

# Journalist Michael Hastings dies in car crash

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Michael Hastings, a journalist for *BuzzFeed*, reportedly died in a fiery car crash early Wednesday morning. The 33-year-old reporter was most famous for his profile of General Stanley McChrystal in *Rolling Stone* magazine, which led to the general's ouster.

The single car crash occurred around 4:30 a.m. on the intersection of Highland Ave. and Melrose Ave. in Hollywood. An eyewitness said the car was traveling about 100 mph when the driver lost control at the intersection and slammed into a tree. Footage of the crash shows the entire car engulfed in flames and the engine thrown roughly 100 feet from the force of the crash.

The fire damage to the body has prevented a positive ID of the driver by police, but *BuzzFeed* announced that it was indeed Hastings and *Rolling Stone* followed with an obituary.

While it is certainly possible that the car crash was an accident, it must be noted that Hastings no doubt had enemies, including among top military and intelligence officials. As such, the circumstances of his death should be treated as suspicious.

Hastings was reportedly deeply troubled by the revelations of government surveillance and spying on journalists. Edward Snowden's revelations about the National Security Agency's widespread spying came on June 6. Hastings, who was widely known for his use of new media, stopped tweeting on the June 12, and the car crash came one week later on June 19.

In an interview with KTLA 5, Hastings' colleague Cenk Uyger, host of "The Young Turks" online news show, said that "a lot of his friends were worried that he was in a very agitated state. Yes, no question that people were concerned. And he was incredibly tense and very worried, and was concerned that the government was looking in on his material as they are on a lot of the top journalists in the country. So you know, I don't know what his state of mind was at 4:30

in the morning but I do know what his state of mind was in general and it was a nervous wreck."

Hastings' reporting had placed him square in the middle of disputes between different sections of the US government. His 2010 profile of then NATO commander in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal, entitled "The Runaway General," became the catalyst for a personnel shift at the highest levels.

As NATO commander in Afghanistan, McChrystal had been a proponent of the 2009 surge that sent 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan. As the surge failed and the ensuing offensive against the Taliban floundered, high-level politicians like Vice President Joe Biden began calling for a shift to greater use of drones and special forces.

In the midst of this, Hastings' article made public many top officers' criticisms of Obama and other leading officials. This provided the occasion for replacing McChrystal with General David Petraeus, the former US commander in Iraq and future director of the CIA.

His 2012 questions surrounding the State Department's unraveling story about the Benghazi attack ended in a profanity-laden email exchange with Hillary Clinton's spokesperson Phillippe Reines.

With his stormy, adversarial relationships with high-ranking government figures, Hastings had more reason than most to worry about government surveillance of journalists and sources.



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