

Petraeus Scandal Widens

U.S. General Now Involved Due To 'Flirtatious' Emails

BY PAULINE JELINEK AND NANCY BENAC
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The sex scandal that felled CIA Director David Petraeus widened Tuesday to ensnare the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, Gen. John Allen, in a suddenly public drama involving a Tampa socialite, a jealous rival, a twin sister in a messy custody dispute and flirty emails.

The improbable story — by turns tragic and silly — could have major consequences, unfolding at a critical time in the Afghan war effort and just as President Barack Obama was hoping for a smooth transition in his national security team.

Obama put a hold on the nomination of Afghan war chief Allen to become the next commander of U.S. European Command as well as the NATO supreme allied commander in Europe after investigators uncovered 20,000-plus pages of documents and emails that involved Allen and Tampa socialite Jill Kelley. Some of the material was characterized as "flirtatious."

Allen, 58, insisted he'd done nothing wrong and worked to save his imperiled career.

Kelley, 37, who had worked herself into the center of the military social scene in Florida without having any official role, emerged as a central figure in the still-unfolding story that has embroiled two of the nation's most influential and respected military leaders.

Known as a close friend of retired Gen. Petraeus, Kelley triggered the FBI investigation that led to his downfall as CIA director when she complained about getting anonymous, harassing emails. They turned out to have been written by Petraeus' mistress, Paula Broadwell, who apparently was jealous of the attention the general paid to Kelley. Petraeus acknowledged the affair and resigned Friday.

In the course of looking into that situation, federal investigators came across what a Pentagon official called "inappropriate communications" between Allen and Kelley, both of them married.

According to one senior U.S. official, the emails between Allen and Kelley were not sexu-



In this file photo dated January 30, 2010, Natalie Khawam, from left; Gen. David Petraeus; Scott and Jill Kelley; and Holly Petraeus watch the Gasparilla parade in a Tampa, Florida.

ally explicit or seductive but included pet names such as "sweetheart" or "dear." The official said that while much of the communication — including some from Allen to Kelley — is relatively innocuous, some could be construed as unprofessional and would cause a reasonable person to take notice.

That official, as well as others who described the investigation, requested anonymity on grounds that they were not authorized to discuss the situation publicly.

The FBI decided to turn over the Allen information to the military once the bureau recognized it contained no evidence of a federal crime, according to a federal law enforcement official, who was not authorized to discuss the matter on the record and demanded anonymity. Adultery, however, is a crime under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

A senior defense official said that the FBI first notified the Pentagon of the Allen matter at 4:15 p.m. EST on Sunday. The Pentagon's top lawyer, Jeh Johnson, then called Defense Secretary Leon Panetta's chief of staff, Jeremy Bash, about 5 p.m. as Bash and Panetta were flying to Honolulu aboard a military jet to begin a week-long Asia trip. Bash then informed Panetta.

Allen was not suspended from his military position, even though his nomination for promotion is on hold. The White House will soon be deciding how many troops will remain in Afghanistan — and for what purposes — after the U.S.-led combat operation ends in 2014. Allen has provided his recommendations to the White House and is key to those discussions.

Still more subplots in the story emerged Tuesday with news that both Allen and Petraeus wrote letters last September on behalf of Jill Kelley's twin sister, Natalie Khawam, in a messy custody dispute. In 2011, a judge had denied Khawam custody of her 3-year-old son, saying she "appears to lack any appreciation or respect for the importance of honesty and integrity in her interactions with her family, employers and others with whom she comes in contact."

Allen, in his letter, wrote of Khawam's "maturity, integrity and steadfast commitment to raising her child." Petraeus wrote that he'd been host for the Kelley family and Khawam and her son for Christmas dinner, and he described a loving relationship with her son. That also indicated how close the Petraeus and Kelley families had been.

France 1st In West To Recognize Syrian Group

BEIRUT (AP) — France on Tuesday became the first Western country to formally recognize Syria's newly formed opposition coalition as the sole legitimate representative of the Syrian people.

The U.S. also recognized the leadership body announced in Qatar Sunday as a legitimate representative, but stopped short of describing it as the "sole" one, saying the group must first demonstrate its ability to represent Syrians inside the country.

The two announcements could start a trend toward world recognition of the rebels as the legitimate government of Syria, undercutting whatever legitimacy the regime of President Bashar Assad still has after 20 months of a bloody civil war.

"We look forward to supporting the national coalition as it charts a course for the end of Assad's bloody rule, and marks the start, we believe, of a peaceful just and democratic future for the people of Syria," said U.S. State Department spokesman Mark Toner in Washington.

Under intense international pressure to form an opposition that includes representatives from the country's disparate factions fighting to topple President Bashar Assad, the anti-government groups struck a deal Sunday in Doha, Qatar, to form a coalition headed by former Muslim preacher Mouaz al-Khatib.

Attorneys Wrap Up Hearing In Afghan Massacre

JOINT BASE LEWIS-McCHORD, Wash. (AP) — Army prosecutors on Tuesday asked an investigative officer to recommend a death penalty court-martial for a staff sergeant accused of killing 16 Afghan villagers in a predawn rampage, saying that Staff Sgt. Robert Bales committed "heinous and despicable crimes."

Prosecutors made their closing arguments after a week of testimony in the preliminary hearing. Prosecutors say Bales, 39, slipped away from his remote base at Camp Belambay in southern Afghanistan to attack two villages early on March 11. Among the dead were nine children.

The slayings drew such angry protests that the U.S. temporarily halted combat operations in Afghanistan, and it was three weeks before American investigators could reach the crime scenes.

"Terrible, terrible things happened," said prosecutor, Maj. Rob Stelle. "That is clear."

Stelle cited statements Bales made after he was apprehended, saying that they demonstrated "a clear memory of what he had done, and consciousness of wrong-doing."

Bishop: We Won't Comply With Obama Rule

BALTIMORE (AP) — A top American bishop said Tuesday the Roman Catholic church will not comply with the Obama administration requirement that most employers provide health insurance covering birth control.

New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said church leaders are open to working toward a resolution with federal officials, but will meanwhile press ahead with challenges to the mandate in legislatures and in court.

"The only thing we're certainly not prepared to do is give in. We're not violating our consciences," Dolan told reporters at a national bishops' meeting. "I would say no door is closed except for the door to capitulation."

The bishops have been fighting the regulation since it was announced by President Barack Obama early this year. Houses of worship are exempt, but religiously affiliated hospitals, charities and colleges are not.

Obama promised to change the requirement so that insurance companies, not faith-affiliated employers, would pay for the coverage. But details have not been worked out. And not only the bishops, but Catholic hospitals and some other religious leaders generally supportive of Obama's health care overhaul have said the compromise proposed so far appears to be unworkable.

Bears, Farmers, Fiscal Cliff On Congress' List

WASHINGTON (AP) — Bears and budgets top the list as Congress returned Tuesday from a seven-week election break to a long list of unfinished business.

Looming large in the lame-duck session is the urgent need for President Barack Obama and Congress to figure out how to avoid the double economic hit of tax increases and automatic spending cuts to defense and domestic programs that kick in after Jan. 1. Those high-stakes negotiations could take weeks and the issue may not be resolved by year's end.

In the interim, Democrats and Republicans are picking up where they left off on several bills while welcoming the newest members — 12 in the Senate and some 70 in the House — for Congress' version of freshmen orientation.

The Senate has scheduled an early evening procedural vote Tuesday for a sportsmen's bill that will decide the fate of 41 polar bear carcasses that hunters want to bring home from Canada as big-game trophies. Hunters killed the bears just before a 2008 ban on polar bear trophy imports took effect, but were not able to bring them home before the Fish and Wildlife Services listed them as a threatened species.

The House on Tuesday is expected to pass and send to the president legislation that would exclude U.S. airlines from the requirements on emissions that the European Union has sought to impose on all planes flying to and from the European continent.

Obama's Challenge Deepens With Security Team

BY BEN FELLER
AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON — Barely a week after winning re-election, President Barack Obama suddenly confronts a deepening challenge in assembling a new national security team, his task complicated by a scandal that has cost him a CIA chief and raised doubts about his Afghanistan war commander.

Hard questions from Congress, potentially bitter confirmation hearings and a scandal of infidelity and inappropriate emails are suddenly shaping the fight ahead. The White House portrayed a president focused on the economy and confident in his military and intelligence leadership, but clearly not thrilled.

When asked if the personnel troubles were an unwelcome distraction, presidential spokesman Jay Carney said: "I certainly wouldn't call it welcome."

Obama was already expecting to have to replace his chief diplomat, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, and perhaps his defense secretary, Leon Panetta. Those two alone — plus Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner, who is also leaving — help shape Obama's thinking and represent him before the world.

Now Obama is without his CIA director, David Petraeus, the once acclaimed military general in Iraq and Afghanistan who resigned in disgrace last week over an extramarital affair.

The details of that scandal keep expanding Tuesday, including the revelation that the top



OLIVIER DOULIERY/ABACA PRESS/MCT
Michael Morell, acting director of the CIA, arrives at a closed briefing Tuesday, November 13, 2012, in Washington, D.C., concerning the attacks on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi.

U.S. commander in Afghanistan, Gen. John Allen, is under investigation by the Pentagon for potentially inappropriate communications with another woman in the case. That, in turn, has frozen Allen's nomination to be the next commander of U.S. European Command and the commander of NATO forces in Europe, which casts more doubt about a military leadership in which each move affects another.

"It's a hard moment for the administration," said Joshua Rovner, an associate professor of strategy and policy at the U.S. Naval War College in Rhode Island. "It certainly wasn't expected, but if anything good comes out of it, they do have a chance to take a long, hard look at strategy."

He noted that Petraeus had taken on such revered status for his military career that he won

confirmation as CIA chief with little scrutiny.

Even beyond the surprise difficulties, Obama could have trouble with the rest of his high-stakes turnover.

When Clinton leaves, a favorite to replace her is Susan Rice, an Obama loyalist who serves as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. She could face a bruising confirmation hearing given that she was the first face of the administration's maligned explanation of the fatal attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya.

"She's clearly going to have a little more difficult time than she would have if she hadn't gone out on all those talk shows," said Sen. Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., the second-ranking Senate Republican. Kyl is retiring at year's end and likely would not get a vote on Rice, but

he said: "As of right now, I wouldn't support her."

Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., said Rice could have a difficult time winning confirmation, although he didn't take a position.

"I'm concerned about the fact that she went on Sunday shows and said it was the product of a spontaneous uprising as opposed to a terrorist attack. Why did they wait so long to publicly ... change their position on it? I think she'd have to answer questions about that, no doubt about it."

Some of Rice's key advocates predict Republican lawmakers would not have the inclination or the votes to try to block Obama from appointing the State Department chief he wants. Yet others expect her confirmation hearing to be contentious and are wary of picking that fight at the start of the second term.

Some Democrats:

Drive Over 'Fiscal Cliff,' Then Bargain

BY ANDREW TAYLOR
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Some Democrats are pushing an unorthodox idea for coping with the "fiscal cliff": Let the government go over, temporarily at least, to give their party more bargaining leverage for changes later on.

The idea has plenty of skeptics, and the White House regards it frostily. But it illustrates the wide range of early negotiating positions being staked out by Republicans and Democrats as lawmakers gathered Tuesday for their first post-election talks on how to avoid the looming package of steep tax hikes and program cuts.

Just as brazen, in the eyes of many Democrats, is the GOP leaders' continued insistence on protecting tax cuts for the rich. President Barack Obama just won re-election, campaigning on a vow to end those breaks.

Democrats and Republicans appear heading toward another round of brinkmanship that will test who blinks first on questions of major

importance. It's a dance that has infuriated many Americans, shaken financial markets and drawn ridicule from foreign commentators.

In late 2010, after big GOP midterm election wins, Obama backed off his pledge to raise taxes on the rich. In the summer of 2011, House Republicans pushed Congress within a hair of refusing to raise the debt ceiling, leading to the first-ever downgrade of the government's credit rating. And last December, it was the Republicans' turn to blink, yielding to Obama's demand to extend a payroll tax break.

The "fiscal cliff" deadline comes in seven weeks. One provision: Unless Congress acts, all Bush-era tax cuts would expire, raising 2013 tax bills for most Americans. Obama wants to end those tax cuts only for households making more than \$250,000 a year. Republicans insist on no tax rate increases anywhere.

If the "fiscal cliff" takes effect, congressional Republicans would feel pressure to give ground in several areas to achieve their top goal: restoring tax cuts for as many peo-

ple as possible. That's why Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., and other Democrats have said their party's leaders should seriously consider letting the Jan. 1 deadline pass and then negotiate with Republicans under sharply different circumstances. Some or most of any new agreements could be made retroactive to Jan. 1, they say.

If Republicans refuse to let tax cuts expire for the wealthy, Murray told ABC's "This Week," "we will reach a point at the end of this year where all the tax cuts expire and we'll start over next year. And whatever we do will be a tax cut for whatever package we put together. That may be the way to get past this."

Murray's allies say voters would blame Republicans for refusing to yield, especially on tax rates, given that Obama won re-election. A recent Pew Research poll supports that view. More than half of the respondents said they would chiefly blame congressional Republicans if there's no compromise on the fiscal cliff; 29 percent would blame Obama.



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