

# New details show how 'swinger' Army general's double life cost him his career

[Tom Vanden Brook](#), USA TODAY 4:04 p.m. EDT August 24, 2016



*(Photo: Army)*

WASHINGTON — Army Maj. Gen. David Haight, Army Ranger, decorated combat veteran and family man, held a key post in Europe this spring and a future with three, maybe four stars.

He also led a double life: an 11-year affair and a “swinger lifestyle” of swapping sexual partners that put him at risk of blackmail and espionage, according to interviews and documents. Jennifer Armstrong, 49, a government employee, said she and Haight had been involved in the torrid love affair that began more than 10 years ago in Baghdad and ended this spring.

Badly.

His secret discovered, Haight was investigated by the Army inspector general, who issued a report in April, and fired in May from his job running operations and plans at U.S. European Command, the Pentagon’s front-line bulwark against Russia. The Army hauled him back to Washington, reprimanded him based on an internal investigation and put him a placeholder job awaiting retirement. A board will determine the rank that he last served honorably. A demotion to colonel or lower would cost him tens of thousands of dollars a year.

Haight's removal from European Command was not disclosed. It was first revealed in July by USA TODAY, which received the Army inspector general's report Wednesday after a Freedom of Information Act request.

Armstrong, who told USA TODAY in interviews that the relationship began with a flirty email and ended after assignations with multiple partners at swingers' clubs, hotels and her home, says Haight had promised a future together. "I gave him the best years of my life," she said.

In a statement issued after news of his reprimand broke, Haight vowed to work with Army investigators untangling his dark, off-duty life.

"I am truly sorry for the pain I have caused my wife and family," Haight said in a second statement Wednesday. "On their behalf, I ask that their privacy be respected during this difficult time."

## Security risks

How Haight, the married father of four adult children who has held a succession of increasingly influential jobs, maintained his intimate secret is unclear. His superiors promoted him three times since his affair with Armstrong began. Screeners of officials for security clearances — particularly those trusted with access to the nation's most sensitive information like Haight — scrutinize financial and family stability to guard against vulnerability to bribes or blackmail.

If an adversary such as Russia had learned of Haight's affair and sexual adventures, he would have been a prime target to blackmail, said four senior government officials who were not authorized to speak publicly about the matter. Russia, one of the officials said, aggressively intercepts telephone calls. An investigative report showed that from June to November 2015 Haight used his government cellphone to make 84 private calls for more than 1,400 minutes of conversation. Further, testimony showed that Haight frequently left his office in Stuttgart, Germany, because it was in a building designed for secure communication, a Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility, or SCIF.

At European Command, he was in charge of the military's plans and operations to confront Russia's increasing aggression in Eastern Europe.

"When MG Haight disappeared and someone need to get a hold of him, (name redacted) knew to check the hallway, outside of the SCIF, where he was usually on his cellphone," the report notes.

Haight, in his job overseeing operations at European Command and previously as a top aide to Adm. Mike Mullen, the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, would have had access to the most sensitive national security information. Indeed, Haight was a key adviser to Mullen at the time of the 2011 raid that killed Osama bin Laden and during the peak of the U.S. involvement in Afghanistan.

Haight's case also underscores the military's continuing problem with misconduct among its most senior officers. In November, Defense Secretary Ash Carter abruptly fired his senior military adviser, Army Lt. Gen. Ron Lewis for personal misconduct; the Pentagon inspector general continues to investigate Lewis. In March, the Air Force fired one of its top officers, Lt. Gen. John Hesterman, after

investigators determined that he had sent sexually suggestive emails to a married female officer. And the Navy continues to investigate a slew of commanders ensnared in the “Fat Leonard” bribery scandal in which they traded secret information about ship movements for prostitutes and other blandishments to enrich Glenn Defense Marine Asia and its flamboyant owner “Fat Leonard” Glenn Francis.

A senior Army official indicated that incidents of misconduct are rare among its 1,000 senior leaders. Less than 6% of allegations made against senior leaders were substantiated in fiscal year 2015, said the official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because officials were not authorized to comment publicly. Haight was removed promptly, reprimanded and effectively forced to retire after the allegations against him were substantiated, the official said.



David Haight and Jennifer Armstrong (Photo: Jennifer Armstrong)

## How it began

The inspector general's report dates the affair to Feb. 12, 2005, when Armstrong was working as a contractor in Iraq handling the remains of combat fatalities. Smitten after seeing Haight at a base, she emailed every David Haight in the Army directory, saying that he had a “terrific smile.” Eventually, she found the right Haight — Lt. Col. David B. Haight, commander of the 2nd Ranger Battalion, elite troops who accompanied commandos on sensitive, dangerous raids. Haight is also a distant relation of an [apostle of the Church of Latter Day Saints](#).

Haight eventually responded to Armstrong's email, and they hit it off.

Haight's honesty and sociability were attractive, she said. But he had a “hard part,” a mark left by the war. They quickly became romantic, and he promised her they would spend their lives together after he left the military, she said.

Armstrong's account of their affair is backed up by emails she said the two shared, indicating trysts involving other women, other couples and encounters with strangers at swingers' clubs. However,

Armstrong also misrepresented her educational background in the interview. She claimed to have a nursing degree from the University of California at San Diego. A check there revealed she did not, prompting Armstrong to claim a degree from California State University San Marcos. She does not. Records also show that she has twice declared bankruptcy, including last year in Virginia.

Armstrong's name is redacted in the Army inspector general's report about Haight. But she identified herself to USA TODAY as his longtime girlfriend and swinging companion.

Armstrong provided copies of emails from Haight's official military account that show their relationship continued into 2015. One of the emails in December 2010 has explicit sexual chatter, and shows him asking about the availability of another woman for a tryst. The report also shows that Haight and Armstrong exchanged other emails with references to types of sexual activity. "I love hearing about women who like and giggle about (oral sex)," he wrote in a September 2012 email cited by the inspector general.

Their relationship, however, wasn't all about sex. Armstrong furnished a copy of a handwritten letter from Haight who encouraged her while she fought breast cancer. She also bears a tattoo with his name on it.

Their affair continued through his postings, including at the Pentagon. The two lived not far from each other in Northern Virginia, and Haight stopped at her house most nights after work before going to his own home, she said.

Armstrong found partners for the couple, and email on his military account shows that he asked after them and their availability. These encounters took place for about a year when Haight asked Armstrong whether she wanted to involve men. "Do you want another guy?" She declined.

Soon, a friend suggested that they should go to a club where members engage in sex with strangers. They went to clubs in Baltimore and near the Army War College in Carlisle Barracks, Pa., Armstrong said. They visited others when he traveled, including Tampa and Atlanta where they were almost recognized by another soldier when Haight was the Army's Chief of Infantry, she said. Armstrong has also recognized other swingers at the Pentagon when her job took her there, she said.

The inspector general's report refers to testimony that indicates Armstrong and Haight "visited swingers' clubs while he was stationed at Fort Benning, Georgia." Haight was assigned to Benning from July 2012 to October 2013.

They also had "parties" at Armstrong's house. Some of the sex parties were arranged with partners through emails pinged back and forth to find convenient times. She described the sex as "non-emotional intimacy." There were no drugs or alcohol involved, she said.

She and Haight knew their relationship and “alternative lifestyle” put him at risk of being blackmailed. But they felt they were discreet enough — his face did not appear on their online profile for Swing Life Style’s website — that he would not be recognized.

In one December 2011 email attributed to Haight, he asked Armstrong whether [Tabu Social Club](#) in Maryland was open the night of “22/23 Dec?” Tabu is a members-only club in Maryland whose web site touts it as “Where Sexy Adults Come and Play.” Haight at the time was deputy director of the Joint Staff’s efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Erotic photos were shared among those in the swinging community. They didn’t stay there, however. Some of the photos were emailed to USA TODAY.

## How it ended

Haight’s trajectory in the Army had been ever upward after graduating from the Army ROTC program at Brigham Young University and commissioning as a second lieutenant in 1986, according to his EUCOM biography. He graduated from the Army’s Ranger school and would go on to command its elite platoons and battalions in combat in Panama, Iraq and Afghanistan.

In January 2009, he commanded the 3rd Brigade Combat Team of the 10th Mountain Division in a restive part of eastern Afghanistan. Successful command of a brigade is a key steppingstone to the highest reaches of the Army’s ranks.



In a Feb. 11, 2009, file photo, David Haight, speaks as Wardak’s chief police Muzafaruddin, second from right, Wardak’s province Governor Mohammed Halim Fedayi, third from right, and Logar’s province Governor Atiqullah Ludin are seen during a press conference in Logar province south of Kabul, Afghanistan. (Photo: Jason Straziuso, AP)

It also earned him a coveted spot in June 2010 as a top aide to Mullen, then the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The post gave Haight had an insider's view and knowledge of the most sensitive of all missions in 2011: the raid that killed Osama bin Laden inside Pakistan.

Haight parlayed that position — all the while conducting his extramarital affair and swinging — to become commandant of the Army's School of Infantry at Fort Benning and promotion to brigadier general in 2013. News clips from the time show him crediting his wife and family for supporting him. His wife Bonnie told the *Ledger Enquirer* of Columbus, Ga., that his career had seen them move 15 times, uprooting their four children from their friends.

The story added that outside the Army, Haight was most proud of his family. We “provided well and raised our four fabulous children that have all been successful contributors to society,” Haight said. “They turned out to be much better children than I was a father.”

With one star, he became deputy commander of U.S. and NATO forces in eastern Afghanistan. In Pentagon parlance, Haight had checked all the boxes for professional and personal accomplishment.

His last post, as a two-star officer, saw him heading plans and operations for U.S. European Command. EUCOM I has responsibility for key Middle East allies Israel and Turkey.

In 2015, anonymous tips about Haight's extramarital affairs were brought to the Pentagon's inspector general. Ultimately, the Army's inspector general took the case. The Army ordered Haight to sever contact with Armstrong. Investigators interviewed her and others and substantiated allegations that he had "had an affair and lived a 'swinger lifestyle.'" Investigators also determined that he had spent nearly 24 hours on his government cellphone and sent more than 800 emails on his military computer to Armstrong.

Haight, the report noted, declined to testify or answer questions provided through his attorney.

The letter of reprimand effectively ended his 30-year career. A board will determine his retirement rank. A clean record could have earned Haight as much nearly \$123,000 in his first year of retirement. If he's busted back to colonel, his pay could drop to about \$98,000.

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2016/08/24/new-details-show-how-swinger-army-generals-double-life-cost-him-his-career/89220810/>