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One-Word Reactions to Petraeus: 'Surprise,' 'Disappointment'

More Following 'Fiscal Cliff' Debate than Petraeus Investigation

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Andrew Kohut

President, Pew Research Center

Carroll Doherty and Michael Dimock

Associate Directors

Scott Keeter

Director of Survey Research

1615 L St, N.W., Suite 700

Washington, D.C. 20036

Tel (202) 419-4350

Fax (202) 419-4399

www.people-press.org

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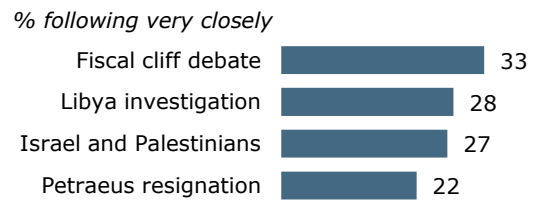
In a busy news week, more Americans say they followed the debate over the “fiscal cliff” very closely than the investigations into the Libya embassy attack, renewed violence in the Middle East or the FBI investigation that led to David Petraeus’s resignation as CIA Director after it found he was having an extra-marital affair.

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted Nov. 15-18 among 1,002 adults, finds that nearly identical percentages of Republicans (36%) and Democrats (35%) say they very closely followed the debate over the automatic spending cuts and tax increases that will take effect at the beginning of next year unless the president and Congress act. Republicans are about as interested as Democrats in the Petraeus investigation (28% vs. 21%).

But there is a wide partisan gap in interest in another major story of the week; Republicans (42%) are much more likely than Democrats (21%) or independents (22%) to say they very closely followed the investigation into the September attack on the U.S. embassy in Benghazi, Libya very closely.

While interest in the investigation that uncovered Petraeus’s affair is modest, 30% of Americans say the news is of great importance to the nation, while 32% say it is of some importance; 32% say it is of very little or no importance. Republicans are significantly more likely than Democrats to say the Petraeus situation is of great importance (43% vs. 27%).

Fiscal Cliff Is Top Story, Limited Interest in Petraeus Investigation



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Republicans More Likely to Follow Benghazi Investigation

<i>Percent following story "very closely"</i>	Rep	Dem	Ind	R-D Gap
	%	%	%	
Benghazi investigation	42	21	22	R+21
Israel/Palestinian violence	34	23	28	R+11
Petraeus investigation	28	21	19	R+7
Fiscal cliff debate	36	35	31	R+1

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Nov. 15-18, 2012.

Notably, more people say the Petraeus situation is of either great or some importance (62%) than said that about Bill Clinton’s affair with Monica Lewinsky in February 1998 (52%), shortly after news of Clinton’s affair broke. There was a much wider partisan gap in perceptions of the importance of the Clinton-Lewinsky affair: Among Republicans, 42% said the scandal was of great importance to the nation, compared with 9% of Democrats. Fully 65% of Democrats said it was of little or no importance to the nation.

In November 2005, when Lewis Libby, a former national security aide to Vice President Dick Cheney was indicted for perjury and obstruction of justice, 79% felt it was of great (44%) or some (35%) importance. More than half of Democrats (56%) said the Libby indictment was of great importance, compared with 30% of Republicans.

When respondents were asked to describe their reaction to news about Gen. Petraeus’s resignation and the ongoing FBI investigation into the situation, the words “surprised” and “disappointed” are used more than any others, along with “shocked,” “sad” and “disgusted.”

The survey finds no signs of a gender gap in interest or reactions to the Petraeus situation. Roughly equal percentages of men and women say they followed the story very closely (23% vs. 21%) and rate it as very important for the nation (28% vs. 31%). In addition, both men and women offer similar words to describe their reaction to the news.

Reactions to Petraeus Situation

	Total
Surprised	72
Disappointed	67
Shock/Shocked	59
Sad	43
Disgusted	31
Didn’t watch/Don’t care	29
Stupid	24
Not surprised	23
Ridiculous	19
Indifferent	18
Cover-up	12
Suspicious	11
Interested	10

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Nov. 15-18, 2012.

NOTE: Numbers listed are the *number of respondents* who offered each response, they *are not* percentages.

About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted November 15-18, 2012 among a national sample of 1,002 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (601 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 401 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 189 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see: <http://people-press.org/methodology/>.

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and region to parameters from the March 2011 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status, based on extrapolations from the 2011 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size among respondents with a landline phone. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1,002	3.7 percentage points
Republicans	288	6.9 percentage points
Democrats	324	6.5 percentage points
Independents	299	6.8 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER
November 15-18, 2012 OMNIBUS
FINAL TOPLINE
N=1,002

ASK ALL:

PEW.1 As I read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past week, please tell me if you happened to follow each news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely. First, **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE;] [IF NECESSARY "Did you follow [ITEM] very closely, fairly closely, not too closely or not at all closely?"]**

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	(VOL.) DK/Ref
a. The debate in Washington over automatic spending cuts and tax increases that would take effect in January unless the President and Congress act					
November 15-18, 2012	33	24	16	25	1
November 8-11, 2012	38	20	20	20	*
July 19-22, 2012	23	21	22	33	1
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:					
February 16-20, 2012: <i>Congress passing a bill to extend payroll tax cuts and unemployment benefits¹</i>	24	27	21	27	1
August 4-7, 2011: <i>Congress and the president agreeing to cut federal spending and raise the debt limit</i>	46	25	13	14	1
December 16-19, 2010 ² : <i>The extension of tax cuts and unemployment benefits approved by Congress and signed by President Obama</i>	37	27	15	19	1
December 9-12, 2010: <i>The agreement reached between Barack Obama and Congressional Republicans to extend tax cuts and unemployment benefits</i>	37	29	15	17	1
December 2-5, 2010: <i>The debate in Washington over the federal income tax cuts passed when George W. Bush was president</i>	39	26	17	17	1
September 16-19, 2010: <i>The debate in Washington over competing Democratic and Republican tax plans</i>	21	24	21	34	*
September 9-12, 2010	16	19	22	42	1
May 8-11, 2009: <i>The debate in Washington over the federal budget</i>	22	28	19	31	*
March 27-30, 2009: <i>Debate over Barack Obama's budget proposal</i>	28	34	18	19	1
February 27-March 2, 2009: <i>Barack Obama's budget proposal for next year that raises taxes on wealthy Americans and increases spending on health care, education and other programs</i>	47	34	9	10	*
May, 2003: <i>George W. Bush's tax cut and economic stimulus plan</i>	25	36	22	15	2
February, 2003	26	33	23	16	2
January, 2003	28	34	21	15	2

¹ The wording of item PEW.1d was changed after the first night of interviewing (February 16, 2012) to reflect Congress passing this legislation. On February 16, 2012, the item wording was "Negotiations in Congress to extend payroll tax cuts and unemployment benefits."

² The wording of item PEW.1c was changed after the first night of interviewing (December 16, 2010), to reflect Congress passing and Obama signing this legislation. On December 16, 2010 the item read "The debate in Washington over extending tax cuts and unemployment benefits."

PEW.1 CONTINUED...

	Very closely	Fairly closely	Not too closely	Not at all closely	(VOL.) DK/Ref
February, 2002: <i>Debate in Congress over G.W. Bush's budget and tax cut plan</i>	17	31	28	23	1
April, 2001	24	38	20	18	*
February, 2001: <i>G.W. Bush's tax cut plan</i>	31	35	19	14	1
September, 1999: <i>The debate in Washington over how much to cut taxes</i>	18	30	28	23	1
July, 1999	14	34	21	31	*
June, 1997: <i>Competing proposals on ways to cut taxes as part of the recent bipartisan budget agreement</i>	11	27	28	33	1
September, 1992 (RVs): <i>George Bush's plan to improve the economy by cutting government spending and cutting taxes</i>	28	44	18	9	1
b. Investigations into the September attack on the U.S. embassy in Benghazi, Libya					
November 15-18, 2012	28	26	21	24	2
October 18-21, 2012: <i>Investigations into last month's attack on the U.S. embassy in Libya</i>	31	30	19	20	1
October 12-14, 2012	28	28	19	23	1
October 4-7, 2012: <i>Investigations into the attack on the U.S. embassy in Libya earlier this month</i>	27	24	20	28	1
September 13-16, 2012: <i>Attacks on American embassies and consulates in the Middle East and the killing of the U.S. ambassador in Libya</i>	43	24	15	17	1
c. An FBI investigation that led David Petraeus to resign as director of the CIA after it uncovered an extra-marital affair					
November 15-18, 2012	22	27	22	27	2
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:					
June 16-19, 2011: <i>Anthony Weiner resigning from Congress amid controversy over sexually suggestive photos he sent to several women online</i>	20	27	24	28	*
June 9-12, 2011: <i>Controversy about Congressman Anthony Weiner admitting that he sent sexually suggestive photos of himself to several women in online messages</i>	15	27	23	34	1
March 12-15, 2010: <i>The resignation of Congressman Eric Massa amid allegations of improper conduct with staff members</i>	7	17	28	47	*
June 26-29, 2009: <i>South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford admitting he had an affair</i>	16	25	28	30	1
August 15-18, 2008: <i>John Edwards' admission that he had an affair</i>	13	26	30	30	1
March 14-17, 2008: <i>The governor of New York, Eliot Spitzer, resigning because of his involvement with a prostitution ring</i>	26	35	24	15	*
September 7-10, 2007: <i>Reports about Idaho Senator Larry Craig's political future following his arrest for disorderly conduct in a men's restroom</i>	16	27	27	29	1

PEW.1 CONTINUED...

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
August 30-September 2, 2007: <i>Idaho Senator Larry Craig's arrest for disorderly conduct in a men's restroom in the Minneapolis airport</i>	19	29	22	29	1
October 17-22, 2006: <i>The resignation of Congressman Mark Foley, who sent inappropriate messages to young people</i>	26	32	23	18	1
September 5-8, 1996: <i>The resignation of (Bill) Clinton advisor Dick Morris over charges of sexual misconduct</i>	17	29	33	21	*
October 5-8, 1989: <i>The scandal involving Congressman Barney Frank and a male prostitute</i>	6	19	26	48	1
September 1-15, 1987: <i>The end of Gary Hart's candidacy and the Donna Rice allegations</i>	28	35	27	10	*
March 12-15, 2010: <i>The resignation of Congressman Eric Massa amid allegations of improper conduct with staff members</i>	7	17	28	47	*
June 26-29, 2009: <i>South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford admitting he had an affair</i>	16	25	28	30	1
August 15-18, 2008: <i>John Edwards' admission that he had an affair</i>	13	26	30	30	1
March 14-17, 2008: <i>The governor of New York, Eliot Spitzer, resigning because of his involvement with a prostitution ring</i>	26	35	24	15	*
September 7-10, 2007: <i>Reports about Idaho Senator Larry Craig's political future following his arrest for disorderly conduct in a men's restroom</i>	16	27	27	29	1
August 30-September 2, 2007: <i>Idaho Senator Larry Craig's arrest for disorderly conduct in a men's restroom in the Minneapolis airport</i>	19	29	22	29	1
October 17-22, 2006: <i>The resignation of Congressman Mark Foley, who sent inappropriate messages to young people</i>	26	32	23	18	1
September 5-8, 1996: <i>The resignation of (Bill) Clinton advisor Dick Morris over charges of sexual misconduct</i>	17	29	33	21	*
October 5-8, 1989: <i>The scandal involving Congressman Barney Frank and a male prostitute</i>	6	19	26	48	1
September 1-15, 1987: <i>The end of Gary Hart's candidacy and the Donna Rice allegations</i>	28	35	27	10	*
d. Renewed violence between Israel and the Palestinians					
November 15-18, 2012	27	22	24	26	1
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:					
May 26-29, 2011: <i>Debate about how to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian dispute</i>	18	23	24	34	*
September 30-October 3, 2010: <i>Israeli-Palestinian peace talks</i>	11	26	29	24	1
September 16-19, 2010	13	21	26	40	*
September 2-6, 2010: <i>Israeli-Palestinian peace talks in Washington</i>	14	24	27	35	1

PEW.1 CONTINUED...

	Very closely	Fairly closely	Not too closely	Not at all closely	(VOL.) DK/Ref
March 26-29, 2010: Reports about tensions between Israel and the United States	20	27	21	31	1
March 19-22, 2010: Reports about tensions in the Middle East between Israelis and Palestinians	15	28	27	30	1
June 19-22, 2009: The situation between Israelis and Palestinians	15	26	30	29	1
January 23-26, 2009: Conflict between the Israeli military and Hamas forces in Gaza	31	31	18	20	*
January 16-19, 2009	24	31	22	22	1
January 9-12, 2009	34	35	18	13	0
January 2-4, 2009	28	32	22	18	*
March 7-10, 2008: Continued violence in the Middle East between the Palestinians and the Israelis	20	33	26	21	*
January 11-14, 2008: News about President Bush attending peace talks in Israel	16	30	23	30	1
Nov. 30-Dec. 3, 2007: The Middle East Peace Summit in Annapolis, Maryland	11	25	24	39	1
August, 2006: The military conflict between Israel and Hezbollah forces in Lebanon	40	34	14	10	2
September, 2003: Continued violence in the Middle East between the Palestinians and the Israelis	31	36	20	13	*
June, 2003: President Bush's summit meeting with world leaders and with the prime ministers of Israel and the Palestinian Authority	20	36	24	19	1
Early June, 2003: Continued violence in the Middle East between the Palestinians and the Israelis	26	40	20	13	1
December, 2002	29	36	22	12	1
Early October, 2002	32	39	20	8	1
June, 2002	38	33	18	10	1
April, 2002	38	37	14	10	1
Early April, 2002	44	33	13	9	1
December, 2001	31	40	19	9	1
Early September, 2001	21	33	25	20	1
April, 2001: Continued violence in the Middle East	22	34	24	19	1
January, 2001: Renewed efforts at reaching a peace agreement in the Middle East	21	32	29	17	1
Mid-October, 2000: Continued violence in the Middle East between the Palestinians and the Israelis	30	38	18	13	1
Early October, 2000: Renewed violence in the Middle East between the Palestinians and the Israelis	21	30	27	21	1
July, 2000: The Middle East peace summit at Camp David	15	30	24	31	*
November, 1998: The latest Mideast peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians	18	33	28	19	2
Early October, 1998 (RVs): Renewed efforts at reaching a peace agreement in the Middle East	21	40	27	12	*

PEW.1 CONTINUED...

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	(VOL.) DK/Ref
January, 1997: <i>Renewed tensions between Israelis and Palestinians over Hebron</i>	12	23	29	35	1
October, 1996: <i>Renewed violence between Israelis & Palestinians on the West Bank and in Jerusalem</i>	17	34	26	23	*
September, 1995: <i>The latest Mideast peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians</i>	11	32	29	27	1
Late September, 1993: <i>The peace accords between Israel and the PLO</i>	23	33	24	19	1
Early September, 1993: <i>Talks between Israel and the PLO about Arab self-rule for the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho</i>	19	31	23	26	1
January, 1993: <i>Israel's expulsion of 400 Moslem fundamentalists following the murder of an Israeli soldier in the West Bank</i>	10	25	31	33	1
October, 1991: <i>President Bush's decision to postpone loan guarantees to Israel</i>	15	25	30	29	1
June, 1990: <i>The incident in Gaza in which a deranged Israeli killed seven Palestinians and the West Bank riots that followed</i>	11	28	30	30	1
May, 1988: <i>The conflict in the Middle East between the Palestinians and the Israelis in the occupied territories</i>	18	37	34	9	2

NO QUESTIONS PEW.2-PEW.3

ASK ALL:

PEW.4 What one word best describes your reaction to news about General Petraeus's resignation and the ongoing FBI investigation into the situation? **[OPEN-END. RECORD VERBATIM RESPONSE. PROBE ONCE ONLY WITH "JUST THE ONE WORD THAT COMES TO MIND" IF RESPONDENT ANSWERS "DON'T KNOW" INITIALLY. IF MORE THAN ONE MENTION, RECORD IN ORDER OF MENTION.]**

Nov 15-18

2012

72	Surprised
67	Disappointed/Disappointing/Disappointment
59	Shock/Shocked
43	Sad
31	Disgusted
29	Did not watch/Dont care
24	Stupid
23	Not surprised/Unsurprised
19	Ridiculous
18	Indifference/Indifferent
12	Cover-up
11	Suspicious
10	Interested
9	Uninterested
8	Concerned
8	Unfortunate
7	Good
6	Bullcrap
6	Personal
6	Shame/Shameful
6	Terrible
6	Waste/Waste of time/money/Wasteful
5	Fair
5	Not shocked
5	Typical
5	Unconcerned
5	Unnecessary
4	Betrayal
4	Confused
4	Crap
4	Crazy
4	Curious/Curiosity
4	Pathetic
4	Political
4	Silly
4	Sorry
4	Unfair
4	Wow
3	Angry
3	Appropriate
3	Conspiracy
3	Convenient
3	Disinterested
3	Dismay
3	Expected
3	Human/Hes a human being
3	So what
3	Tragic
3	Why
228	Other
192	Don't know

NOTE: The numbers listed represent the number of respondents who offered each response; the numbers are not percentages.

ASK ALL:

PEW.5

How important an issue do you think this whole situation is to the nation? **[READ]**

	<u>Of great importance</u>	<u>Of some importance</u>	<u>Of very little importance</u>	(VOL.) None	(VOL.) DK/Ref
Nov 15-18, 2012	30	32	29	3	7
TRENDS FOR COMPARISON					
Libby indictment					
November, 2005 ³	44	35	18	1	2
Clinton lied under oath					
September 21-22, 1998	37	19	42	0	2
September 19-20, 1998	42	23	33	0	2
September 11-15, 1998	37	22	38	1	2
Early September, 1998	34	20	42	3	1
Late August, 1998	33	23	42	2	*
Early August, 1998	27	21	46	3	3
Clinton had affair					
Late February, 1998	22	25	50	3	*
Early February, 1998	25	27	45	1	2
CBS: January 26, 1998	39	28	28	2	3
CBS: January 24-25, 1998	40	21	35	3	1

³ November, 2005 asked about "a grand jury investigating the leak of a CIA agent's identity indicted the vice president's adviser Lewis Libby on charges of perjury and obstruction of justice." Early August, 1998 through September 21-22, 1998 asked about "the allegation that President Clinton lied under oath about a sexual relationship with Monica Lewinsky." January 24-25, 1998 through late February, 1998 asked about "allegations that President Clinton had an affair with former White House intern, Monica Lewinsky."