

# Honesty and “Impropriety” Within the US Military: The Honorable Life and Untimely Death of Colonel Ted Westhusing

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*As a West Point graduate and former Army officer, I ran into few military leaders that embodied the ideals of West Point, particularly those who lived by its motto “duty, honor, country.” One such standout officer was the late great Colonel Westhusing who died in Iraq in June 2005. With Memorial Day and the tenth anniversary of his untimely, suspicious death coming up in just over a month, it seems appropriate to pay tribute to his character and life.*

[Theodore “Ted” Westhusing](#) was born November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1960 in Dallas, Texas into a large close-knit Christian family among seven children. Ted stood out from the beginning. After moving to a suburb outside Tulsa, in high school he became a National Merit Scholar and nearly went to the state basketball finals as the over-achieving point guard. He was so devoted to his basketball that every morning at seven would shoot 100 jump shots before classes even began. Though he could have attended any college he chose, Ted was enamored by members of his family’s illustrious military service and selected West Point as his undergraduate collegiate destination. His father was a Korean War veteran who later served in the Navy Reserves. Ted possessed both a commitment and compassion in everything he did. With his passion for justice guiding him, the West Point motto “duty, honor, country” meant everything to Ted. His final year at the Academy he was chosen to be the honor captain, the highest ranking ethics official within the entire Corps of Cadets. Cadet Westhusing was also an outstanding student, graduating [third in his West Point Class of 1983](#).

As an Army Infantry officer, Ted completed Ranger school, served in Italy, Honduras and South Korea, and the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division under then Colonel David Petraeus at Fort Bragg. Ted became fluent in both Italian and Russian and also earned a masters and then later a PhD in philosophy from Emory University, choosing that particular school because it uniquely offered graduate programs in both classical Greek and Roman history as well as military philosophy. His expertise in classical military history led him to becoming [an adviser for the film “Troy”](#) where he explained military planning and troop movement to the filmmakers. Ted’s military service dedication and academic brilliance were rewarded in a lifetime teaching position at the US Military Academy where he served as a professor in both philosophy and English.

Though happily married with three children, when given the chance to round out his leadership experience by participating in the Iraq War, Lieutenant Colonel Westhusing volunteered to [oversee training operations of Iraqi security forces](#), again serving under

General Petraeus' command of special operations in Iraq. Initially when Westhusing arrived on the scene in Baghdad in January 2005, he and Petraeus had an ongoing mutual admiration society with King David anointing Ted a full bird colonel. Three star General Petraeus was instrumental in outsourcing the US military with privatized civilian contractors, replacing military personnel that historically performed all previous logistics, training and support services in American wars throughout its history.

Thus, Colonel Westhusing's Iraq War assignment involved working closely with the Virginia based, no bid, Carlyle Group bought and owned for \$545 million, the private contracting firm of [United States Investigative Services](#) (USIS) that held a 79 million dollar contract with the Pentagon. Of course having the sitting US President Bush owning shares in these civilian outsourcing companies that changed the way America was fighting its wars was nothing new under the Bush-Cheney regime. Shortly before Cheney became the US Vice President, he was the CEO of Halliburton, another giant no bid contractor given multimillion dollar contracts in Iraq, Afghanistan and the United States.

The corruption, theft, graft and greed of the neocon war criminals in charge clashed with the ideals and morays of the 44-year old Army officer that represented West Point at its best. The professional ethicist and scholar from West Point was shocked to learn that the real world politics of modern dirty Empire wars necessarily involved theft, corruption, greed and war crimes on an unprecedented global scale. In May 2005 Westhusing's world began rapidly unraveling upon receiving an anonymous [four page letter from a USIS insider](#) citing various violations that the huge private contractor was regularly engaging in Iraq. It exposed greedy civilian USIS contractors ripping off the government for millions of dollars with stolen equipment, weapons, electronics, helmets that the company swept under the carpet by falsely claiming it was lost on loan to the irresponsible Iraqis.

To cut corners even further in order to increase profits, the company was also alleged to have supplied a gross shortage of instructors to train the Iraqi security forces. But most serious was the charge that American USIS civilian [contractors bragged about shooting Iraqi citizens](#) during the siege of Fallujah and other overly aggressive covert patrols. It was against both US and Iraq law for private contractors to engage in combat missions, the one job in Iraq that was still designated to be fulfilled by military personnel only. Of course indiscriminant shooting and killing of Iraqi civilians also constitute serious war crime atrocities, the notorious case being Blackwater. The [murder of 14 unarmed Iraqis back in 2007](#) finally caught up to four mercenary employees who a few months ago were convicted... no doubt the tip of the iceberg that Colonel Westhusing was suddenly confronting in Iraq two years earlier than those Blackwater killings.

When Ted Westhusing was confronted with the reality of what was really going on in Iraq, he immediately let his superior officers know and called for an investigation per proper chain of command protocol. However, the colonel became disheartened when the two generals - three star Petraeus and two star Fil - in so many words told him to keep his mouth shut and play the game. After all, Petraeus was responsible more than any other single general for [outsourcing the neocon wars with corrupt private civilian contractors](#). Also at that time Petraeus was overseeing the training of [Iraqi death squad commandos](#) marauding through Iraq's city streets block by block systematically invading homes, murdering families, and detaining innocent Iraqi males for prison torture. This was yet another grim discovery Westhusing made, linking his boss Petraeus to training the largely Shiite security forces into Sunni killer commandos. Realizing how US counterinsurgency wars were so dirtily fought by

the man who wrote the book on counterinsurgency warfare (COIN manual) was yet another sobering, disillusioning find. Accepting that murder of innocents as so called “collateral damage” being a mere secondary afterthought in the business of rooting out potential enemy insurgents wore deeply on Ted’s moral conscience.

Upon concluding General Petraeus never had his back, Colonel Westhusing began seeing that his complaints falling on deaf ears only made him a growing problem amidst the business-as-usual method of modern US imperialistic warfare. Ted Westhusing increasingly [confronted USIS management](#) with the evidence of their wrongdoing, and during his final weeks alive, the open hostilities and tensions between Ted and USIS personnel were mounting daily.

Ted spoke on the phone and regularly emailed his wife and family members alluding to the growing danger of his own safety. Though he never specified any overt threats made toward him by USIS adversaries, he did reveal that “terrible things are going on in Iraq” and only going from bad to worse. He also said he hoped he would make it back to the United States alive.

Ted’s wife Michelle had her last phone conversation with her husband lasting about a half hour exactly two weeks to the day prior to his death. [She knew from his voice](#) that his life was increasingly in peril. Though bodyguards were generally not assigned to military officers in Iraq other than to King David himself, Michelle and Ted’s family members [insist that Colonel Westhusing had in fact been assigned a bodyguard](#) that had suddenly been granted a leave of absence when the colonel that final weekend of his life traveled to Camp Dublin to the USIS headquarters near the Baghdad airport. That Saturday morning the day before his death the colonel had a very contentious meeting with the USIS private contractors. Ted had just uncovered the link between the death squad commando units from the Iran-Contra affair and the death squads being trained to kill in Iraq.

By this time word was out that the super honest, “troublemaking” colonel threatened to go public with the filth he had uncovered at USIS. That same day Ted attended the scheduled demonstration put on by freshly trained Iraqi security forces to show just how skilled and adept they were fresh off their “successful, effective” USIS training. It was all for show as Ted knew the darker truth. Just hours before his death, Colonel Westhusing also had an extremely heated and confrontational meeting with General Petraeus over the USIS charges and what was to be done about it. By lunchtime that Sunday June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2005, just prior to his scheduled departure to return to his regular headquarters in the green zone, [Ted Westhusing was found face up](#) lying on the floor in a pool of blood in his trailer, dead from a gunshot wound to his head, becoming the highest ranking soldier to die in Iraq at the time.

Since this case was extremely high profile, both the US Army and later the US Congress launched investigations into Westhusing’s untimely death, both ultimately concluding that the demoralized colonel died from a self-inflicted head wound from his own revolver with a suicide note allegedly found on his bed.<sup>41</sup> Part of Ted’s alleged suicide note written to General Petraeus published in the [Texas Observer](#) in March 2007 follows below:

Thanks for telling me it was a good day until I briefed you. [Redacted name General Petraeus] – You are only interested in your career and provide no support to your staff – no msn [mission] support and you don’t care. I cannot support a msn that leads to corruption, human right abuses and liars. I am

sullied no more. I didn't volunteer to support corrupt, money grubbing contractors, nor work for commanders only interested in themselves. I came to serve honorably and feel dishonored. I trust no Iraqi. I cannot live this way. All my love to my family, my wife and my precious children. I love you and trust you only. Death before being dishonored any more. Trust is essential – I don't know who to trust anymore. Why serve when you cannot accomplish the mission, when you no longer believe in the cause, when your every effort and breath to succeed meets with lies, lack of support, and selfishness? No more. Reevaluate yourselves, commanders. You are not what you think you are and I know it. Life needs trust. Trust is no more for me here in Iraq.

Three of seven numbered pages from his suicide note went undisclosed during the investigation, which begs for further explanation and opens a floodgate of unanswered questions. Ted's suicide note apparently was part of a journal he had been compiling to chronicle issues and events. And then raising even more suspicion, other pages from his journal were purposely omitted from the Army's final report because they were considered "too sensitive government issues."

Clearly the colonel felt betrayed by his commander Petraeus in the wake of Ted's efforts to alert him as to the immoral and illegal activities of USIS. Yet every last allegation about USIS improprieties proved unfounded according to the official inquiry released three months later. That said, today common public knowledge has long since accepted the fact that obscene amounts of US taxpayer dollars in cash and millions more in unaccounted weapons and equipment in Iraq were looted and stolen by various military industrial complex war profiteers. Human rights violations as war crime atrocities have also been documented later by whistleblower Private Bradley Manning. Despite those bogus "official" findings, subsequently confirmed rampant corruption and misconduct in Iraq were committed regularly by the same privatized profiteers with whom Colonel Ted Westhusing was confronting and exposing right up until his death. To vindicate Westhusing's accusations and discredit the previous finding that exonerated USIS of any misconduct, two years after his death in August 2007 the [Government Accountability Office disclosed](#) that the Pentagon could not account for 110,000 AK-47 assault rifles, 80,000 pistols, 135,000 items of body armor and 115,000 helmets all planned for use by Iraqi security forces.

To maintain the appearance that the Army really cared about Ted, both Generals Petraeus and Fil had the audacity to fly back to the US to attend the colonel's funeral at West Point. No sooner was Ted buried before Petraeus was then suddenly heading off to his next assignment, not in Iraq but Fort Leavenworth, while [Fil was off to Fort Hood](#). The Army saw to it that both brass were conveniently and safely far enough away from any subsequent connection with Iraq war crimes and Westhusing's untimely ending crying foul about what they were both privy to and responsible for.

A postscript to General Fil, as Eighth Army commander in South Korea, he apparently received kickbacks from a wealthy, prominent local Korean businessman. In early 2013 *Washington Post* reporter [Craig Whitlock broke the story](#) that the three star General Fil wrongfully accepted a \$1500 set of gold-plated pens, a \$2000 leather briefcase and allowed a "family member" to accept \$3000 in cash. Ironically of all things, Fil was slated to become the Inspector General at the Pentagon when he was busted. Instead he lost a star and retired in disgrace. Both of Ted's "superior officers" in Iraq – Generals Fil and Petraeus – who after Ted's demise went on thriving in the military system that rewards lies and corruption. But in the end, each brought dishonor and humiliation onto themselves in a classic case of just deserts.

To a person all of Ted's family members, classmates and friends believe that the consummate professional soldier was [murdered in action](#). He became a growing threat revealing the evil doing of greedy war profiteers with direct ties to President Bush, Vice President Cheney, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and future CIA Director Petraeus. Though perhaps insufficient evidence exists to convict the responsible guilty party or parties in a court of law for murder, Colonel Westhusing either way was a casualty of an immoral war. And just the same, a strong body of circumstantial evidence makes for a very serious and solid case of suspected murder and assassination.

The systematic practice of eliminating individuals who pose an imagined or real threat of exposing the ugly truth about status quo clandestine operations committed by the powerful in America is nothing new. A poll from November last year indicates [61% of American citizens believe that President Kennedy](#) was not assassinated by a lone gunman, but that elements of our own government were also involved. Many witnesses and potential whistleblowers have since been mysteriously killed. Cover-ups in America have long been maintained by customarily dismissing any and all conspiracy theories as mere unsubstantiated speculation despite whatever evidence emerges to prove they are in fact true. This gross and blatant form of denial of reality is simply how our nation's leaders continue living their lies, of course aided and abetted by ongoing propaganda and disinformation pumped out nonstop by mainstream media. But [87%](#) of Americans neither trust their leaders nor the six giant oligarch owned media corporations.

As the incriminating facts do slowly get uncovered over time, [more Americans](#) are now coming to believe and accept that even [9/11](#) and the invented, so called "war on terror" was all an inside job perpetrated by the neocon regime that's only continued operating under Obama. In June 2013 muckraking journalist [Michael Hastings was most likely murdered](#) for nearly blowing the shady lid off current US intelligence agencies' illicit and unconstitutional activities. For the growing legions of Americans who no longer place any trust in the official party line spun by our government propaganda machine, the following account of facts surrounding the case of Colonel Westhusing's suspicious death is presented for consideration.

Ted Westhusing was born and raised a devout, practicing Roman Catholic. And committing suicide is nothing short of a sin to all Catholics. Ted was happily married and loved his wife and children as much as any husband and father. All who knew Ted also knew this to be fact. At the time of his death Ted also loved his job as a West Point professor and was merely four short weeks away from returning to his prior life and family he loved so much awaiting him back in the States. At no point did he share any thoughts of suicide with anyone, not even with his closest family and friends who knew him best. Not even for a moment does any one of them believe that Ted would actually throw away his life and abandon those he loved and cherished so much. On the morning of the very day he died prior to his Petraeus meeting, Ted sent a thoughtful email message wishing his mother a happy birthday. That such a devoted Catholic ethicist, loving son and moral warrior would commit such a forbidden sin on his own mother's birthday is far less believable than a corrupt company made up of lying, murderous mercenaries run by the lying, murderous [Bush family](#) doing him in to [preserve its own reputation and 79 million dollar defense contract](#).

The USIS manager that allegedly discovered his lifeless body had gone to his quarters initially by himself, knocked on the door several times, called out his name and even attempted to enter but observed that the door was locked. When fifteen minutes later he



returned with a colleague who peered through the blinds and noticed the colonel laying in blood on the floor, the USIS manager explicitly stated that that same locked door fifteen minutes earlier was suddenly and mysteriously found to be unlocked. That same [manager then picked up the revolver](#) allegedly used laying on the floor near Westhusing's body. His account maintains the gun was near his head yet the other witness stated it was near his feet. The manager obviously knew he was tampering with crucial evidence by placing his fingerprints all over the pistol used to kill the colonel, coming up with the lame feeble excuse that since it still was loaded, knowing people would soon be arriving on the scene, for safety purposes he took it upon himself to unload the weapon. Moreover, in the Army's rush to rule the death a suicide, only Westhusing's fingers were tested for gunpowder traces, conveniently failing to even bother testing the manager that admitted to tampering with the lethal weapon. A pair of suspicious plastic gloves were also found at the crime scene.

[A USIS secretary](#) whose living quarters were attached to Westhusing's trailer at Camp Dublin went on record stating that she heard loud voices coming from the colonel's quarters around lunchtime not long before the USIS manager's account. She concluded it was either Westhusing talking loudly to himself, alluding to observing the colonel's eccentric behavior earlier that weekend, or that Westhusing was possibly talking to a cleaning crew supervisor who spoke English. She explained she could not make out the content of what was being said but only that the voice or voices she heard were in English and could identify one voice as definitely Westhusing's. In spite of being within earshot of the colonel, strangely enough she claimed she never heard any gun go off, yet its noise is far louder than a voice.

Because Colonel Westhusing died on USIS turf, all the witnesses interviewed during the subsequent investigation were limited exclusively to USIS employees that would be sure to tow the company line. Their sworn testimony described Westhusing's behavior that weekend as highly disturbed, incessantly scratching the back of his head, staring blankly into space or at his computer screen, repeatedly scratching his legs uncontrollably, periodically removing his revolver from his holster and fidgeting with it. The Army psychologist subsequently brought in to investigate and assess Westhusing's psychological state at the time of his death concluded that his rigid moral convictions and beliefs could not accept the reality that the war in Iraq with which he found himself participating was largely waged by private civilian contractors driven by the profit motive rather than the military officer's own credo of "duty, honor, country." She felt his response to become so demoralized, severely depressed and nearly despondent over this clash between his moral West Point high ground and the reality he witnessed on the ground there [pushed him over the edge to commit suicide](#), calling it an inherent characterological weakness in the colonel's incapacity to reconcile the two.

Meanwhile, a renowned expert in forensic and clinical psychiatry, [Dr. Lawson Bernstein](#), discussing the case stated that a self-inflicted gunshot wound behind the ear is extremely rare since suicide by gunshot is most commonly executed by aiming the barrel of the gun toward the mouth or temple, and never in his extensive experience has suicide resulted from reaching behind one's left ear to pull the trigger. The medical practitioner concluded that Ted Westhusing was either murdered or killed himself wanting it to appear like a murder. Simply put, shooting someone in the head from behind is far more typical of an execution-style murder than a suicide by self-inflicted gunshot.

That all USIS employees would portray Colonel Westhusing as a severely depressed individual but not quite so severe as to actually think he would commit suicide is exactly

what USIS would want to project, so as to absolve its personnel from any suspicion or blame. Even though the colonel had a series of increasingly heated arguments and confrontations openly accusing the contractors of misconduct and greed, predictably for all too obvious reasons, none of them went on record acknowledging any major conflict or bad blood between them and the colonel. And of course the Department of Defense (DoD) investigators never much pursued that pink elephant in the room that most likely killed Ted since the Army's agenda was to simply whitewash and quickly sweep the truth under the rug. After all, the unholy marriage between Petraeus' outsourced Army and Bush's privatization war was self-servingly never about the truth. From the very start it had been built on lies upon lies. Because too much was at stake with Colonel Westhusing still alive, it seems all too likely a decision was made that he simply had to be put down.

Far more objective and knowledgeable than I can be, there are inside government investigators that reviewed the facts of the case that off the record concluded that Colonel Westhusing was murdered. In a February 2008 Texas Observer article, reporter [Robert Bryce](#) opened with:

Since last March, when I wrote a story about the apparent suicide of Colonel Ted Westhusing in Iraq, I had believed there was nothing else to write about his tragic death.

But in December 2007 he interviewed a DoD source who explained that he met Ted Westhusing in Iraq about three months prior to his death. For obvious reasons the source requested that he remain unidentified. At the time he was investigating claims of wrongdoing against the very same military contractors in Iraq.

When Robert Bryce asked him what he thought had happened to Westhusing, the [DoD investigator](#) replied:

I think he was killed. I honestly do. I think he was murdered. Maybe the DoD didn't have enough evidence to call it murder, so they called it suicide.

Similar to the untimely fate of another good man from West Point [Jack Wheeler](#) who was most likely was assassinated, Colonel Ted Westhusing's death also appears to have been a move to silence another potential whistleblower. Westhusing was likely murdered by one or more USIS personnel shortly after the USIS administrator in close proximity heard loud voices one of which belonged to the colonel. Of course no surprise that she would conveniently omit and deny hearing any gunshot go off. After all, had she told the whole truth and incriminated her company for murder, she too would have been silenced. Per [Wikipedia](#), "A DoD Army report stated that an administrator near his trailer had heard a very loud argument in Colonel Westhusing's office trailer before he was found dead by the contractor. And despite account(s) overhearing voices from Ted's trailer on the same timeline, no apparent gunshot was ever reported.

Ted's alleged suicide note appears real, authenticated both by investigating authorities as well as Ted's wife who stated that his handwritten note contained the exact same language and sentiments she had heard her husband utter before. But some of it may have been written under duress at gunpoint, composing his final remarks knowing he was about to be murdered. Or even more likely, some or all of it may have been taken directly out of the journal he had been writing. In any event, Ted Westhusing held true to his convictions right to the end as the honorable and brave officer that he was, fulfilling his mission that he had volunteered for in Iraq to become the battle-tested warrior he ended up in the end. Colonel

Westhusing gave his life to his country but did not die in vain. His spirit and will to live by his own integrity in telling the truth is his invaluable legacy for all of us humans who also believe in and value truth and justice. Rest in peace America's premier fallen moral warrior.

It seems that a great West Point leader was falsely accused of killing himself and murdered too young by equally powerful sinister forces. Colonel Ted Westhusing's goodness, honor and tragic death in contrast to the soiled bloody hands of his boss General Petraeus. If there ever was a West Pointer who lived up to the ideals of the [Cadet Prayer](#) below, it was Ted Westhusing (emboldened for emphasis):

O God, our Father, Thou Searcher of Human hearts, help us to draw near to Thee in sincerity and truth. May our religion be filled with gladness and may our worship of Thee be natural. Strengthen and increase our admiration for honest dealing and clean thinking, and suffer not our hatred of hypocrisy and pretense ever to diminish. Encourage us in our endeavor to live above the common level of life. Make us to choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong, and never to be content with a half-truth when the whole can be won. Endow us with courage that is born of loyalty to all that is noble and worthy, that scorns to compromise with vice and injustice and knows no fear when truth and right are in jeopardy. Guard us against flippancy and irreverence in the sacred things of life. Grant us new ties of friendship and new opportunities of service. Kindle our hearts in fellowship with those of a cheerful countenance, and soften our hearts with sympathy for those who sorrow and suffer. Help us to maintain the honor of the Corps untarnished and unsullied and to show forth in our lives the ideals of West Point in doing our duty to Thee and to our Country. All of which we ask in the name of the Great Friend and Master of all. Amen.

*Joachim Hagopian is a West Point graduate and former US Army officer. He has written a manuscript based on his unique military experience entitled ["Don't Let The Bastards Getcha Down."](#) It examines and focuses on US international relations, leadership and national security issues. After the military, Joachim earned a master's degree in Clinical Psychology and worked as a licensed therapist in the mental health field for more than a quarter century. He now concentrates on his writing and has a blog site at <http://empireexposed.blogspot.com/>. He is also a regular contributor to [Global Research](#) and a syndicated columnist at [Veterans Today](#).*

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