

A Covert Affair: Petraeus Caught in the Honeytrap?

By [Justin Raimondo](#)

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The outing of Gen. David Petraeus as an [adulterer](#), and his subsequent resignation as CIA Director, was carried out by an unknown FBI “whistleblower” who leaked the facts of the FBI investigation into the General’s private life to Rep. Eric Cantor. The New York Times [reports](#):

“Eric Cantor, the House majority leader, said Saturday an F.B.I. employee whom his staff described as a whistle-blower told him about Mr. Petraeus’s affair and a possible security breach in late October, which was after the investigation had begun.

“‘I was contacted by an F.B.I. employee concerned that sensitive, classified information may have been compromised and made certain Director Mueller was aware of these serious allegations and the potential risk to our national security,’ Mr. Cantor said in a statement.

“Mr. Cantor talked to the person after being told by Representative Dave Reichert, Republican of Washington, that a whistle-blower wanted to speak to someone in the Congressional leadership about a national security concern. On Oct. 31, his chief of staff, Steve Stombres, called the F.B.I. to tell them about the call.”

The FBI probe apparently started in [late spring](#), when several people associated with Petraeus — not just the [one woman](#), as has been reported elsewhere — received harassing emails. The emails were traced to 40-year-old [Paula Broadwell](#), national security analyst, military intelligence veteran, and author of a biography of Petraeus. Authorities believed his email account [may have been](#) hacked, and this led to a remarkable irony: the CIA chief’s emails were monitored, without his knowledge, whereupon it was discovered Broadwell may have either had access to his account or tried to obtain access. In any case, in the course of their spying, FBI monitors discovered a large volume of emails to and from Broadwell. Looking for evidence of a security breach, all they found was evidence of a “human drama,” as one anonymous FBI official put it: an illicit affair between Petraeus and Broadwell.

Petraeus was only informed of the investigation on October [25 or 26](#). So here we have the astonishing fact of the CIA’s head honcho being spied on for a period of months by our own law enforcement officials.

Or maybe it wasn’t a simple case of complaints about “harassing” or threatening emails. Fox News [avers](#):

“The FBI had been investigating an unrelated and much broader case before stumbling on the affair. Fox News has learned that during the course of this investigation, the name of biographer Paula Broadwell came up. The FBI followed that lead and in doing so, uncovered his affair with her.”

What was this “much broader case”? Almost certainly it was a counterintelligence investigation, i.e. a pushback against efforts by some foreign entity to penetrate or otherwise compromise US secrets. We can only guess at the specifics, however we do know that in the course of that investigation Broadwell’s name “came up.”

On the surface, at least, Broadwell is not the sort of person whose name would come up in a counterintelligence investigation: a West Point graduate, where she earned degrees in political geography and systems engineering, she seems like the veritable embodiment of All-American red-white-and-blue super-patriotism. [This biographical account](#) on her high school website says

“Paula pursued a military intelligence career abroad, serving in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. During her service, especially after 9-11, Paula’s intensity was directed toward the war against terror; her contributions and efforts to thwart terrorism have been commended by the U.S. Army and by Europe’s Special Operations Forces Commanding General. In this arena, she has planned counter-terrorism initiatives presented to NATO and worked on transnational counter-terrorism issues with foreign and domestic agencies, U.S. Special Forces, and the FBI.”

Graduate studies at the University of Denver in Middle East studies enabled her to travel to “Jordan and Israel,” and make a swing through the Persian Gulf and Europe where she spoke at various conferences. This triumphal tour was capped by a Harvard fellowship “for study in Syria and Iran.”

While Broadwell’s current academic affiliation is with Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, her previous post was deputy director of the Jebesen Center for Counter-Terrorism Studies at Tufts University’s Fletcher School. The Center, according to its [self-description](#), “distinguishes itself by a philosophy that maintains counter-terrorism should be predictive, preventive and preemptive, with the latter being a last resort.” Founded in 2005, the Jebesen Center was made possible by the generous donation of one Jan Henrik Jebesen, heir to the Norwegian shipping fortune, who gave \$1.3 million to set it up. Jebesen, a former investment banker with Lazard Freres, is the principal of Gamma Applied Visions Group, an international octopus with tentacles all over the place: part [arms dealer](#) and weapons [developer](#), part “[green](#)” energy company. As one might expect from someone who has so much of his multi-billion dollar fortune invested in making and selling armaments, Jebesen is [on the board](#) of directors of the distinctly warlike Hudson Institute, where [Scooter Libby](#), [Douglas Feith](#), [Michael Ledeen](#), and practically every neocon you’ve ever heard of have found refuge.

While, in true neocon fashion, Hudson scholars conjure a wide diversity of imminent “threats” to the US, including [China](#) and [Russia](#), their main focus is the threat of Islamist radicalism, especially as it impacts Israel. Indeed, Hudson operates [inside Israel](#), where it pushes the far-rightist views of the most extreme elements in Israeli society: the settler movement, and the faction of Likud angling for war with Iran. It has also focused its attention on [purging](#) universities of academics who don’t toe the right-wing ultra-nationalist Likudnik line.

More recently, former Hudson president and “trustee emeritus” Max Singer — who has since moved to Israel, where, as a “public policy consultant” at Bar Ilan University, he spends his

time [inciting violence](#) against Palestinians — is on a mission to protect Israel from the [alleged threat](#) posed by the President of the United States.

The Jebson Center has been equally useful to the neocons. Richard H. Schultz, head of Tufts' International Studies program (of which the Center is a part) was [a signatory](#) to the Project for a New American Century's "open letter" to President Bush urging war with Iraq and a number of other Middle Eastern actors in the wake of 9/11. [Here he is](#) recommending the importation of Israeli "anti-terrorist" techniques to pacify the restless natives of Iraq. [Here is another](#) Jebson Center scholar describing alleged terrorist actions engaged in by Iran worldwide. And then there's the testimony of [this guy](#):

"The idea of overthrowing the Iranian government through covert but peaceful means is not original. The project was first brought to my attention in August 2006 when I worked as an intern research assistant at Tufts University's Fletcher School of Diplomacy's Jebson Center for Counter-terrorism. I worked for the then director of the center Brigadier General Russell Howard (Ret.) on a project titled Bringing Down Iran Without Firing A Shot. I wasn't very experienced in the world of covert operations in the field or in the academic realm but I was very interested in becoming involved in it. General Howard, on the other hand, was not only a counter-terrorism strategist but a veteran Special Forces officer, an academic, and a tutor. It was General Howard who introduced me to the idea of targeting factors specific to Iran in order to adapt to the country's specific needs. He had six factors which he believed were important: The military use of ongoing insurgencies within Iran, political strife, economic strife, declining oil revenues, demographics, and deteriorating infrastructure."

Interestingly, in November of 2006, during her tenure at the Jebson Center, Broadwell led a group of Fletcher School students on [a trip to New York City](#) to meet with then Iranian UN representative Javad Zarif. Both are [alumni](#) of the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at the University of Denver.

All this establishes a context that goes far beyond the titillating details of the alleged affair between Petraeus and Broadwell — and this is no doubt what set alarm bells ringing in the intelligence community when it was revealed. Is there really any need to point out the uses of the "[honeypot](#)" in intelligence-gathering and other covert activities regularly engaged in by [spooks](#) of all nations? From [Mata Hari](#) to the [Mossad agent](#) who lured Israeli nuclear scientist Mordechai Vanunu, sex is a time-honored weapon in the war of spy-vs-spy. A secret affair with the CIA Director is the equivalent of the Honeypot Olympics, and we have to ask: was the remarkably fit Ms. Broadwell a lure? If so, she's won a Gold Medal.

Broadwell's actions — sending emails that were bound to be traced back to her — appear to make little sense on the surface. But if the goal of luring a 60-year-old geezer into an affair with a much younger woman was to expose him, and get him fired, then surely her antics succeeded in accomplishing that goal.

So who would have an interest in getting rid of Petraeus? Here's where the Cantor connection comes in. The tip by an anonymous "FBI employee" that wound up in Cantor's office two weeks ago came through [Rep. David Reichert](#), Republican of Washington state, who has a friend who knows the whistleblower. Cantor then spoke to the whistleblower directly, who put him in touch with FBI Director Mueller.

Cantor is a great friend of Israel, and Petraeus — not so much. The General was [attacked](#), as

[you'll recall](#), by partisans of the Lobby, including [Abe Foxman](#), when he delivered [testimony](#) before Congress citing Israel as a strategic liability in the Middle East. As the executor of the new Obamaite policy of sidling up to Islamists, not only in [Libya](#) but also in [Syria](#) and [Egypt](#), Petraeus was no doubt seen by the Israelis as an enemy to be neutralized.

Broadwell's affiliation with the Jebson Center, and the Center's connection to the neoconservative network, sets the scene: a young, attractive woman with impeccable national security credentials throws herself at Petraeus, and he takes the bait. Whether she's been recruited by a foreign intelligence agency at this point or not is irrelevant: he's already put himself in a vulnerable position, and there are any number of actors on the international stage more than willing to press their advantage.

Will we ever know the full story? At this point, the story is so hot that it may burn the cover story — "it's all about sex" — right off the wrapper. Because there's more — a lot more — here than meets the eye. When Cantor [pledged](#) to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that he and his fellow Republicans "will serve as a check on the administration" in regard to the President's policy toward Israel, he was clearly aligning himself with a foreign leader against American interests as perceived by the White House. But would he really go this far — deliberately taking down a key figure, one beloved by Republicans, in order to keep his promise to Netanyahu?

Stay tuned to this space, because this story is moving fast....

Update: This morning [11/12/12] the New York Times [reports](#):

"F.B.I. agents interviewed Ms. Broadwell for the first time the week of Oct. 21, and she acknowledged the affair, a government official briefed on the matter said. She also voluntarily gave the agency her computer. In a search, the agents discovered several classified documents, which raised the additional question of whether Mr. Petraeus had given them to her. She said that he had not. Agents interviewed Mr. Petraeus the following week. He also admitted to the affair but said he had not given any classified documents to her. The agents then interviewed Ms. Broadwell again on Friday, Nov. 2, the official said."

Bingo!

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