



McChrystal Fired as Top U.S. Commander in Afghanistan: Petraeus Tapped to Take Over

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President Obama removed Gen. Stanley McChrystal on June 23 from his position as top war commander in Afghanistan following disparaging remarks the general made in a *Rolling Stone* article.

In the article, headlined "The Runaway General," McChrystal strongly criticized Obama, Vice President Joe Biden and other members of the Obama administration.

Obama nominated Gen. David Petraeus to succeed McChrystal as top U.S. military commander in Afghanistan, pending confirmation of the nomination by the Senate.

"I welcome debate among my team, but I won't tolerate division," said Obama in a news conference at the White House. "I say to the American people, this is a change in personnel, not in policy."

McChrystal faced possible legal ramifications from the interview. Article 88 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice states that any commissioned officer who uses contemptuous words against the president, as well as the vice president, may be punished by court-martial.

"It is well within the President's rights as Commander-in-Chief to enforce this Article and make Gen. McChrystal's statements an example of reprehensible actions to take at any time, especially during a time of heightened military action," military defense lawyer Michael Aniton said in a news release issued by the law firm Tully Rinckey PLLC Military Law.

The 55-year-old general, who was appointed by Obama last year to run the war in Afghanistan, has made headlines before. He earned the president's ire last fall after saying that Biden is "shortsighted," and that his counterterrorism strategy would lead to a state of "Chaos-istan."

When the *Rolling Stone* article surfaced, White House spokesman Robert Gibbs initially said Obama was leaving open the option of firing McChrystal, but would not react hastily. Obama later said he made his decision after meeting with the general.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai advised Obama against replacing McChrystal in the middle of the war against terrorism.

"The president believes that we're in a sensitive juncture in our partnership, in our war on terror, in the process of bringing peace and stability to Afghanistan and that any gap in this process will not be helpful," Karzai spokesman Waheed Omar told the Agence France-Presse wire service. "General Stanley McChrystal is a very important part of this process and we hope that he continues to partner with the Afghan government and others in Afghanistan to achieve the goal that we have set together."

But the current war in Afghanistan is bigger than any one person, Obama countered, asking the Senate to "act as swiftly as possible" in confirming Petraeus' new position.