



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on June 24, 2021

John McAfee: Suicide?

John McAfee — famous software developer and infamous crypto bad boy — is dead. He was found Wednesday hanging in his Spanish prison cell in what is being described as an apparent suicide. He was being held there on charges of tax evasion in the United States. Just hours before he was found dead, a Spanish court had agreed to his extradition to the United States to stand trial for those charges.

McAfee had tweeted in 2019 that if he ever committed suicide, he didn't do it; he was murdered.



AP Images

McAfee, 75, was a complicated man who lived a complicated life. He made his original fortune as the developer of McAfee anti-virus software in the 1980s. In the 1990s, he sold the company. McAfee used the proceeds from that sale and his deep knowledge of computers — especially his knowledge of privacy, security, and hacking — to launch several other successful ventures that made him extremely wealthy. In 2007, he was estimated to have a net worth of \$100 million. The financial bubble burst of 2008 reduced his net worth to just over \$4 million, as many of his investments failed.

A libertarian who lived a life that could easily have been described as libertine, McAfee was no stranger to either controversy or legal trouble. He once tweeted that he was the biological father of scores of children. He often posted pictures and videos of himself using drugs. He campaigned twice (in 2016 and 2020) to be the Libertarian Party presidential candidate. In his campaigns and at other times, he advocated for the legalization of drugs, especially marijuana.

The legal problems that eventually led to his being arrested in Spain — at the request of the U.S. Department of Justice — stemmed in part from campaign finances. During his 2020 bid for the Libertarian ticket, he tweeted that he would continue his campaign “in exile” after it was announced that he, his wife, and four members of his campaign staff had been indicted for tax-related felonies. He had previously boasted via Twitter that he believed taxes are illegal and had not filed a return since 2010.

But his trouble with the IRS was not the first time McAfee had found himself on the radar of law enforcement.

At various times (and in countries spanning multiple continents) he was arrested or charged in connection with crimes including driving while intoxicated, drug possession, drug manufacturing, possession of illegal weapons, and — *most famously* — the murder of his neighbor (and fellow American expatriate) Gregory Viant Faullin while living in Belize. On that charge, McAfee fled Belize and sought asylum in Guatemala. Instead of receiving asylum, he was arrested for entering Guatemala illegally and deported to the United States. When he refused to return to Belize and face the murder charges, he was subsequently found by a court there to be “criminally liable” in a wrongful-death lawsuit.

McAfee was also a thorn in the side of the Surveillance State. He often promoted the use of encryption



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technology for data at rest (documents, pictures, and other files stored on a drive) and data in motion (phone calls, text messages, e-mails, and other forms of communication) to protect it from the prying eyes of government agencies. In fact, many of the companies he founded, funded, or was otherwise involved in, were focused on cryptography.

In 2016, when [China hacked into secured systems within the Office of Personnel Management \(OPM\)](#), McAfee showed how [NSA “back doors” in firewalls and other network components were to blame](#).

The final chapter in his life is no less enigmatic than any or all of the previous chapters. Years before his extradition was ordered, McAfee tweeted on November 30, 2019:

Getting subtle messages from U.S. officials saying, in effect: “We’re coming for you McAfee! We’re going to kill yourself”. I got a tattoo today just in case. If I suicide myself, I didn’t. I was whackd. Check my right arm.

The tweet was accompanied by a picture of the “Whackd” tattoo.

On October 15, 2020 — while in custody in Spain — his Twitter account tweeted, “I am content in here. I have friends. The food is good. All is well. Know that if I hang myself, a la Epstein, it will be no fault of mine.”

And then, within hours of his extradition orders to the United States to face tax charges, he was found dead by hanging.

There are three possibilities that this writer can see: First, McAfee died as he lived; enigmatically. He set this whole thing up two years ago planning to kill himself before he would face what — for a 75-year-old man — would be life in prison. And he did it all as a last hack. Second — his tattoo and previous claims notwithstanding — he decided at the last minute to hang himself and avoid that “life sentence.” Or third, McAfee was “Epsteined.”

There is not enough information to know for sure which of those possibilities is the truth, but this much is certain: The Surveillance State has one less enemy today than it had yesterday. And — shortcomings and all — this writer prays, “Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord.”



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