

New York police attack students protesting ex-CIA chief David Petraeus

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On Tuesday, New York police attacked protesting students from the City University of New York (CUNY), New York City's public college system, arresting six. The unprovoked police attack took place at a protest against the appointment of war criminal David Petraeus, former head of the US joint Command and former Director to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), to the university as a visiting professor.

The incident occurred on West 67th Street in Manhattan in front of Macaulay Honors College where Petraeus was attending a fundraiser.

Video footage shows officers of the New York City Police Department (NYPD) pushing demonstrators away from the entrance to the college with metal barricades. Protesters were not blocking the entrance to the college. It is legal to protest on the sidewalk in New York City without a permit as long as protesters do not block pedestrian traffic. Once demonstrators had been forced into the street, where a police permit is necessary, officers used this as a pretext to begin attacking the protesters. Students were shoved against vehicles, punched, and thrown to the ground.

One student who was present at the demonstration told the media: "Protesters were marching in a circle on the sidewalk and chanting, but the police forced them into the street and then charged. One of the most brutal things I saw was that five police officers slammed a Queens College student face down to the pavement across the street from Macaulay, put their knees on his back, and he was then repeatedly kned in the back."

Luis Henriquez, a Queens College student who was arrested, said, "I got beaten on my back. I got kned in my head while I was on the ground. My face [was] being pushed into the concrete." Another student who was arrested, Augustin Castro, has reported that he heard a police officer saying, "Let's tase them!"

The six students were held in jail for hours without being charged and were eventually arraigned on charges of obstruction of governmental administration, riot, resisting arrest and disorderly conduct.

Petraeus is an odious figure, hated by millions in the US and around the world. As the commander after 2004 of the US-run Multi-National Security Transition Command Iraq, he oversaw the formation of Iraqi Special Police Commando units, based on Shia fundamentalist militias and former regime security operatives. With the assistance of American specialists in this kind of work, who reported directly to Petraeus, these forces murdered and tortured insurgents and those opposed to the American occupation.

According to government documents provided to Wikileaks by Bradley Manning, and reported in the *Guardian* earlier this year, "US soldiers came across tortured detainees in a network of detention centres run by the police commandos across Iraq."

Petraeus's crimes helped earn him a promotion to the command of American forces in Iraq in 2007, to head the US Central Command in 2010, and then to oversee US operations in Afghanistan. Finally he was appointed by Barack Obama as CIA director in 2011, a position from which he resigned in 2012 after a sex scandal.

That the City University of New York would invite such a figure to its campuses only indicates how closely integrated the academic establishment and New York City political circles are with the military-intelligence apparatus.

The fundraising event that Petraeus was attending as the CUNY students were arrested is telling in this respect. Invited guests included multibillionaire mayor Michael Bloomberg, the moving force behind the NYPD's infamous stop-and-frisk program. The keynote speaker was Fareed Zakaria, a foreign policy

adviser to Obama, CNN talk show host and former associate of Iraq war architect Paul Wolfowitz. CUNY Interim Chancellor William P. Kelly also attended the event and issued a statement supporting the arrests, bragging that the university would work closely with the NYPD to protect Petraeus's "security."

The arrests and police brutality, together with Petraeus's appointment to the faculty, have sparked an outcry from CUNY students and faculty. Many have signed a petition demanding that all charges against the students be dropped.



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