

# THE SUSPECTED 2019 EXPOSURE OF JOHNATHAN BUMA'S SOURCE

One of several reasons why I've been cautious about FBI counterintelligence agent Johnathan Buma's claims of whistleblower retaliation is how little care he has shown to protect his former informants.

Since the summer, multiple outlets have reported on Buma's story, most focusing on Buma's claim that his supervisors are retaliating because he shared source reporting with the FBI implicating Rudy Giuliani. After a right winger posted his statement, Insider did a story, followed by New Yorker, then MoJo, followed by an on-screen interview with Insider. The other day, MoJo reported that the FBI had searched his home for classified documents.

Buma submitted two complaints to Congress: A shorter one to Jim Jordan's weaponization committee, and a more detailed one – which was released in redacted form in Insider's first story on Buma – to the Senate Judiciary Committee. Between the two of them and a follow-up report from Insider, the reporting on Buma described six informants:

- **Dynamo:** A US-based businessman with close ties to Ukraine and Russia and, seemingly, a real gripe with Pavel Fuks
- **Rollie:** A former KGB agent who evolved into a clandestine operative in the Security Bureau of Ukraine (SBU) after the Soviet Union

collapsed and then started a successful real estate business and a foundation that promotes the rule of law in society with stated purpose that includes holding criminal oligarchs accountable or pilfering Ukrainian state funds

- The Economist: A highly educated academic with expertise in international business and economics who consulted with Ukraine's Prosecutor General's Office and Rollie's foundation
- Mr. X: A foreign informant with information about specific money laundering transactions pertaining to Ihor Kolomoyskyi
- Genius: Chuck Johnson, whom Buma had recruited in 2020
- Peter Thiel

At least four of these informants have been shut down.

Buma describes that his managers shut down Johnson as a source – for what Buma attributes to Johnson's expression of white supremacist views on social media – in 2021, while the FBI agent was on vacation. Buma dismissed those far right postings as Johnson's means to retain his credibility among other white supremacists. But Buma doesn't mention any of the other fifty or so reasons why Johnson was totally inappropriate to be an FBI source, nor does he describe the larger context of FBI's recognition, after January 6, that they had made a number of key members of militia groups informants to report

on topics other than those militia groups. Buma's treatment of Johnson seriously discredits his claims as it is, but that shocking lapse of judgement is not the point of this post.

Buma described that Rollie and The Economist were only briefly FBI informants in early 2019. He makes it clear they were fairly quickly identified to be part of the larger information operation targeting Joe Biden. While Buma acknowledges that they were part of an info op, he nevertheless claims that information they shared on Hunter Biden was the primary reason the Delaware investigation turned to examine influence peddling and tax crimes. Buma's claims about the Hunter Biden investigation are among those that don't match the public record (but which would be interesting, if true, because it might suggest Bill Barr funneled that report to Delaware like he funneled other dodgy allegations).

By contrast, Buma boasts of Dynamo's productivity, crediting him with a range of critical reporting on organized crime and money laundering. He specifically cites Dynamo's import in subsequent legal action against Ihor Kolomoyskyi and Serhiy Kurchenko and what he describes to be largely unresolved reporting on Fuks. Buma doesn't describe Dynamo providing any reporting on Andrii Derkach; indeed, he blames Fuks for Andriy Telizhenko's information op, not Derkach. Nor does Buma describe Dynamo reporting on Mykola Zlochevsky or which Ukrainians and Russians Dynamo reported on in conjunction with the Mueller investigation.

Buma attributes some reporting Dynamo did, in 2020, on Rudy Giuliani's fundraising for his Hunter Biden movie as the source of his troubles with his supervisors. While that's a credible claim, given Barr's known interference in investigations into Rudy in 2020, Buma's description of the complexities of DOJ's interest in Rudy similarly does not match the public record.

As Buma describes it, the Foreign Influence Task

Force first recommended he shut down Dynamo after Rollie and the Economist were determined to be an information operation, which he dates to around June 2019. He fought that recommendation successfully. But then following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, FITF renewed the recommendation and won that battle. Buma complains that one of his best sources was shut down in spite of his continued productivity.

I don't doubt there's some real retaliation against Buma going on. His description of being moved to a surveillance crew on the other side of Los Angeles is the kind of petty thing vindictive bosses do. We will have to wait and see what predicated the search from earlier this week.

But what I don't get is how Buma ignores the exposure of his sources in all this. Whether or not Dynamo was part of Rollie and the Economist's information operation (or, as seems likely, Dynamo had started handling Buma to accomplish his own objectives, something that makes Buma's reported use of his own phone and car to work sources a bigger problem), he would have been burned by his contact with it.

As Buma describes it, Rollie and the Economist came to LA in January 2019 and, thanks to the intervention of Dynamo, presented their claims *at the US Attorney's Office*. If that weren't already enough for a former KGB agent like Rollie to figure out that Dynamo might be an informant, Dynamo's ties to Rollie led the White House to ask for background information on Dynamo in June 2019.

On June 26, 2019, I received request for any/all known information related to the true name of my most sensitive confidential source, DYNAMO. This request for information originated from the White House/Special Events/Intelligence Agencies national name check program, which was sent to me through the FBI New York Field Office

(NYFO). Ostensibly, the purpose of this request was to vet DYNAMO's attendance at special event, To me this appeared to be an attempt to discover if DYNAMO was an FB recruited source. This was deep concern for me, since DYNAMO had direct access to and had reported on individuals connected to the White House related to the Special Counsel investigation. I later learned DYNAMO had taken ROLLIE and THE ECONOMIST to a special event, during which time ROLLIE gave the same thumb drive with derogatory information on it concerning Burisma to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (Pompeo).

It makes perfect sense that FITF recommended the FBI shut down Dynamo at that point, because from that point forward, the FBI would have had to assume Russia was tracking everything Dynamo was doing and using him to plant disinformation.

But it's Buma's carelessness about Dynamo – and all his other sources, even including Chuck Johnson – that I find especially suspect.

As part of his complaint against the FBI, Buma sat down and catalogued a bunch of recent investigations in which he says Dynamo played an instrumental role, I guess in an effort to show how stupid the FBI was to shut him down. By his description, Dynamo has informed on all manner of organized crime, money launderers, and foreign spies. And while Insider made a big show of redacting some of the sensitive references in Buma's more detailed statement, unsurprisingly – given that Buma shared it with a committee with a few notorious right wing Senators willing to burn anything down – it has circulated in unredacted form freely.

I'm no expert but I've got some guesses as to who Dynamo, Rollie, and the Economist are. Even casual members of the Ukrainian exile community in the US no doubt know exactly who they are (the New Yorker spoke with Dynamo for its story,

describing him as “a businessman well connected in both Eastern European and American political circles”). Russian spooks are going to know even more.

FBI handling agents don't do that kind of thing. It's the kind of thing that can get someone killed.

If Dynamo really had been as valuable as Buma says he was, I can't imagine Buma would put all this in one report, not even one sent securely to the Intelligence Committees, much less a noted fountain of leaks like SJC. It's not a question of classified information or not (Buma's attorney has told the press that the statement, which was seized in the search, did not include classified information). Indeed, the initial right wing blog post, about a different topic entirely, seems just like the kind of vehicle to leak such a document. If Buma believed what he says about Dynamo, his actions seem inexplicable to me.

There's plenty that is dodgy about the FBI's own conduct, at least as described. But there are big holes in Buma's story, starting with his seeming lack of concern for Dynamo's confidentiality.

Update: Corrected misspelling of Buma's first name.