

Former CIA head Petraeus gets wrist-slap sentence for leaking classified material

Tom Hall
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Former CIA director and four-star general David Petraeus was given a wrist-slap sentence in federal court Thursday for giving binders of highly-classified information to his biographer and mistress, Paula Broadwell, in 2011.

Petraeus avoided jail time, receiving only two years of probation and a \$100,000 fine for “mishandling classified information,” a misdemeanor. Even so, this was a stiffer sentence than had been recommended by federal prosecutors, who suggested only a \$40,000 fine. Judge David Kessler elected to raise the sentence, arguing that the punishment recommended by prosecutors was “unscientific” and arrived at arbitrarily. “This constitutes a serious lapse of judgment,” he told the court in the hour-long proceedings on Thursday.

Broadwell began interviewing Petraeus in late 2011, shortly before he assumed his post as CIA director, for a fawning biography entitled, *All In: The Education of General David Petraeus*, which was published in 2012. As part of the research for the book, Petraeus provided her with binders, later referred to in the media as “black books,” containing highly classified information, including the names of covert officers, code words, intelligence capabilities and information relating internal deliberations within the White House National Security Council.

The FBI first became aware of the incident in May 2012 after investigating complaints by Jill Kelley, a wealthy socialite from Tampa, Florida and friend of the Petraeus family, who reported that she had been receiving threatening emails from an anonymous source, which later turned out to be Broadwell. Petraeus repeatedly lied to investigators about the incident, including giving a falsified sworn, written statement.

The investigation was initially carried out in unusual

secrecy. Neither Congress nor the White House was informed until after the 2012 elections. Members of various Congressional intelligence committees told the press that they were blindsided by both the investigation and Petraeus’ eventual resignation in November 2012. Indicating the potentially explosive nature of the investigation, General John Allen, the then-top US commander in Afghanistan and nominee for the top military post at NATO, was implicated over “inappropriate communications”—consisting of some 20-30,000 pages of emails—with Kelley. He has since been cleared of wrongdoing.

There is a marked double standard at work in the ruling elite’s kid-glove treatment of Petraeus. The Obama administration has prosecuted more whistleblowers than every other administration combined. Yet Petraeus has avoided jail time despite knowingly handing Broadwell top-secret information, including the names of operatives, for purely personal gain.

Chelsea Manning is currently serving a 35-year prison sentence in a military prison for leaking evidence of American war crimes and diplomatic skullduggery to WikiLeaks. Before the sentencing, Manning was stripped naked and subjected to 23 and one half hours of solitary confinement every day, vindictive measures that attorneys described as torture.

Earlier this year former CIA analyst John Kiriakou was released from prison, after serving a two-year sentence for revealing the use of torture by the CIA during a 2007 interview with ABC News. Shortly after his release, Kiriakou told *Russia Today*, “But what really bothers me, is that there is no prosecution of CIA officers who obviously violated the law...I have no idea why there is no outrage, and why those officers are not being prosecuted.”

Former CIA officer Jeffrey Sterling is currently awaiting sentencing after being found guilty of providing information about the agency's operations against Iran to *New York Times* journalist James Risen; prosecutors are arguing for a prison sentence between 19 and 25 years.

And of course, there are the ongoing operations to extradite Julian Assange via trumped up sex charges in Sweden, for which a secret jury has already been convened in Northern Virginia, and against NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden, who fled to Russia in the summer of 2013.

Yet in the case of David Petraeus, the Justice Department under Eric Holder allowed him to plead guilty to misdemeanor charges and avoid spending a day in jail, despite the fact that he had repeatedly lied to investigators, including in a sworn statement. The administration's fawning over Petraeus was so blatant it apparently angered some within the FBI itself, according to anonymous sources who spoke to the *New York Times*.

The essential difference in Petraeus's case is that he has served as an integral and valued organizer of Washington's war crimes, rather than an opponent of them. Prior to his year-long stint as CIA Director, Petraeus was the much-lauded architect of "the surge" of US troops while in command of the international occupation force in Iraq. He later served as commander of US Central Command (CENTCOM) and as the head of the occupation in Afghanistan.

In a real sense, the ruling elite's light treatment of Petraeus reflects gratitude for services rendered. Several senators, high-ranking military brass and even world leaders went so far as to submit letters to the court attesting to Petraeus' character.

John McCain (Republican-Arizona), one of the US senators closest to the military-industrial complex, sorrowfully declared in March, after Petraeus was found guilty, 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."

Dianne Feinstein (Democrat-California), vice-chairwoman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, pleaded publicly with the Justice Department not to indict Petraeus. "This man has suffered enough in my view," she told CNN in January. "[He] made a

mistake...But...it's done, it's over. He's retired. He's lost his job. How much does the government want?" Far from "suffering" as a result of the trial, Petraeus has been allowed to enjoy the luxurious lifestyle of a semi-retired government official, replete with cushy sinecures from universities and private corporations. The \$100,000 fine is less than half of the \$220,000 annual payout from his US Army pension. In addition, Petraeus has held a non-resident senior fellowship at Harvard's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs since October 2013, after the FBI investigation began.

In 2013, Petraeus was hired by the \$73 billion investment fund KKR to chair its KKR Global Institute. According to *Forbes* magazine, the newly formed institute "will deal with macro-economic issues like the role of central banks in the world since the [2008 financial] crisis, changes in public policy and other areas where KKR has interests like environmental and social issues that would influence its investment decisions."

Incredibly, even the White House has continued to consult with Petraeus on national security issues throughout the investigation and trial. It is not yet clear how Petraeus' sentencing will affect this relationship, according to news reports.

The entire Petraeus affair demonstrates, once again, that two forms of "justice" exist in the United States. For the ruling elite and government officials at every level, from the head of the CIA to local police, no crime is too severe to warrant serious punishment, and when they are forced to press charges, it is done with tearful reluctance. For the rest, there is the standard of justice increasingly redolent of a police state, in which political opponents of the ruling elite are railroaded on trumped up charges.



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