

Top US Generals Blatantly Lied About Afghanistan and Iraq Wars to Advance Their Careers

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*According to the Pentagon’s [annual reports](#) on military justice, there have been more than 1.3 million cases of discipline in the U.S. military since 2001, mostly relating to the so-called “War on Terror.” But as [The Intercept](#) highlighted, the generals who misled Congress and the American public about the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have not only avoided repercussions after conducting a disinformation campaign for 20 years, but were instead rewarded for their deceptively positive assessments. “When they retired with generous military pensions, they landed high-paying jobs on corporate boards, further profiting from their disingenuousness,” Peter Maass wrote in *The Intercept*.*

Following the terrorist attacks against the U.S. on September 11, 2001, then president George W. Bush took his country into destructive wars against Afghanistan and Iraq. What also followed the 9/11 attacks was an outpouring of ignorance, racism and violence against supposedly Muslim-appearing Americans. This even culminated in the murder of Indian-born Balbir Singh Sodhi, a Sikh, by 43-year-old Frank Silva Roque who during his arrest shouted slogans like “I am a patriot!”, “I stand for America all the way!” and “I wish that my punishment would be sending me to Afghanistan with a lot of [expletive] weapons.” Sodhi’s murder is considered the first post-9/11 backlash against non-Christian America.

However, Roque’s actions and calls to fight in Afghanistan was not in isolation, and in fact, many Americans with similar extremism joined the military. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq saw entire infrastructures destroyed, hundreds of thousands of civilians killed, millions of refugees, and over \$6 trillion of American taxpayer money wasted. Much of this devastation was caused by American soldiers, often with impunity. In fact, the Americans were not alone in such war crimes, with many British, Australian and other soldiers from partnered countries responsible for murder, rape, extortion and theft in Afghanistan and Iraq.

What is most concerning though is that the upper echelons of the U.S. military had little to no concern for the war crimes perpetrated by NATO forces. Instead, they focused on creating a narrative, portraying the situation in Afghanistan and Iraq as constantly

improving. Journalist Craig Whitlock's new book, "[The Afghanistan Papers](#)," provides evidence that military leaders knew the war in Afghanistan was failing but lied about it. Colonel Bob Crowley claims in the book that "every data point was altered to present the best picture possible" and Whitlock described the military's positive assessments as "unwarranted and baseless" that "amounted to a disinformation campaign."

The main question is why the top military leaders were adamant in their claims that the war situation in Afghanistan and Iraq was improving. It can be suggested that their lies about the situation in Afghanistan and Iraq was motivated by self-interest to advance their own careers and capital. They were certainly not going to allow the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as over 1.3 million cases of ill-discipline in the military, including rape, torture and murder, ruin their prospects.

Take for example the current U.S. Secretary of Defense, Lloyd Austin. During the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Austin was the assistant commander of the 3rd Infantry Division. The Intercept recounts an exchange in May 2013, just weeks after the U.S. captured Baghdad, between Austin and Dathar Khashab, director of the Daura oil refinery. No matter about Khashab's insistence that Baghdad was more crime-ridden under U.S. occupation than under Saddam Hussein's rule, Austin could only say that "two months ago was a brutal dictator who killed thousands of people."

Austin, who from the very beginning of Iraq's occupation insisted everything was fine, eventually became the commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, then took charge of Central Command that covers all operations in the Middle East, retired with a \$15,000 a month pension, and then joined several corporate boards, including the board of directors of United Technologies Corporation, the military contractor that merged with Raytheon in 2020. With these corporate gigs, he became a multimillionaire with a \$2.6 million mansion that boasts seven bedrooms, a five-car garage, two kitchens and a pool house in the Washington D.C. area.

Along with Austin was also David Petraeus, who at the start of the Iraq War was a major general. But as The Intercept author recounts, "Petraeus was doing what pretty much every general who served in Iraq and Afghanistan would do, stringing together any data he could find that would masquerade as a narrative of success. The statistics on his PowerPoint were vintage Vietnam — find big numbers and call them victory."

In 2007, Petraeus was named the commander of U.S. forces in Iraq and hailed as a savior. He then went on to command U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan from 2010 to 2011. Although Petraeus assured Congress in 2011 that the situation in Afghanistan was improving, Whitlock's book notes that "military officers in the field knew the blizzard of numbers meant nothing."

One of Petraeus' advisers in Afghanistan, Sarah Chayes, recalled how she suggested ideas to stem corruption in the U.S.-backed government in Kabul, but none of those plans were ever implemented. "I responded to request after request from Petraeus until I realized that he had no intention of acting on my recommendations; it was just make-work," [she wrote](#).

In late 2011, Petraeus then headed the CIA, but in 2012 was caught sharing highly classified information with his girlfriend and resigned, avoiding felony charges and lengthy prison sentences that haunt the likes of Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden. Following the CIA,

Petraeus was rewarded with a lucrative partnership at the private equity giant KKR, securing his wealth in his retirement years.

Effectively, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have been allowed to drag on for the second decade because those at the very top of the U.S. military were more concerned about advancing their own careers. By doing so, the U.S. unleashed thousands of soldiers with similar thinking to Frank Silva Roque that wanted to exact revenge on those they held responsible for the 9/11 attacks, thus resulting in countless NATO war crimes against innocent civilians.

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