

RELEASE IN PART  
B6

**From:** sbwhoeop [redacted]  
**Sent:** Saturday, February 13, 2010 10:36 AM  
**To:** H  
**Subject:** Re: also...

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Clemons posted this piece on his dinner with Petraeus, (it's replete with a lot of punditry), but he told me more detail about his attitude and interest. Among other things, Petraeus recounted a joke about Gates' speech at the Alfalfa Club dinner that Petraeus couldn't be there because he was in Iowa. Petraeus didn't tell that story to disdain the possibility. He smiled and watched closely for reaction from others. S

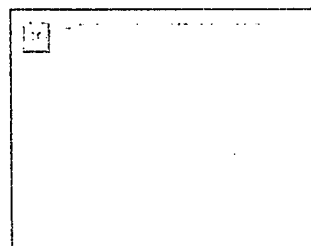
February 13, 2010



## Steve Clemons

Publisher of "The Washington Note"

## Pondering David Petraeus' Future: Running for VP?



I recently had the opportunity to participate in a small dinner with CENTCOM Commander General David Petraeus and his wife Holly. These sorts of discussions are nearly always off the record -- but the fact that they happened is not off limits.

Petraeus was not in uniform but rather wore what looked to me to be a brand new, perfectly tailored dark suit. I joked to him that if I Twittered that out of two dozen or so times I had seen Petraeus that this was the first time I'd seen him out of uniform, an ice cold shudder of fear would spread quickly through some political circles in DC.

In August of 2007, I wrote a piece stating that folks should keep an eye out for the possibility that General Petraeus might run for President in 2012. In April 2008, Steven Lee Myers wrote a solid *New York Times* follow up titled "The Political General!" referencing my earlier take.

Recently, legendary newsman Arnaud de Borchgrave resuscitated the topic of an Eisenhoweresque future for the counterinsurgency guru in his piece, "President Petraeus?"

Petraeus was recently named as one of *Foreign Policy* magazine's top 100 global thinkers, and as *U.S. News & World Report's* "Washington Whispers" notes, he is going to be speaking in May 2010 at the annual American Enterprise Institute dinner receiving the Irving Kristol Award.

In January 2010, Public Policy Polling revealed that while Obama held a ten point lead over a potential wild card race against Petraeus, the General had some strengths. But the pollsters also noted that many in the American public just didn't know enough yet about Petraeus to form an opinion:

Finally our blog readers voted for David Petraeus as our wild card Republican this month and his numbers come out as a mixed bag. He has the largest deficit against Obama, trailing 44-34. But at +13 his net favorability is better than the President or any of the other Republicans we tested. The problem for

him is that the numbers break down 25/12- 63% of voters in the country don't know enough about him to have formed an opinion. Who knows if Petraeus would actually have any interest in going into politics, but if he did he would be introducing himself to many voters for the first time.

President Obama himself, according to what some of his aides have reported to me, is quite taken with David Petraeus and respects his approach and thinking.

Petraeus has also been respectful of the President -- although when pushed at a recent forum about how he might react to a Presidential decision on Afghanistan that the General might not have liked, Petraeus offered a cryptic rather than clear response. (see above video)

At the "First Draft of History" meeting sponsored by the *Atlantic Monthly*/Atlantic Media Group, the Newseum, and the Aspen Institute, Petraeus when asked if he would support the President no matter what the result of the strategic review on Afghanistan responded that he "would continue to give the President the best professional military advice he could." Contrast that with Defense Secretary Robert Gates responding to the same question, "We will salute and execute [the President's] decisions faithfully and to the best of our ability."

But after spending an evening with General Petraeus and watching him closely for a number of years, there is no way that this intelligent leader -- with whom I have some disagreements but respect -- could be comfortable with the Tea Party takeover of the Republican political machine.

There is always the possibility that a core of reasonable Republicans like Michael Bloomberg, James Baker, Olympia Snowe, Chuck Hagel, Alan Simpson, John Whitehead, Peter Peterson, Rita Hauser and others will try to rekindle classic Republican sensibilities by fighting to re-hijack their party back in an Eisenhower-like campaign with Petraeus at the lead. Remember that Eisenhower clinched the Republican nomination by promising to be the President who though he knew war would end the Korean War. Petraeus knows Afghanistan and Iraq -- and though it seems hard to envision today could be the kind of leader promising to end those wars if Obama proves unable to do so.

But there is another option that intrigues me and seems more realistic than imagining the iconic David Petraeus running for President -- and that is his running for Vice President.

I think Vice President Joe Biden has done an outstanding job and of all the big guns in the Obama White House, Biden has done the best job of outperforming expectations. He had given President Obama much needed counsel, not always taken regrettably, but counsel that Obama needed to show the American public he was getting. Biden has been the key agent behind the scenes in moving Iraq's elections forward. He has scored a lot of wins -- not reported -- in the nuclear/WMD controls arena. Biden has worked with Gates in stabilizing an awkward and complex relationship with Russia -- and his counterpoints on the Afghanistan surge, in my view, remain compelling.

But Biden is going to have to find a way to hold his spot in 2012 because others are going to be gunning for it.

As I look at it now, Hillary Clinton who has now said that she will not do more than one term as Secretary of State would be a natural candidate for the Obama VP slot. Her franchise is not completely in the control of the Obama team yet, but moving Hillary closer to the White House (although her private home on Whitehaven Street is actually a couple of hundred feet closer to the White House than the VP residence at the Naval Observatory) would finalize Obama's takeover of all the key political franchises in the Democratic Party -- starting with Daley's machine, Daschle's machine, Kennedy's machine, Edwards' machine, and then the Clintons'.

But General David Petraeus, in his business suit, lurks out there. Obama seems to be concerned about looking like he is weak on national security. The Republicans -- at Cheney's constant goading (and now Sarah Palin's) -- seem to want to continue to play politics through fear-mongering.

Obama could neutralize the possibility that he faces a Republican party challenge by David Petraeus by inviting the General on to the 2012 ticket as a Democrat.

Crazy? Perhaps.

But inviting potential rivals into his tent is becoming a standard Obama trademark -- much as he did by appointing Republican Governor of Utah and former G.W. Bush administration Deputy US Trade Representative Jon Huntsman, Jr. to serve as US Ambassador to the People's Republic of China.

And get this, we have just learned that David Petraeus has not voted since 2002 -- not because he doesn't care to vote -- but reportedly because he wants to keep his eventual political options and political loyalties open.

This is a soldier for whom all options are on the table and who is keeping his powder dry.

My hunch is that whether Obama sticks with Vice President Biden or pivots to someone else, Petraeus will be on the short list of those considered.

-- Steve Clemons publishes the popular political blog, [The Washington Note](#).

-----Original Message-----

From: H <HDR22@clintonemail.com>

To: 'sbwhoep( )' <sbwhoep( )>

Sent: Sat, Feb 13, 2010 10:29 am

Subject: Re: also...

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Pls be sure you send me the next article about Podesta from Clemons. And will he write about Petraeus?

----- Original Message -----

From: sbwhoep [redacted] <sbwhoep [redacted]>

To: H

Sent: Sat Feb 13 10:24:53 2010

Subject: also...

H: Steve Clemons called me last night to talk about this, which he's just posted on his website. Ed Luce of the FT of course told him. Also, Clemons had dinner this week with Petraeus, who freely talked about running for president. Sid

John Podesta on Obama team. I am hearing that Financial Times Washington Bureau Chief Edward Luce <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward\\_Luce](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Luce)> has a pretty significant interview with Center for American Progress President and former White House Chief of Staff John Podesta <<http://www.americanprogress.org/experts/PodestaJohn.html>>

coming out on Monday. Luce recently did a video interview with Senator John

McCain <[http://www.ft.com/cms/1644d08e-f450-11dc-aaad-0000779fd2ac.html?i\\_referralObject=14346013&fromSearch=n](http://www.ft.com/cms/1644d08e-f450-11dc-aaad-0000779fd2ac.html?i_referralObject=14346013&fromSearch=n)>

. One source tells me that Podesta "goes farther" in his critique of the Obama team than his already pretty direct comments in Luce's recent survey

<[http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/b6b4700a-10fb-11df-9a9e-00144feab49a.html?nclick\\_check=1](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/b6b4700a-10fb-11df-9a9e-00144feab49a.html?nclick_check=1)>

of the Obama White House's inner workings.

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