

# The Great Disappointment of Obama's First Year

by Scott Camil

Last year on these pages I wrote about the optimism due to the election of President Barack Obama.

After a year, that optimism has turned to disappointment as President Obama continues many of Bush's policies. We strongly disagree with President Obama's escalation of the war in Afghanistan and his expansion of war into Pakistan and Yemen.

The war in Afghanistan is unlawful under international law and still makes no sense.

The US is a signatory of the UN Charter. The US Senate ratified that signature. This makes those obligations we have signed on to lawful and Constitutional. Under the UN Charter, a nation can only go to war, use armed force against another nation, under two conditions. Those conditions are (1) if a nation is attacked it may use force to defend itself and (2) if the UN votes the right to use force against a nation. These are the only two legal reasons to go to war, period.

The UN has not authorized us to use force against Iraq or Afghanistan and neither of those nations attacked us. This clearly makes these wars illegal.

Obama's escalation actually started in February when he sent 17,000 more troops to Afghanistan.

This escalation shows that Obama is not the leader of Hope and Change, he is just another tool in the pocket of the "Military- Industrial-Congressional Complex."

This war is now Obama's War. It is his legacy. Last year when Obama was elected we had 32,000 troops in Afghanistan. We now have 68,000 troops there with another 30,000 on the way. Last year when Obama was elected we had 150,000 troops in Iraq. We now have 120,000 troops in Iraq: our build-up in Afghanistan is moving along much more quickly than our draw-down in Iraq. 30% of all U.S. casualties in the eight-year war in Afghanistan have occurred during the 11 months of his presidency.

The Congressional Research Service reports the number of contractors in Afghanistan will likely jump by 16,000 to 56,000, adding up to a total of 120,000-160,000 contractors in Afghanistan.

According to the Department of Defense there are only about 100 Al Qaeda fighters in the entire country of Afghanistan.

On September 23rd, it was reported that in General Stanley McChrystal's classified assessment of the war in Afghanistan, his conclusion was that a successful counterinsurgency

strategy would require 500,000 troops over five years. If this is true, what good will only 100,000 troops after the new escalation do?

These numbers don't add up.

We are told that Gen. McChrystal needs these troops to accomplish his mission in Afghanistan. The question here is, can we trust Gen. McChrystal's judgment?

On April 22nd, 2004 Army Corporal Pat Tillman, a former NFL star, was killed by friendly fire in Afghanistan. In an effort to hype the war, the friendly fire incident was covered up and Corporal Tillman was awarded the Silver Star, the third highest military decoration that can be awarded to a member of any branch of the United States Armed Forces.

Within 24 hours of Corporal Tillman's death, Gen. McChrystal was recommending a Silver Star for him and lying about the circumstances to the nation and to Corporal Tillman's parents. Can we trust this guy?

Obama has expanded the war in Pakistan and into Yemen. We would not call this very Nobel.

Obama has rejected comparisons between Afghanistan and Vietnam. We ask how could he possibly not see the analogy to Vietnam, which led to the collapse of Johnson's Great Society programs, and the threat of his own domestic agenda collapsing under the pressure of funding the escalation in his war.

Just as the Viet Cong were Vietnamese citizens opposed to the foreign occupation of their country, the Taliban are Afghan citizens opposed to the foreign occupation of their country.

Just as the Viet Cong weren't going to pack up and leave, the Taliban are not going to pack up and leave.

Soon after taking office, President Richard Nixon introduced his policy of "vietnamization." The plan was to encourage the South Vietnamese to take more responsibility for fighting the war. It was hoped that this policy would eventually enable the United States to withdraw gradually all their soldiers from Vietnam.

From President Obama's West Point speech: "After 18 months, our troops will begin to come home. These are the resources that we need to seize the initiative, while building the Afghan capacity that can allow for a responsible transition of our forces out of Afghanistan."

This is the same plan – and if you remember, right after we left, those Vietnamese forces that we trained folded.

Nationalism trumps politics when dealing with a foreign occupation.

The Obama claim of draw-down in July of 2011, is his “light at the end of the tunnel” propaganda.

No one, including Obama, really believes that in July of 2011 we will actually start ending the war.

When you look at Robert McNamara’s book, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*, it is not hard to see the parallels.

- \* We misjudged...the... intentions of our adversaries... and we exaggerated the dangers to the United States of their actions.

- \* We viewed the people and leaders of South Vietnam in terms of our own experience... we totally misjudged the political forces within the country.

- \* We underestimated the power of nationalism to motivate a people... we continue to do so today...

- \* Our misjudgments of friend and foe alike reflected our profound ignorance of history, culture, and politics of the people... and the personalities and habits of their leaders....

- \* We failed then — as we have since — to recognize the limitations of modern high technology, military equipment, forces, and doctrine in confronting unconventional, highly motivated people’s movements. We failed as well to adapt our military tactics to the task of winning the hearts and minds of people from a totally different culture.

- \* We did not recognize that neither our people nor our leaders are omniscient. ...We do not have the God-given right to shape every nation in our own image or as we choose.

**Afghanistan is known as The Burial Ground of Empires, the place where empires go to die.**

We are taught in the military that it is our Duty and Obligation to disobey an unlawful order.

We are not taught how to distinguish between a lawful order and an unlawful order.

We are not taught a process for disobeying an unlawful order.

Years ago I wrote the Pentagon to find out the definition of an unlawful order. Their response blew me away: "All orders are considered lawful."

So this duty and obligation to disobey an unlawful order is used only to protect the asses of those up the chain of command, not to keep the troops from using unlawful behavior.

**Logically speaking, any order to deploy to an unlawful war has to be an unlawful order.**

**It is the Duty and Obligation of those in the military to disobey unlawful orders.**

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*Other Obama disappointments:*

- His refusal to prosecute those responsible for torture and his protection of them.
- His refusal to join the international ban on land mines.
- Universal Single Payer Health Insurance is the only real solution to the monopoly that the insurance industry has on our health care system. From the beginning Obama refused to allow single payer to be part of the health care reform debate. This stance runs counter to Obama's statement that he believes health care is a right.
- The continuation of renditions, secret abductions and transfers of prisoners to countries that use torture
- His acceptance of the military coup in Honduras
- The Wall Street bailout and placing those responsible for our economic collapse in charge of our economy.
- Obama has broadened the government's legal argument for immunizing his administration, government agencies, & telephone companies from lawsuits surrounding the National Security Agency's eavesdropping.
- Although Obama has condemned the continued expansion of Israeli settlements, Israel continues the theft of Palestinian land and the expansion of settlements with no worry of loss of US aid.

After 8 years of a president who was not very articulate, many liberals have been fooled by President Obama's articulate speeches; they have lost sight of the Orwellian nature of his speeches - he does not walk the walk. This should shatter the illusion that just by electing Democrats we will have meaningful change.

All of this suggests to us that the corporate takeover of our government is about complete and that the two major political parties are there to serve corporate interests, not the public interest.

What we have learned from the election of Obama and a Democratic majority in Congress is that we need to commit ourselves to stepping outside of these two parties if we want real change.

As we said last year, “Putting a new person in the White House will not dampen our commitment or activities”.