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Here's why conspiracy theories about Taylor Swift and the Super Bowl are spreading

Shannon Bond, NPR News, February 1, 2024

Taylor Swift has been one of the most dominant cultural figures of the past year, between her billion-dollar Eras Tour and accompanying film, a slew of Grammy nominations, and a high-profile romance with Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce that's made her a fixture of the National Football League season.

But Swift's popularity is being twisted into a threat by a contingent of far-right, Donald Trump-supporting conservatives who have started circulating conspiracy theories about the singer, the Super Bowl, and the 2024 election.

During the Chiefs' conference championship game against the Baltimore Ravens on Sunday, Mike Crispi, a pro-Trump podcast host on the right-wing Salem Media Group, posted a rant claiming the NFL had "RIGGED" a Chiefs victory.

"All to spread DEMOCRAT PROPAGANDA. Calling it now: KC wins, goes to Super Bowl, Swift comes out at the halftime show and 'endorses' Joe Biden with Kelce at midfield. It's all been an op since day one," Crispi wrote on X. (This will be the Chiefs' fourth Super Bowl appearance in the past five years.)

When the Chiefs pulled off a win, speculation went wild, casting Swift's relationship with Kelce as a plot to tip the presidential contest in Biden's favor.

"I wonder who's going to win the Super Bowl next month. And I wonder if there's a major presidential endorsement coming from an artificially, culturally propped-up couple this fall," former Republican presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy, who has pushed debunked conspiracy theories about the Jan. 6th insurrection, the 2020 election, and 9/11, wrote on X, the site formerly known as Twitter, on Monday.

Unfounded claims about Swift's alleged role as a government plant have been swirling for some time. Last month, Fox News host Jesse Watters speculated that Swift might be a Pentagon "psyop" — an asset used for psychological operations.

"Is Swift a front for a covert political agenda?" he asked. While noting that he had no evidence, he pointed to Swift's endorsement of Biden in 2020 and her recent encouragement that fans register to vote, which led to a surge in registrations. The Pentagon rejected Watters' claim.

But the collision of the Super Bowl and a contentious presidential race have propelled the right-wing backlash to new heights. A New York Times report this week that Biden's campaign is hoping Swift will endorse him again this year added further fuel to the fire.

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