

Obama boasts of Bin Laden killing

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President Barack Obama has launched his campaign for re-election by glorifying his role in giving the order for the killing of Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.

In speeches, interviews and a seven-minute web video narrated by former President Bill Clinton, the Obama campaign has hailed his decision to order the commando raid one year ago today on bin Laden's compound in Pakistan, while suggesting that Republican Mitt Romney would not have made that choice.

The campaign began last Thursday with a speech by Vice President Joseph Biden at New York University, in which he declared that the bumper sticker slogan for Obama's re-election could be: "Osama bin Laden is dead, and General Motors is alive," while claiming that for Romney, the opposite would be the case.

On Friday, the Obama campaign released the web video titled "One Chance," in which former President Clinton praised Obama as the "decider-in-chief" for ordering the raid in which a team of Navy Seals gunned down bin Laden and several members of his family. The ad then asks, "Which path would Mitt Romney have taken?"

The public relations blitz culminated Monday night in an interview with Obama broadcast on NBC Nightly News, conducted in the White House Situation Room, where Obama, Biden and other officials gathered on the night of May 1, 2011 (early May 2 in Pakistan) to monitor the progress of the commando attack in Abbottabad.

What is most striking about this campaign appeal is its brazenly right-wing character. The Bill Clinton video, for example, plagiarizes one of the most notorious statements of George W. Bush, when he dismissed mounting public opposition to the war in Iraq by declaring that on such issues, "I'm the decider."

As for Biden's typically crude bumper sticker—"Bin Laden dead and GM alive"—this could indeed be used to summarize the record of an administration whose principal actions have been increasingly reckless military violence abroad and bailing out the banks and corporations at the expense of working people at home.

When the operation to kill bin Laden was accomplished a year ago, the Obama administration seized on this "success" as the defining event of his presidency. This act of state killing has become the template for increasingly monstrous and aggressive actions by American imperialism, going well beyond anything attempted by the Bush administration. In his State of the Union speech in January, Obama cited the Navy Seals as a model for the operations of the US government in every sphere.

The raid on Abbottabad came just as the US-NATO bombing of Libya was building up, eventually culminating in the imperialist-backed overthrow and lynch mob murder of Muammar Gaddafi. Islamist cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, a US citizen, was incinerated by a drone-fired missile in Yemen. Now the US is fomenting civil war in Syria and deploying warships and bombers to strike against Iran.

In the midst of the first anniversary celebration of the Osama bin Laden “kill,” White House terrorism czar John Brennan gave a speech defending the ever-wider use of remote-controlled drone missile attacks and claimed the US government had the absolute right under international law to target anyone it saw fit.

There is something particularly degrading about the use of a state killing—in which dozens of heavily armed special ops troops mowed down the fugitive in front of his wives and children—to promote a political campaign. Obama presents himself, not so much even as commander-in-chief, but as “hitman-in-chief,” appealing to the worst social instincts.

There is no doubt that such appeals have touched a chord among the well-heeled sections of the upper middle class who are Obama’s key constituency. In backing the Democratic president, this social layer has embraced US militarism and imperialism.

This finds clear expression in the liberal and left-liberal media. The *New York Times* devoted the front page of its “Sunday Review” section to a paean to Obama as the “Warrior In Chief,” written by Peter L. Bergen, author of a newly published book taking a behind-the-scenes look at the decade-long hunt for Osama bin Laden, and glorifying the raid by the Navy Seals that was its culmination.

The commentary began, “The president who won the Nobel Peace Prize less than nine months after his inauguration has turned out to be one of the most militarily aggressive American leaders in decades.” That is quite a statement, given the record of Obama’s immediate predecessors: Reagan (Lebanon, Grenada, Nicaragua, Libya); Bush senior (Panama, the Gulf War, Somalia); Clinton (Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, bombing Iraq); and Bush junior (Iraq, Afghanistan).

Similar praise of the bin Laden operation rolled in from other pro-Obama media. *Rolling Stone* magazine devoted its cover to an interview with the president, conducted by publisher Jann Wenner, who wrote that Obama “plans to run on his remarkable record of accomplishments,” one of which is “killing Osama bin Laden.”

Arianna Huffington, multimillionaire editor-in-chief of *Huffington Post*, criticized Obama’s use of the bin Laden killing for campaign purposes, but referred to the assassination itself as “the great news we had a year ago.”

These layers are rallying to the Obama reelection campaign not despite, but because of, its resort to ever-increasing levels of state violence, against those targeted by American imperialism around the world, and against the working class at home, when it moves into struggles against corporate America and its political representatives like Obama.

The entire episode demonstrates the utterly reactionary state of bourgeois liberalism in America. There is not a single significant figure in the Democratic Party or among the liberal pundits who feels any revulsion over this celebration of state killing, or who is prepared to speak out against it. Anyone who did would be quickly silenced or politically destroyed.

The attempt by Obama to run to the right of his Republican rivals, as the candidate most prepared to order murder and military violence, is symptomatic of the utterly degraded character of American politics and the government of the United States.

The Obama administration and the Democratic Party are making it abundantly clear that they have absolutely nothing to offer American working people confronting the worst economic disaster in generations. Instead, they put themselves forward as the champions of militarism, assassination and war.

The struggle against imperialist war cannot be waged through any section of the bourgeois political establishment. A genuine antiwar movement is inseparable from the mobilization of the working class as an independent political force, against the profit system and the American ruling class.

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