

## Stanley McChrystal, a Top General Fired Over Insults to Biden, Says He'll Vote for Him

Fired after an article portrayed him and senior aides as disrespectful of Obama administration officials, General McChrystal added a coda to the story: He endorsed Joe Biden to be the next commander in chief.



By Helene Cooper

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WASHINGTON — On the day it was published in the summer of 2010, the Rolling Stone article electrified Washington in a way that almost seems quaint by today's news standards: The commander of American troops in Afghanistan, Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, and his aides were quoted privately mocking several government officials. One McChrystal aide referred to Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. using the phrase “bite me.”

An angry President Barack Obama promptly fired the general, putting an end to a storied career that had included running the military's most secretive Special Operations missions and the American-led war effort in Afghanistan.

On Thursday, General McChrystal added a coda to the story: He endorsed Mr. Biden, now the Democratic presidential candidate, not President Trump, to be the country's next commander in chief.

“I worked most closely with President Obama and Vice President Biden when I commanded in Afghanistan,” the general told Joe Scarborough on MSNBC's “Morning Joe.”

“They didn't see everything the way I did,” he added. “But in every instance, they listened. In every instance, they took in my view. In every instance, I felt that they were trying to make the best decision based on all the information they had, and based on a bedrock of values.”

The Biden campaign immediately embraced General McChrystal's statement.

“Vice President Biden is honored by General McChrystal's endorsement,” said Andrew Bates, the campaign's spokesman. “And he couldn't agree more that the next commander in chief must ‘respect people who serve and have served’ and be ‘someone that you can trust’ — which would be a decisive break from Donald Trump, the most dishonest president in American history and the only one to have utterly disgraced himself by calling veterans and the fallen ‘losers and suckers.’”

Mr. Trump has disputed a report in The Atlantic that he privately used those words in referring to American soldiers killed in combat.

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To say that Mr. Biden and General McChrystal had policy differences is like saying that oil and water occasionally did not mix.

In 2009, General McChrystal and the Pentagon leadership, then backed by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, fiercely battled Mr. Biden over whether to ramp up the Afghanistan war effort and send tens of thousands more American troops to engage in a counterinsurgency strategy meant to rout the Taliban and create conditions they said were necessary for the Afghan government to stabilize the country.

Mr. Biden, for his part, expressed skepticism that the effort was worth that much more American blood and treasure. He pushed for a more streamlined counterterrorism strategy that would have seen fewer troops going to Afghanistan.

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General McChrystal won the debate, and Mr. Obama in late 2009 approved speeding 30,000 additional troops to Afghanistan to reverse Taliban gains in the country, to better protect the Afghan people and to increase the pressure on Afghanistan to build its own military capacity and a more effective government.

But not long after, the general lost his part in the war after he allowed a Rolling Stone magazine writer to accompany him to Paris. The resulting article painted scenes of the general's aides drunk at the Irish bar Kitty O'Shea's and, along with their boss, mocking Mr. Biden, among other administration officials. The article did not directly quote the general as saying anything overtly insubordinate.

Two days after the article was published, General McChrystal was out.

On Thursday, General McChrystal said disagreements between people who respect each other are healthy for a democracy — and, in any case, he said that Mr. Biden would be better for the country than Mr. Trump.

“You have to believe your commander in chief, at the end of the day, is someone you can trust,” General McChrystal said. “And I can trust Joe Biden.”

Katie Glueck contributed reporting from Latrobe, Pa.