, not to mention authorizing the targeted killing of an American citizen far from any field of battle. He did acknowledge that these extra-constitutional extensions of executive



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power seem to be of little concern to many on the political left who were vocal in their condemnation of the excesses of the Bush administration.

“The left,” Bergen wrote, “which had loudly condemned George W. Bush for waterboarding and due process violations at Guantánamo, was relatively quiet when the Obama administration, acting as judge and executioner, ordered more than 250 drone strikes in Pakistan since 2009, during which at least 1,400 lives were lost.”

How many of those whose lives were lost in those drone attacks were innocent people who had nothing to do with terrorist activities? That’s another question Bergen did not address. As Glenn Greenwald noted on Salon.com, neither the word “innocent” nor “civilians” appears anywhere in Bergen’s 2000-word essay celebrating Obama’s foreign policy achievements. Nor is there any mention of al-Awlaki’s 16-year-old son, who was killed in a separate drone attack, also in Yemen, though according to the Pentagon the teenager was not a target. He was merely part of the collateral damage.

Nor is there any mention of the possibility that instead of making us safer, the U.S. military actions Bergen describes may inspire more of what the CIA calls “blowback” — attacks on American targets by people in far-off lands as retaliation for our military attacks and political interventions in their countries.

Greenwald, meanwhile, has been unsparing in his criticism of those on the left who appear to accept and even approve of policies under Obama that they viewed with alarm when carried out by President Bush. One of “Obama’s most enduring legacies,” he wrote will be “transforming these policies of excessive militarism, rampant secrecy and civil liberties assaults from right-wing radicalism into robust bipartisan consensus.”



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