

The Other Moral Squalor of U.S. Militarism

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With at least [five](#) top U.S. generals currently in the media spotlight for corruption, abuse of power, sexual assault, and now the adultery commotion around General David Petraeus, now ex-CIA director, it is a relief to see militainment go in reverse. Now all of the media entertainment involving the icons of the media-military complex is about salacious, sordid, undignified, and even hilarious plots and sexual intrigues. On one level, this is a major distraction from [the stories that are being obscured](#), including the likelihood of a far more scandalous and illegal continuation of [CIA secret detentions](#), supposedly banned by Obama, and allegedly the cause of the attacks in Benghazi that at least establish some credible motive. On another level, however, one wishes that the continued flurry of reports of secret emails, shirtless FBI agents hoping to score with some snooty militarist groupie, a dopish sophomore with her indelicately titled “biography” (*All In*—clearly an inside joke that made it to the cover of a book), would all continue to swirl: for once, militainment is not about prowess, heroism, courage, honour, sacrifice, and all of the other cloying attributes routinely ascribed to these “military heroes”. The cult-like romance of the mainstream media with military leadership has been nothing short of what one would expect under a fascist military dictatorship, and at some point, enough had to be enough even for the media’s altar boys. For us, this is a repeat of the scandals we spotlighted, and abundantly mocked, that came out of the U.S. Army’s Human Terrain System, writ large. As the saying goes, a fish rots from the head down, and there are an awful lot of rotten heads in the U.S. military.

Even while using polite terms of minimization in speaking of “missteps,” a corporate media outlet like ABC is now forced to [state the obvious](#): “The culture of military misconduct starts at the top”. Referring to the five generals currently under investigation, ABC adds that this is, “a startling run of embarrassment for a military whose stock among Americans rose so high during a decade of war that its leaders seemed almost untouchable”. Even a short while ago, one would not have expected an ABC report that posed the problem in this manner: “Do the generals suffer from arrogance and entitlement, borne from years in a military culture that endows them with unquestioned respect, even reverence? Are they so dazzled by their own standing that they become blind to their moral code?”

Added to corporate and political elites, military commanders are now shown as ranking among the top 1%. The unbearable sanctimony and pious deference shown to figures in military uniforms, a sickening submission to authority always verging on tears with a quivering “thank you for your service,” had to come to an end sooner or later. This is not the end yet, but it is the beginning of the end, and it clearly started when some of the recent releases from the Hollywood militainment industry produced box office flops, and became clearer when the minds of voters finally turned to the emptying of their own stomachs, the loss of roofs over their heads, and the inability to find employment.

In what I have read so far, the most scathing and convincing critique has come from, yet again, [Michael Hastings](#). In his latest piece, "[The Sins of General David Petraeus](#)," Hastings speaks of the fraud perpetrated for many years by Petraeus, the outright deception, and the creation of a false image, quoting Petraeus himself on the art of perception management. In memorable terms Hastings lambasted the submissiveness inspired by the media:

Until this weekend, Petraeus had been incredibly successful in making the public think he was a man of great integrity and honor, among other things. Most of the stories written about him fall under what we hacks in the media like to call "a blow job." Vanity Fair. The New Yorker. The New York Times. The Washington Post. Time. Newsweek. In total, all the profiles, stage-managed and controlled by the Pentagon's multimillion dollar public relations apparatus, built up an unrealistic and superhuman myth around the general that, in the end, did not do Petraeus or the public any favors. Ironically, despite all the media fellating, our esteemed and sex-obsessed press somehow missed the actual blow job.

Hastings is not without his ambiguities and contradictions—moving from calling Petraeus "a world-class bullshit artist" to admitting that he won Hastings' respect and admiration. In an otherwise great slam on CNN (see below), Hastings still felt the need to thank the troops for their service. Let's hope that his recovery continues to progress.

So far the most productive outcome of this soap opera-like saga has been this newly prominent questioning of the mass mediated adoration of the killer clowns in combat fatigues. For over a decade that the war in Afghanistan has lasted, here in Canada with the majority consistently opposing the war, we have never seen anti-war activists featured in the mainstream media, including the publicly funded CBC which imposed the usual roster of right-wing pundits, think tank meat sacks, military officers posing as objective sources, and incredibly dim political insiders. The war was never popular, but you would never guess that from the media coverage. In the U.S., here is Hastings instead, who also takes long overdue aim at CNN's own Pentagon drone, Barbara Starr, an absolutely gutless repeater of the Pentagon line that should never have been allowed to set foot even in a Disney mock-up of a news room such as CNN.

As for the women at the centre of this saga: please continue. Apart from getting those you lionized fired, you have done so much to advance the demolition of their credibility.

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