



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on August 17, 2012

Four-Star General Under Investigation For Lavish Spending

A four-star general and former head of the U.S. Africa Command is under investigation for allegedly [mispending](#) hundreds of thousands of dollars on hotels, travel, and a host of lavish amenities. Gen. William “Kip” Ward, who has been under investigation for about 17 months, retired but was retained on active duty in Virginia to serve as an assistant to the vice chief of the Army.



Disciplinary action is still up in the air, but Defense Secretary Leon Panetta is expected to issue a decision after a report by the Defense Department inspector general is released; it is unclear whether Ward will face criminal charges. Panetta’s decision is confined by a string of military guidelines and circuitous laws, and he will have to vouch to Congress that Ward served competently at the rank at which he is retired.

The general could be demoted to a three-star rank, which would purportedly cost him up to a [million dollars](#) in retirement pay over time. It is unlikely that he would be demoted to two-star, officials claim, because investigators would have to resolve that Ward also misspent money prior to his transfer to the Africa Command.

Allegations regarding Gen. Ward’s misconduct include permitting unauthorized people, including family members, to fly on government planes and spending exorbitant amounts of federal dollars on transportation, hotel rooms, and other expenses, when he headed the Africa Command.

Ward relinquished his post early last year after acting as the first head of the Africa Command, which was established in 2007 under the Bush administration. Despite Ward’s filing all the paperwork, and even attending a retirement ceremony in April 2011, the Army suspended Ward’s retirement because of the investigation. The army office where Ward is now located has been utilized as a holding area for general officers, some of whom include officers who are under investigation.

The [U.S. Africa Command](#), headquartered in Stuttgart, Germany, was established to broaden U.S. military reach in the continent by overseeing operations and relations with more than 50 African nations, including regions to the north and east where Al Qaeda-sponsored militia train and plan attacks.

The extent of Ward’s financial misconduct is unclear, but the projected total raises comparisons with the General Service Administration’s (GSA) lavish [\\$823,000 Las Vegas training conference](#) in 2010. This comparison bolsters an intriguing discussion, one that pokes holes in the Republican establishment’s



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conventional ideology on government spending.

Republicans and neo-conservative critics railed against the GSA's spendthrift conferences, highlighting them as yet another example of wasteful government spending. Rightfully so, they are calling to slash the budgets of the GSA and other federal agencies that have been pouring billions of taxpayer dollars down the drain.

However, when it comes to the defense budget, they all cry foul, asserting that even to look at such expenses would put the nation's security at risk. Responding to a GOP presidential debate question by the *Wall Street Journal's* Gerald Seib about the "major" defense cuts Ron Paul had proposed, the Texas congressman [pointed](#) to an example of the U.S. government spending a billion dollars on an embassy in Baghdad.

"You consider that defense spending. I consider that waste," Dr. Paul contended. "We need to have a strong national defense but we don't get strength by diluting ourselves in 900 bases, 130 countries." The Texas congressman then summed up his argument by saying, "We're supposed to be conservative — spend less money."

Ron Paul's son, Kentucky Senator Rand Paul, has also sniped at the hypocrisy of the establishment's skewed ideology on government spending. "You need ... compromise on where the spending cuts come from," Paul [told](#) ABC's Christiane Amanpour in a 2010 interview. "Republicans traditionally say, oh, we'll cut domestic spending, but we won't touch the military. The liberals — the ones who are good — will say, oh, we'll cut the military, but we won't cut domestic spending."

In sum, the Defense Department is a *government* agency; and as the trend goes, government agencies are often riddled with waste and fraud. Analysts have noted that General William Ward's misconduct is just another example of this interminable pattern.

Photo of Gen. William "Kip" Ward receiving the rank of four-star general: AP Images



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