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John McAfee

John David McAfee (/ˈmækəfiː/ MAK-ə-fee; [2][3] 18 September 1945 – 23 June 2021)[4][5] was a British-American computer programmer, businessman, and two-time presidential candidate. In 1987 he wrote the first commercial anti-virus software, founding McAfee Associates to sell his creation. McAfee resigned in 1994 and sold his remaining stake in the company. [6]

McAfee became the company's most vocal critic in later years, urging consumers to uninstall the company's antivirus software, which he characterized as <u>bloatware</u>. McAfee had also disavowed the company's continued use of his name in branding, a practice that has persisted in spite of a short-lived corporate rebrand attempt under <u>Intel</u> ownership.

McAfee's wealth peaked in 2007 at \$100 million, before his fortunes plummeted in the financial crisis of 2007–2008. After leaving McAfee Associates, he founded the companies Tribal Voice (makers of the PowWow chat program), QuorumEx, and Future Tense Central, among others, and was involved in leadership positions in the companies Everykey, MGT Capital Investments, and Luxcore, among others. His personal and business interests included smartphone apps, cryptocurrency, yoga, and recreational drug use. He resided for a number of years in Belize, but returned to the United States in 2013 while wanted in Belize for questioning on suspicion of murder. [7]

McAfee was also a political activist. He unsuccessfully sought the <u>Libertarian Party</u> nomination for <u>president of</u> the United States in 2016 and 2020.

In October 2020, McAfee was arrested in Spain over U.S. tax evasion charges. [8] U.S. federal prosecutors brought criminal and civil charges alleging McAfee failed to pay income taxes over a four-year period. [9][10]

On 23 June 2021, McAfee was found dead due to <u>suicide</u> by <u>hanging</u> in a prison cell <u>near Barcelona</u>, shortly after his extradition to the U.S. was authorized by Spain. [11][12]

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John McAfee speaking at <u>Politicon</u> in Pasadena, California in 2016

rasadena, Camornia in 2010	
Born	John David McAfee 18 September 1945 Cinderford, Gloucestershire, England
Died	23 June 2021 (aged 75) Sant Esteve Sesrovires, Barcelona, Spain
Cause of death	Suicide by hanging ^[1]
Education	Roanoke College (BA)
Occupation	Businessman • computer programmer • perennial candidate
Known for	Founder of McAfee
Political party	<u>Libertarian</u> (before 2015, 2016–2021) Cyber (2015–2016)

Janice Dyson (m. 2013)

Spouse(s)

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Early life

McAfee was born in <u>Cinderford</u>, in the <u>Forest of Dean</u>, <u>Gloucestershire</u>, United Kingdom, <u>[13]</u> on 18 September 1945, <u>[14]</u> on a <u>U.S. Army</u> base (of the 596th Ordnance Ammunition Company), to an American father, who was stationed there, and a British mother. <u>[15]</u> He was primarily raised in <u>Salem</u>, <u>Virginia</u>. McAfee said that he felt as much British as he felt American. <u>[16]</u> When McAfee was <u>15</u>, his father, an abusive alcoholic, killed himself with a gun. <u>[16]</u>

He received a bachelor's degree in mathematics in 1967 from Roanoke College, which subsequently awarded him an honorary Sc.D. degree in 2008. [17]

Ventures

Before McAfee Associates

McAfee was employed as a programmer by NASA's Institute for Space Studies in New York City from 1968 to 1970 working on the Apollo program. From there, he went to Univac as a software designer, and later to Xerox as an operating system architect. In 1978, he joined Computer Sciences Corporation as a software consultant. He worked for consulting firm Booz Allen Hamilton from 1980 to 1982. In the 1980s, while employed by Lockheed, McAfee received a copy of Brain, the first computer virus for the PC, and began developing software to combat viruses.

McAfee Associates

In 1987, McAfee founded McAfee Associates, which sold his program, the first anti-virus software to market. The company was incorporated in Delaware in 1992, and had its initial public offering the same year. In 1994, two years after McAfee Associates went public, McAfee sold his remaining stake in the company. He had no further involvement in its operations.

After various mergers and ownership changes, <u>Intel</u> acquired McAfee in August 2010. [20] In January 2014, Intel announced that McAfee-related products would be marketed as Intel Security. McAfee expressed his pleasure at the name change, saying, "I am now everlastingly grateful to Intel for freeing me from this terrible association with the worst software on the planet." [21]

After McAfee Associates

Other business ventures that were founded by McAfee include <u>Tribal Voice</u>, which developed one of the first instant messaging programs, <u>PowWow</u>. In 2000, he invested in and joined the board of directors of <u>Zone Labs</u>, makers of <u>firewall software</u>, prior to its acquisition by <u>Check Point Software</u> in 2003. <u>[23]</u>

In August 2009, <u>The New York Times</u> reported that McAfee's personal fortune had declined to \$4 million from a peak of \$100 million due to the effect of the <u>financial crisis of 2007–2008</u> on his investments. [19]

In 2009, McAfee was interviewed in Belize for the <u>CNBC</u> special "The Bubble Decade," in which it was reported that he had invested in and/or built many mansions in the USA that went unsold when the 2007 global recession hit. The report also discussed his quest to produce plants for possible medicinal uses on his land in Belize. [24]

In February 2010, McAfee started the company QuorumEx, [25] headquartered in Belize, which aimed to produce herbal antibiotics that disrupt quorum sensing in bacteria. [26][27]

In June 2013, McAfee uploaded a parody video titled *How to Uninstall McAfee Antivirus* onto his YouTube channel. In the video, McAfee criticized McAfee's antivirus software while snorting white powder, and being stroked and undressed by scantily clad women. The video has garnered over 10 million views. McAfee told Reuters that he made the video to ridicule the media's negative coverage of him. A spokesman for McAfee Inc. called the video's statements "ludicrous." [28]

Also in 2013, McAfee started the company Future Tense Central, which aimed to produce a secure computer network device called the D-Central. [29] By 2016, it was also serving as an incubator. [30]

In February 2014, McAfee announced Cognizant, an application for smartphones, which displays information about the permissions of other installed applications. In April 2014, Cognizant was renamed DCentral 1, and an Android version of it was released for free on Google Play. [32][33]

At the <u>DEF CON</u> conference in <u>Las Vegas</u>, Nevada, in August 2014, he warned Americans not to use smartphones, suggesting <u>apps</u> are used to spy on clueless consumers who do not read privacy user agreements. [34]

In January 2016, he became the chief evangelist for security startup Everykey. [30]

In February 2016, McAfee received media attention by publicly volunteering to decrypt the iPhone used by the San Bernardino shooters, avoiding the need for Apple to build a backdoor. [35]



McAfee at DEF CON 2015

McAfee later admitted that his claims of how simple cracking the phone would be were a publicity stunt, though he still claimed he could pull it off. [36]

In May 2016, McAfee was appointed chief executive chairman and <u>CEO</u> of MGT Capital Investments, a technology <u>holding company</u>. The company initially stated that it would rename itself John McAfee Global Technologies, [37] although this plan was abandoned due to a dispute with Intel over rights to the "McAfee" name. [38] McAfee changed MGT's focus from <u>social gaming</u> to cybersecurity, stating in an interview that "anti-virus software is dead, it no longer works," and that "the new paradigm has to stop the hacker getting in" before they can do damage. [39]

Soon after joining MGT, McAfee claimed that he and his team had exploited a flaw in the Android operating system that allowed him to read encrypted messages from WhatsApp. Gizmodo investigated these claims, and reported that McAfee had sent reporters malware-infected phones to make this hack work. McAfee responded to these accusations, writing: "Of course the phones had malware on them. How that malware got there is the story, which we will release after speaking with Google. It involves a serious flaw in the Android architecture." [41]

McAfee also moved MGT into the <u>mining</u> of <u>bitcoin</u> and other <u>cryptocurrencies</u>, saying that it was intended both to make money for the company, and to increase MGT's expertise in dealing with blockchains, which he thought was important for cybersecurity. [42]

In August 2017, McAfee stepped down as CEO, instead serving as MGT's "chief cybersecurity visionary." In January 2018, he left the company altogether. Both sides stated that the decision was amicable, with McAfee saying that he wanted to spend all of his time on cryptocurrencies, while the company stated that they were getting pressured by potential investors to disassociate themselves from McAfee. [43]

On 13 August 2018, McAfee took a position of CEO with Luxcore, a cryptocurrency company focused on enterprise solutions. [44]

Politics

Political positions

McAfee was a <u>libertarian</u>, advocating the <u>decriminalization of cannabis</u>, an end to the <u>war on drugs</u>, <u>non-interventionism</u> in foreign policy, a <u>free market economy which does not redistribute wealth</u>, and <u>upholding free trade</u>. McAfee <u>supported abolishing the Transportation Security</u> Administration. [45]

McAfee advocated increased cyber awareness, and more action against the threat of cyberwarfare. [46]

McAfee advocated <u>religious liberty</u>, saying that business owners should be able to deny service in circumstances that contradict their religious beliefs, and: "No one is forcing you to buy anything or to choose one person over another. So why should I be forced to do anything if I am not harming you? It's my choice to sell, your choice to buy." [47]

2016 presidential campaign

On 8 September 2015, McAfee announced that he would seek the office of president of the United States in the 2016 presidential election, as the candidate of a newly formed political party called the Cyber Party. [15][48] On 24 December 2015, he re-announced his candidacy bid saying that he would instead seek the presidential nomination of the Libertarian Party. [30][49] On the campaign trail,

McAfee consistently polled among the top three presidential candidates for his party with his rivals Gary Johnson and Austin Petersen. [50] The three candidates appeared in the Libertarian Party's first nationally televised presidential debate on 29 March 2016. [51]

McAfee announced that his vice presidential choice would be the photographer, former <u>commercial</u> real estate broker, and Libertarian activist Judd Weiss. [52]

McAfee was the runner-up in the primaries [53] but came in third at the 2016 Libertarian National Convention. [54]

Notable endorsements

- Adam Kokesh, talk show host and activist^[55]
- John Moore, Nevada assemblyman^[56]
- L. Neil Smith, science fiction author and activist^[57]

2020 presidential campaign

Contrary to his assertion at the <u>2016</u> convention, McAfee announced on 3 June 2018, via <u>Twitter</u> that he would run for president again in <u>2020</u>, either with the <u>Libertarian Party</u> or under the banner of a party of his own creation; <u>[58]</u> he ultimately ran as a <u>Libertarian.</u> His main campaign issue was to promote the use of cryptocurrencies.

On 22 January 2019, McAfee announced via <u>Twitter</u> that he would be continuing his campaign "in exile", following reports that he, his wife, and four of his campaign staff were being indicted for tax-related felonies by the <u>IRS</u>. McAfee indicated that he was in "international waters", and had previously tweeted that he was on his way to <u>Venezuela</u>. [60] The IRS has not commented on the alleged indictments. [61] On 29 June, McAfee tweeted that his campaign



headquarters had been relocated to <u>Havana</u>, <u>Cuba</u>. [62] Around the same time, McAfee defended <u>Communist</u> revolutionary <u>Che Guevara</u> on Twitter, putting himself at odds with the Libertarian Party, with <u>Libertarian National Committee</u> chairman <u>Nicholas Sarwark</u> saying, "I hear very little buzz about McAfee this time around ... making a defense of Che Guevara from Cuba may ingratiate him with the Cuban government, but it didn't resonate well with Libertarians." [63]

In a tweet on 4 March 2020, McAfee simultaneously suspended his 2020 presidential campaign, endorsed Vermin Supreme, and announced his campaign for the Libertarian party vice presidential nomination. The next day, he returned to the presidential field, reversing the suspension of his bid, as "No one in the Libertarian Party Would [sic] consider me For Vice President." The next month, he endorsed Adam Kokesh; he simultaneously became Kokesh's vice-presidential candidate, though McAfee decided to also continue his campaign for the presidency. At the 2020 Libertarian National Convention, McAfee was again not nominated, losing to Jo Jorgensen and Spike Cohen for the presidential and vice-presidential slots.

Other views

McAfee contended that taxes were illegal, and claimed in 2019 that he had not filed a tax return since 2010. He referred to himself as being a "prime target" of the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. [68]

In July 2017, McAfee wrote on Twitter that he predicted that the price of one bitcoin would jump to \$500,000 within three years, and that "If not, I will eat my own dick on national television." In July 2019, he continued to defend a prediction of \$1 million by the end of 2020. In January 2020, however, he stated on Twitter that his previous predictions were simply "A ruse to onboard new users", and that bitcoin had limited potential because it was "an ancient technology".

Legal issues

On 30 April 2012, McAfee's property in <u>Orange Walk Town</u>, <u>Belize</u>, was raided by the <u>Gang Suppression Unit</u> of the <u>Belize Police Department</u>. At that time, McAfee was in bed with a girlfriend. A GSU press release stated that McAfee was arrested for unlicensed drug manufacturing and possession of an unlicensed weapon. [27][72][73] He was released without charge. [74] In 2012, Belize police spokesman, Raphael Martinez, confirmed that McAfee was neither convicted nor charged, only suspected. [75]

In January 2014, McAfee in Canada claimed that when the Belizean government raided his property, it seized his assets, and that his house later burned down under suspicious circumstances. [76]

On 2 August 2015, McAfee was arrested in <u>Henderson County</u>, <u>Tennessee</u>, on one count of driving under the influence and one count of possession of a firearm while intoxicated. [77]

In July 2019, McAfee and members of his entourage were arrested while his yacht was docked at Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic, on suspicion of carrying high-caliber weapons and ammunition. They were held for four days before being released. [78]

On 11 August 2020, McAfee fabricated a hoax [79] that he was arrested in Norway during the COVID-19 pandemic, after refusing to replace a lace thong with a more effective face mask. McAfee later posted a picture of himself to Twitter with a bruised eye, claiming that it occurred during this arrest. [80] However, the photo of the alleged arrest shows an officer with the German word for "police" on their uniform, so it could not have been an arrest in Norway. The Augsburg Police later confirmed McAfee unsuccessfully attempted to enter Germany on that day, but was not arrested. [81]

Murder of Gregory Faull

On 12 November 2012, Belize police began to search for McAfee as a "person of interest" in connection to the murder of American expatriate Gregory Viant Faull. Faull was found dead of a gunshot wound on 11 November 2012, at his home on the island of Ambergris Caye, the largest island in Belize. [82][83] Faull was a neighbor of McAfee's. [84] In a November 2012 interview with Wired, [85] McAfee said that he had always been afraid police would kill him and refused their routine questions; he evaded the Belizean authorities. [84] Belize's prime minister, Dean Barrow, called McAfee "extremely paranoid, even bonkers." [86] McAfee fled Belize when he was sought for questioning concerning the murder. [87][88][89]

The magazine <u>Vice</u> accidentally gave away McAfee's location at a Guatemalan resort in early December 2012, when a photo taken by one of its journalists accompanying McAfee was posted with the <u>EXIF geolocation</u> metadata still attached. [90] While in <u>Guatemala</u>, McAfee asked Chad Essley, an American cartoonist and animator, to set up a blog so that McAfee could write about his experience while on the run. [91] McAfee then appeared publicly in <u>Guatemala City</u>, where he unsuccessfully sought political asylum. [92]

On 5 December 2012, McAfee was arrested for illegally entering Guatemala. Shortly afterward, he was placed under arrest, and a board to review McAfee's plea for asylum was formed. The committee denied his asylum, so he was taken from his holding facility to a detention center in order to await

deportation to Belize. [93]

On 6 December 2012, <u>Reuters</u> and <u>ABC News</u> reported that McAfee had two minor heart attacks in a Guatemalan detention center and was hospitalized. <u>[94][95]</u> McAfee's lawyer stated that his client had not suffered heart attacks, but had instead suffered from <u>high blood pressure</u> and <u>anxiety attacks</u>. <u>[96][97][98]</u> McAfee later said he had faked the heart attacks while being held in Guatemala, to buy time for his attorney to file a series of appeals that ultimately prevented his deportation to Belize, thus hastening the government's decision to send him back to the United States. <u>[99]</u>

On 12 December 2012, McAfee was released from detention in Guatemala, and deported to the United States. [100] On 14 November 2018, the Circuit Court in Orlando, Florida, refused to dismiss a wrongful death lawsuit against McAfee for Faull's death. [101][102]

U.S. finance charges, arrest in Spain, and planned extradition

In January 2019, McAfee announced that he was on the run from U.S. authorities, and living internationally on a boat following the convening of a grand jury to indict him, his wife, and four of his 2020 Presidential campaign workers on tax-related charges. [103] At the time the Internal Revenue Service had not independently confirmed the existence any such indictment. [103]

On 5 October 2020, McAfee was arrested in Spain at the request of the $\underline{\text{U.S. Department of Justice}}$ for tax evasion. The June indictment, which was unsealed upon his arrest, alleged he earned millions of dollars from 2014 to 2018, but failed to file income tax returns. [104]

On 6 October 2020, the <u>U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission</u> (SEC) filed a complaint that further alleged that McAfee and his bodyguard promoted certain <u>initial coin offerings</u> in a fraudulent cryptocurrency pump-and-dump scheme. <u>[105]</u> According to the SEC, McAfee presented himself as an impartial investor when he promoted the ICOs, despite the fact that he was allegedly paid \$23 million in digital assets in exchange for the promotions. <u>[105]</u> On 5 March 2021, the <u>U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York</u> formally indicted McAfee and an executive adviser on these charges. <u>[106]</u>

McAfee was incarcerated in Spain, pending extradition to the United States. [106][107] On 23 June 2021, the Spanish National Court authorized the extradition of McAfee to the United States, for criminal charges in Tennessee. [6] McAfee died a few hours later. [108] The New York extradition case was still pending in a lower Spanish court. [6]

Personal life

The night after McAfee arrived in the United States after being deported from Guatemala in December 2012, he was solicited by Janice Dyson, then a prostitute in <u>South Beach</u> (<u>Miami Beach</u>). The two spent the night together. Despite Dyson being more than 30 years McAfee's junior, McAfee and Dyson subsequently began a relationship, and married in 2013. [110]

McAfee originally took up residence in Portland, Oregon, in 2013. [111]

In a 2012 article in <u>Mensa Bulletin</u>, the magazine of <u>American Mensa</u>, McAfee stated that being the developer of the first commercial anti computer virus program had made him "the most popular hacking target," confiding that "Hackers see hacking me as a badge of honor." He added that for his own security, he had other people buy his computer equipment for him, used pseudonyms for setting up computers, and logging in, and changed his <u>IP address</u> several times a day. [112] When asked on another occasion if he personally used McAfee's antivirus software, McAfee replied: "I take it off," and that "It's too annoving." [113]

In 2013, McAfee claimed that the former cocaine baron "Boston" George Jung was writing his official biography, *No Domain*. [114]

In 2015, McAfee resided in Lexington, Tennessee. [77]

In December 2018 he claimed, in his Twitter feed, to have 47 genetic children. [115][116][117][118]

Death

On 23 June 2021, McAfee was found dead in his prison cell at <u>Brians 2 Penitentiary Center</u>, <u>near Barcelona</u>, hours after the Spanish National Court ordered his extradition to the United States on criminal charges filed in Tennessee by the <u>Justice Department</u>'s tax division. [6] The Catalan Justice <u>Department</u> said in a statement that "everything indicates" McAfee took his own life. [119][120][121][122]

His death has sparked internet conspiracy theories in a manner resembling "Epstein didn't kill himself". On multiple occasions before his death, McAfee asserted that if he were ever to be found dead by hanging, it would mean he was murdered. Minutes after the report of his death, an image of the letter Q was posted to his Instagram feed (as a deceased person, his account has now been taken down), possibly in reference to the QAnon conspiracy theory. Instagram feed to by the press as speculative, "bizarre", and "baseless", with their primary source of evidence mainly consisting of McAfee's own statements. Instagram feed (125) [126] [127]

In the media

Gringo: The Dangerous Life of John McAfee is a Showtime Networks documentary about the portion of McAfee's life spent in Belize. It began airing in September 2016. [128] The documentary covers allegations of both the rape of McAfee's former business partner, Allison Adonizio, and the murders of Belizean David Middleton and American expat Gregory Faull. [129][130] In an interview with Bloomberg's Pimm Fox and Kathleen Hayes on 8 September 2016, McAfee claimed that these incidents were fabricated, saying that "Belize is a third-world banana republic and you can go down there and make any story you want if you pay your interviewees, which Showtime did." [131][132]

In March 2017, it was reported that Glenn Ficarra and John Requa would direct a film about McAfee titled *King of the Jungle*, with a script by Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski. At various points, Johnny Depp, Michael Keaton, and Seth Rogen were reported to have been signed to roles in the film and later to have left the project. In November 2019, Zac Efron was reported to be starring in the film as journalist Ari Furman. [133][134][135][136]

On 12 May 2017, McAfee was interviewed on <u>ABC</u>'s 20/20 regarding the alleged murder of his neighbor, Greg Faull. McAfee's wife, Janice, was interviewed in the segment as well. [137]

Books

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- The Fabric Of Self: Meditations on Vanity and Love, Woodland Publications, 2001^[140]
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Further reading

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External links

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