
Committee Regrets Giving Obama Nobel Peace Prize

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While it is quite rare for Nobel officials to openly discuss the nuts and bolts of their secretive committee, the former director of the Norwegian Nobel Institute has apparently owned up in his memoir 'Secretary of Peace', to be released on Thursday, that the panel had expected the award to somewhat challenge Obama, who received the Nobel Peace Prize during his first term.

The Norwegian historian told AP that the committee *"thought it would strengthen Obama and it didn't have this effect."* The five members of the Nobel Committee, often former politicians, are appointed by the Norwegian parliament. The coveted award was met with an avalanche of criticism instead. An army of opponents noted that Obama had made no foreign policy achievements worthy of the prize in less than nine months in office. On top of this, he received the award while the US was engaged in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Even many of Obama's supporters believed that the prize was a mistake," Lundestad wrote in excerpts of the book, read by AP.

"In that sense the committee didn't achieve what it had hoped for," Lundestad, who stepped down last year after 25 years as the non-voting secretary of the secretive committee, added.

Lundestad has also reportedly noted that Obama was taken aback by the award and that his staff investigated whether other winners had skipped the prize ceremony in Oslo.

"In the White House they quickly realized that they needed to travel to Oslo," Lundestad wrote.

At that point *"his cabinet had already asked whether anyone had previously refused to travel to Oslo to receive the prize,"* Lundestad wrote, according to AFP.

"In broad strokes, the answer was no.

"No Nobel Peace Prize ever elicited more attention than the 2009 prize to Barack Obama," Lundestad wrote, AFP reported.

He reportedly recalled that then-Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Store tried the following year to dissuade the panel from awarding the prize to Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo for fear it would sour Norway's relations with Beijing.

"During my 25 years [on the committee], I don't ever recall seeing anything like that," Lundestad said.

Ignoring the minister's warnings, the Nobel committee honored the human rights activist in 2010, leaving Oslo's ties with Beijing frozen ever since.
