

Peter Thiel was reportedly an FBI informant

web.archive.org/web/20231020012230/https://www.theverge.com/2023/10/19/23923759/peter-thiel-fbi-informant-foreign-influence-report

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A report from Insider alleges that Thiel passed info about foreign contacts and ‘Silicon Valley intrigue’ to the agency starting in 2021.

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Image: Getty Images

PayPal co-founder, venture capitalist, Republican megadonor, and [disputed vampire](#) Peter Thiel may also have been an FBI informant — at least according to [a new report from Insider](#).

Insider spoke to multiple people who claim Thiel became a “confidential human source” for a Los Angeles-based agent named Johnathan Buma — a term that indicates a long-running relationship with the FBI, allegedly beginning in 2021. While Thiel was once a high-profile supporter of former President Donald Trump, a subject of multiple FBI investigations, the deal is said to have excluded any information about Thiel’s domestic political contacts. *Insider* says it focused instead on “foreign contacts and Silicon Valley intrigue,” potentially including foreign influence operations in the tech industry. He was apparently outed as revenge for not investing in a right-wing blogger’s startups.

Neither Thiel nor the FBI commented to *Insider* about the report. And one of *Insider*’s sources is Charles Johnson, a far-right political figure and blogger that *Insider* acknowledges has spread a [mix of accurate and false information](#) in the past. But Johnson’s relationship with Thiel has been previously reported, including in Kashmir Hill’s [recent book on facial recognition startup Clearview AI](#), a company Johnson [claims in a lawsuit](#) to have co-founded. (In that March suit, Johnson identifies himself as an FBI informant as well.) Johnson told *Insider* he introduced Thiel to Buma — then exposed him because Johnson “felt betrayed that Thiel did not invest in Johnson’s own startups, which he had expected Thiel to do in exchange.”

Holding longtime informant status would put Thiel at odds with parts of the Republican party, which has grown hostile to the FBI amid its investigations of Trump. (Granted, that hostility didn’t stop Trump’s Truth Social from [tipping off the agency](#) to a man who made threats on the social network.) But [Thiel has stepped back](#) from politics during the 2024 US presidential election, reportedly because he felt that Republicans were focused on domestic culture wars instead of American economic competitiveness. As *Insider* notes, Thiel has [urged the FBI to investigate](#) Google for Chinese government infiltration. Passing the agency tips about foreign contacts would align neatly with his concerns about foreign influence in tech — and until he can [hole up full time in a bunker in New Zealand](#), his deep Silicon Valley connections are likely worth cultivating by the FBI.