

Petraeus gets slap on the wrist in state secrets case

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Former top general and CIA chief David Petraeus passed classified secret information to his lover, including details of ongoing covert operations and names of undercover agents, and subsequently lied about these actions to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Justice announced Tuesday.

Petraeus transferred the notebooks to Paula Broadwell in August 2011 while he was head of the CIA. The books contained a range of state secrets including US war plans, intelligence capabilities, and minutes from National Security Council meetings and private one-on-one discussions between the general and President Barack Obama, according to the *Washington Post*.

Broadwell requested the information as part of her research for a biography of Petraeus, published as *All In: The Education of General David Petraeus*. The evidence makes clear that Petraeus knew he was passing extremely sensitive information to his mistress.

“Umm, well, they’re really, I mean they are highly classified,” Petraeus can be heard telling Broadwell on an audio recording from 2011.

Less than a month before his affair with Broadwell became public, Petraeus lied to US government investigators, saying that he never transferred any secret information to her. An FBI team seized the notebooks from Petraeus’ residence in Virginia in April 2013, nearly half a year after the retired general signed an FBI statement declaring that he no longer possessed documents containing classified information.

The FBI had ordered Petraeus questioned after discovering emails between Broadwell and Jill Kelley, a wealthy socialite known for hosting lavish parties for top Pentagon officials at her residence in the Tampa, Florida area.

Senator John McCain, a leading congressional representative of the military-intelligence apparatus, voiced his unshaken solidarity with Petraeus, saying that he had already “expressed deep regret” and that “it is time to consider this matter closed.”

“Petraeus will continue to provide his outstanding service and leadership to our nation, as he has throughout his distinguished career,” McCain said.

While Edward Snowden and numerous other whistleblowers have been threatened with death and subject to extensive vilification in the media for revealing grave crimes by the government, Petraeus will pay a fine of \$40,000 and will not face any jail time, according to federal attorneys.

The former general’s treatment is in sharp contrast to the savage penalties imposed on Private Chelsea (Bradley) Manning, who exposed some of the crimes of American imperialism in Afghanistan and Iraq by downloading classified material and sending it to WikiLeaks for publication.

Manning is serving a 35-year prison term, while Julian Assange of WikiLeaks has been locked up in the Ecuadoran embassy in London where he sought asylum three years ago.

Far from being prosecuted for war crimes, for which Manning, Assange and others have provided ample evidence, Petraeus has enjoyed a well-publicized career in the upper echelons of the American military-intelligence apparatus.

Prior to his downfall, Petraeus rose steadily through the military, culminating in the command of multinational forces in Iraq during 2007-08, then command of CENTCOM and of occupation forces in Afghanistan. Petraeus assumed leadership of the CIA in September 2011, and ran the top US intelligence agency for more than a year before the Broadwell

relationship became public.

Since leaving the CIA in November 2012, Petraeus has been welcomed with open arms by the financial and academic establishment, working as a globe-trotting consultant for New York investment house Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co. LP (KKR) and been appointed to professorships at the City University of New York (CUNY), the University of Southern California, and the University of Exeter.

Petraeus apparently fell afoul of political currents in Washington, under circumstances that remain murky even today. He was kicked upstairs from Afghanistan to the CIA in the summer of 2011, at a time when Republican Party circles were seriously discussing him as a possible presidential or vice presidential candidate against the Obama-Biden reelection ticket.

His ouster from the CIA was also politically timely. Petraeus handed in his resignation within days of Obama's reelection, paving the way for John Brennan, Obama's top national security aide and the overseer of the drone missile assassination program, to return to the CIA and become its director.

His resignation came only two months after the events in Benghazi, Libya, when a US diplomatic post and a CIA annex were attacked by Islamists who had been working with the agency as part of its efforts, first to overthrow Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, then to attack the government of Bashar al-Assad in Syria.

Since then, the Republican hue and cry over Benghazi, itself motivated by an effort to discredit then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the likely Democratic presidential candidate in 2016, has served to divert attention from the primary role of the CIA in the events in Libya, which remain uninvestigated to this day.



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