

WIN ONE FOR DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

In his statement announcing the firing (technically, acceptance of resignation) of Stanley McChrystal and McChrystal's replacement with David Petraeus, Obama emphasized the importance of chain of command and civilian control of the military.

War is bigger than any one man or woman, whether a Private, a General, or a President. As difficult as it is to lose General McChrystal, I believe it is the right decision for our national security. The conduct represented in the recently published article does not meet the standard that should be set by a commanding General. It undermines the civilian control of the military that is at the core of our democratic system. And it erodes the trust that's necessary for our team to work together to achieve our objectives in Afghanistan. My multiple responsibilities as Commander in Chief led me to this decision. First, I have a responsibility to the extraordinary men and women who are fighting this war and to the democratic institutions that I've been elected to lead. I've got no greater honor than serving as Commander in Chief of our men and women in uniform. And it is my duty to ensure that no diversion complicates the vital mission that they are carrying out. That includes adherence to a strict code of conduct. The strength and greatness of our military is rooted in the fact that this code applies equally to newly enlisted Privates and to the General Office who commands them. That allows us to come together as one. That is part of the reason why America has

the finest fighting force in the history of the world. It is also true that our democracy depends on institutions that are stronger than individuals. That includes strict adherence to the military chain of command and respect for civilian control over that chain of command. And that's why as Commander in Chief I believe this decision is necessary to hold ourselves accountable to standards that are at the core of our democracy. [my emphasis]

While I recognize that David Petraeus' selection represents a continuation of the same policy in Afghanistan, and while I don't agree with the overall conduct of the war in Afghanistan, I believe Obama made the correct decision with regards to Stanley McChrystal and said precisely the right things about why he had to fire McChrystal.

Now if only we could see the same respect for America's democratic institutions elsewhere in the Obama Administration.