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Musk's DOGE Teen Was Fired By Cybersecurity Firm for Leaking Company Secrets

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Elon Musk, chief executive officer of Tesla Inc., during the 60th presidential inauguration in the rotunda of the US Capitol in Washington, DC, US, on Monday, Jan. 20, 2025. Donald Trump's Monday swearing-in marks just the second time in US history that a president lost the office and managed to return to power - a comeback cementing his place within the Republican Party as an enduring, transformational figure rather than a one-term aberration.

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(Bloomberg) -- Edward Coristine, a 19-year-old member of Elon Musk's squad that's criss-crossing US government agencies, was fired from an internship after he was accused of sharing information with a competitor.

"Edward has been terminated for leaking internal information to the competitors," said a June 2022 message from an executive of the firm, Path Network, which was seen by Bloomberg News. "This is unacceptable and there is zero tolerance for this."

A spokesperson for the Arizona-based hosting and data-security firm said Thursday: "I can confirm that Edward Coristine's brief contract was terminated after the conclusion of an internal investigation into the leaking of proprietary company information that coincided with his tenure."

Afterward, Coristine wrote that he'd retained access to the cybersecurity company's computers, though he said he hadn't taken advantage of it.

"I had access to every single machine," he wrote on Discord in late 2022, weeks after he was dismissed from Path Network, according to messages seen by Bloomberg. Posting under the name "Rivage," which six people who know him said was his alias, Coristine said he could have wiped Path's customer-supporting servers if he'd wished. He added, "I never exploited it because it's just not me."

His comments, made in a Discord server focused on another competitor company, worried executives at Path Network, who

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believed there was no legitimate reason for a former employee to access their machines, according to a person familiar with the incident. The person asked not to be named, citing the sensitivity of the matter.

▶ **Related video:** Musk's 25-year-old DOGE staffer resigns after racist posts emerge: report (MSNBC)

In response to his firing, Cristine, who is wearing a blazer and shorts in one undated photo that was posted anonymously online, wrote on Discord that he had done "nothing contractually wrong" while working at Path Network.

Several of Cristine's online peers and former co-workers said they were surprised that the teenage friend they knew has been brought into one of the most high-profile teams in the Trump administration. His 2022 dismissal and the circumstances surrounding it add to questions about how he arrived in this new job with Musk's Department of Government Efficiency and how he'll handle the sensitive government information that comes with it.

"Giving Elon Musk's goon squad access to systems that control payments to Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and other key federal programs is a national security nightmare," Senator Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat and a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, told Bloomberg News about his general concerns regarding the DOGE team. "Even having any distribution

concerns regarding the DOGE team. Every hour new disturbing details emerge to prove that these guys have no business anywhere close to sensitive information or critical networks."

Earlier this week, Wyden and other Democrats on the Senate intelligence panel asked White House Chief of Staff Susie Wiles to explain how DOGE members were vetted and what steps the Trump administration has taken to ensure the classified and unclassified systems and records the DOGE team has accessed are safeguarded from disclosure.

Coristine didn't respond to requests for comment. Attempts to reach his parents for comment through publicly listed telephone numbers were unsuccessful. The White House wouldn't comment directly on Coristine's employment, but an official who discussed the situation on the condition of anonymity to discuss personnel matters said all DOGE staffers under Musk were working as employees of relevant agencies with security clearances. Their employment is in compliance with federal law and they are not outside advisers, the official said.

The official acknowledged that DOGE's operations were being viewed by some government employees as disruptive, but said the efforts were necessary to carry out Trump's vision.

Coristine, who also interned at Musk's Neuralink according to a cached online biography, is part of a core group of DOGE employees who are gathering datasets on government personnel, contracts and programs, according to people familiar with the matter. They asked not to be named because they don't have permission to discuss the matter publicly.

In meetings at the US Agency for International Development and the General Services Administration, for example, Coristine and other colleagues have discussed how they can use that data to potentially replace government employees with artificial intelligence and train chatbots to do the work.

Coristine regularly posted on both Discord and the messaging service Telegram in 2021 and 2022, when he was under 18. His posts are a mix of discussions about Path Network, coder-talk and lewd



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are a mix of discussions about Path Network, cyber talk and some insults. Wired also reported earlier on some of Cristine's history online.

On Telegram, he used language that suggested he was seeking a tool used in hacking, according to three people familiar with his online personas, a copy of the messages and two people familiar with cyber attacks. The people asked not to be named to discuss sensitive matters.

DOGE's moves across US agencies have put a spotlight on how Musk, the world's richest person with a \$412 billion fortune, tends to operate without regard for norms or traditional boundaries. Cristine's online postings and his termination from Path Network raise questions about how members of the DOGE team were vetted. Trump's administration has not provided detailed information on that process. The Wall Street Journal reported Thursday that a different member of the DOGE team had resigned after racist posts were discovered on his social media account.

People familiar with Cristine's DOGE work said he would need a security clearance at least at the secret level to access the secure spaces that hold some of the information he and his coworkers are seeking. It's unclear what clearance he has, if any, though Trump on his first day in office issued an executive order to grant top secret and sensitive compartmented information security clearances for six months to at least some individuals so they could "immediately access the facilities and technology" to perform their work.

Online Chats

Two US law enforcement officials who investigate cybercrimes told Bloomberg they've been tracking online chat rooms that Cristine and others participated in for at least a year. The officials, who requested anonymity because they are not authorized to publicly discuss their work, said they first became aware of him, under the usernames "Rivage" and "JoeyCrafter," while investigating an alleged hacker who Cristine was communicating with in an online forum.

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The officials wouldn't identify the hacker or the case they were investigating.

In one message from November 2022 seen by Bloomberg News, the "JoeyCrafter" persona wrote: "Looking for capable, powerful & reliable L7." That message, posted in a Telegram group, refers to a type of cyber attack that knocks out websites with overwhelming internet traffic, according to three people familiar with that type of attack and its terminology, who asked not to be identified citing the sensitivity of the matter. It's unclear whether he acquired or used the application.

Coristine's presence in the forums and his chat history wouldn't necessarily disqualify him from obtaining a secret-level clearance, said Brad Moss, a Washington-based lawyer who specializes in security clearances. That's because that information likely wouldn't show up during a preliminary vetting process, which includes speaking with an investigator and a background check, interviews with friends and neighbors and a scrubbing of public-facing social media platforms such as Facebook, X and Instagram.

Yet for a higher-level clearance, "it's much more likely they would have had to submit to a polygraph and that kind of behavior would absolutely have come up, and it would have raised concerns," Moss said. "There are mitigating factors though. How long ago was it? Was the person a minor? Is the person still engaged in it?"

Tesla.Sexy LLC

According to other people who have been online with him, Coristine has spent much of his teenage years on the Internet.

By the time he was 17, Coristine had started at least three limited liability corporations, all registered to the family's five-bedroom house in Connecticut. Those include Mistdeck LLC, DiamondCDN LLC and — in a nod to Musk's publicly traded electric carmaker — Tesla.Sexy LLC, an image hosting service. (Of the three LLCs, only Tesla.Sexy is still active.)

resid.sex is still active.)

Edward Coristine also worked more typical teenage jobs. He was a camp counselor at a day camp and worked as a warehouse team member at his dad's popcorn company, according to a since-deleted LinkedIn account under the younger Coristine's name.

JoeyCrafter was a member of Telegram groups called "Kiwi Farms Christmas Chat" and "Kiwi Farms 100% Real No Fake No Virus," both referencing an online forum known for harassment campaigns. Typically, the site has been used to share the personal information of a target, encouraging others to harass them online, in-person, over the phone or by falsely alerting police to a violent crime or active shooter incident at their home.

In online messages, the aliases that investigators said Coristine uses have regularly discussed free speech and internet providers' role in keeping websites online, including one that hosted the neo-Nazi site the Daily Stormer.

--With assistance from Gregory Korte.

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