



## One Year After Obama's Peace Prize: Where's the Peace?

In a famous TV commercial from the 1980s, an elderly woman, surveying the minuscule amount of hamburger in the middle of a bun, asks pointedly, "Where's the beef?" One year after President Barack Obama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize despite having been in office only a short time, ABC News' Russell Goldman reports that many people are asking, "Where's the peace?"



On October 9, 2009, the Nobel Committee [awarded](#) Obama the Peace Prize "for his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples." Goldman writes that Obama "was selected, prize committee chairman Thorbjorn Jagland said, not for what he had accomplished but for the promise of what he would accomplish." Former President Jimmy Carter, the 2002 Peace Prize recipient, said Obama was deserving of the prize for his "vision and commitment."

What, then, has Obama done to vindicate the committee's faith in him? Goldman sees a few bright spots: "Obama has withdrawn tens of thousands of troops from Iraq. He rushed to the relief of Haiti after its devastating earthquake and redirected U.S. helicopters and aid to help the millions of Pakistanis whose homes were washed away by catastrophic floods."

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On the flip side, Goldman notes, "fighting is escalating in Afghanistan, the war in Iraq continues to smolder and Obama [is struggling] to keep fledgling Middle East peace talks from collapsing. Drones are firing missiles in unprecedented [sic] numbers and confrontations with Iran and North Korea are hotter than ever." "In addition," he says, "wars rage in Somalia, Africa, Asia and South America, fueled by religion, tribal hatreds, poverty and piracy." It is, of course, a good thing that Obama has mostly kept his nose out of these other wars. But he has done little to address the problems in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan and, in the case of Afghanistan and Pakistan, has actually escalated, rather than lessened, hostilities.

The President has committed an additional 47,000 troops to Afghanistan; and though he has stated that he will begin withdrawing troops in July 2011, he has made it clear that the withdrawal is dependent on conditions on the ground and that even if withdrawal does begin at that time, the United States is going to be involved in Afghanistan for [years to come](#). The troop surge has hardly achieved peace: "Nearly 500 U.S. troops have been killed in Afghanistan and nearly another 500 troops from other Western allies since October 2009," writes Goldman. At the same time, the Pentagon is [seeking a permanent](#)



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on October 10, 2010

[presence in Afghanistan](#), with Defense Secretary Robert Gates averring that “we’re not ever leaving at all” and Obama meekly acquiescing to whatever the military wants — this according to Bob Woodward’s book *Obama’s Wars*.

In Pakistan, as Goldman points out, unmanned drone strikes have greatly increased on Obama’s watch. Via these strikes Obama “has killed well over a thousand people inside Pakistan since taking office,” [according to Jason Ditz](#) of Antiwar.com. “The vast majority of those killed have turned out to be innocent civilians, while large numbers of others remain unidentified but classified as ‘suspects.’” Fighting between NATO (read: U.S.) troops and Taliban militants in southwestern Pakistan has also been on the increase lately, with some NATO contractors even [suspected](#) of planting bombs in some of the oil tankers that have been blowing up en route to Afghanistan.

Elsewhere, [fighting continues](#) in Iraq even though Obama announced the end of combat operations on August 31. The President has [ordered](#) drone strikes within Yemen. He has imposed sanctions on Iran. He has [failed](#) to close the Guantanamo Bay detention camp despite having issued an executive order calling for its closure by January 22, 2010. He has [asserted](#) the right to order the assassination of anyone, even an American citizen, anywhere in the world. The list goes on — and none of it resembles peace by any stretch of the imagination.

Anti-war activism has become much less pronounced since Obama took office, probably because most prominent anti-war groups are on the Left and therefore have a natural affinity for the President. Previous Nobel Peace Prize winners Carter, Al Gore, and the American Friends Service Committee declined to offer comments on the anniversary of Obama’s prize when contacted by Goldman.

However, not all anti-war activists are keeping silent. Dana Balicki, National Campaign Coordinator for Code Pink, told Goldman, “Of course we’re disappointed with the president. He simply hasn’t live [sic] up to [his Nobel Prize]. There was a great deal of skepticism that he deserved the prize in the first place.” Balicki added, “We’ve seen an escalation in Afghanistan. We’ve seen a withdrawal in Iraq, but with the left hand comes a withdrawal and with the right hand an increase in private mercenary army a [sic] funded with tax dollars. Thousands of people are dead, because of those policies.”

Cindy Sheehan, who was feted by the national media when she dogged President George W. Bush’s footsteps to demand an audience with him over the death of her son in Iraq, has not given Obama a pass either, [writing](#) recently that as far as she is concerned, Obama is Bush “on steroids.” Even though Sheehan has continued to turn up on Obama’s travels, one would never know this from reading the mainstream press since journalists, too, are by and large Democrat partisans. Sheehan herself noted this phenomenon, observing that “to be anti-war in the age of Obama is not to be tolerated by many people.”

What ought not to be tolerated is a President who escalates existing unconstitutional wars and incites new ones, especially after presenting himself as the peace candidate when campaigning for office and accepting the Nobel Peace Prize once in office. Peace activists and voters need to increase the pressure on both Obama and Congress to end the wars, bring the troops home, and then mind their own business. What a wonderful day for America — and the rest of the world — it would be if, when asked, “Where’s the peace?” Americans could answer, “It’s here.”

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