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BRAIN DRAIN

Elon Musk Is Shamelessly Firing Government Workers Who Were Investigating His Companies

"Call him whatever you want."



By [Joe Wilkins](#) / Published Feb 19, 2025 2:33 PM EST / [Add Futurism](#) ⓘ



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In an unnerving press conference last Tuesday, Elon Musk assured skeptical reporters that his DOGE government cost-cutting efforts had nothing to do with his private business interests.

“All of our actions are fully public,” Musk stammered as his four-year-old son tore up the Oval Office carpet. “So if you see anything, you say like, wait a second, hey Elon, that [seems like], there’s a conflict there, it’s not like people are going to be shy about saying that.”

“If there’s a conflict, he won’t be involved,” Trump claimed this week.

In reality, though, it’s clear that Musk is shamelessly firing government workers who’d been trying to hold his many companies to account.

Just yesterday, for instance, *Reuters* reported that several Food and Drug Administration workers fired thanks to DOGE had been investigating Musk’s Neuralink, a company developing “brain-computer interfaces” for use in human beings (the laid-off FDA workers are part of a broader wave of DOGE cuts which sent upward of 20 medical device inspectors to the breadline, cutting down on critical staff and increasing the workload for those who remain.)

The Neuralink-FDA debacle is only the latest conflict of interest tied to Musk’s newfound power in the government. The world’s richest man has previously been called out for meddling in South African law as Starlink negotiates deals in the country, gutting the FAA to the benefit of SpaceX, and slashing the consumer protection agency in charge of regulating X-formerly-Twitter.





And Musk isn't the only one getting his hands dirty.

DOGE's recent wave of cuts come after Donald Trump removed 17 inspectors general from their posts, going so far as to send agents to haul the long-tenured USDA inspector general out of her office. Like the FDA, that office was responsible for investigating Neuralink's animal testing after it was found that the company had killed about 1,500 animals since 2018. Another inspector general for the USAID was heading an investigation into Musk's Starlink partnership with the Ukrainian government at the time DOGE advised Trump to freeze the agency. (A federal judge recently refused to reinstate eight inspectors general on a procedural basis)

And maybe the biggest issue is just the vibes: the clear message to remaining investigators is that Musk ultimately holds their livelihoods in his hands, even as they're responsible for regulating his business activities. "It's intimidating to the FDA professionals who are overseeing Neuralink's trial," former FDA official Victor Krauthamer told *Reuters*.

This is all on top of an already flimsy approach to Neuralink oversight. Last year during the Biden administration, lawmakers balked after the FDA declined to inspect a Neuralink device despite approving its use in humans, an indication that Silicon Valley's "work



fast, break things” mantra was already seeping into the inspection process.

Amidst ongoing legal turmoil related to DOGE, the Trump administration asserted this week that Musk was not, in fact, in charge of DOGE — in a frantic and confusing move clearly meant to throw litigators off the scent.



“You could call him an employee, you could call him a consultant,” Trump told reporters as he obscured Musk’s legal title. “You could call him whatever you want.”

Considering Musk’s numerous conflicts of interest, the White House is right to be walking on eggshells — especially given that his companies have racked up a combined \$20 billion in US government handouts.

So while we wait for anyone to hold Musk accountable, it’s apparently open season on staffers holding the last line of defense against the whims of the Silicon Valley billionaire’s dystopian fantasies.



More on DOGE: Elon Musk's DOGE.gov Was Made So Sloppily That Anyone Can Vandalize It



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I'm a tech and labor correspondent for Futurism, where my beat includes the role of emerging technologies in governance, surveillance, and labor.

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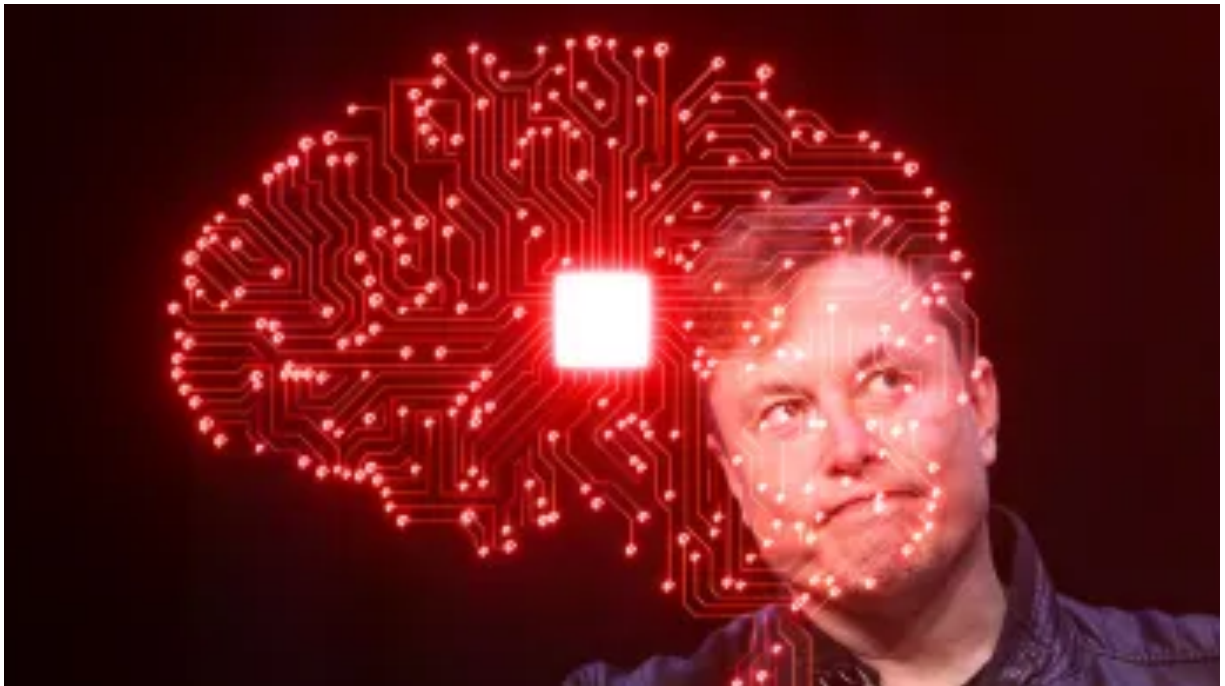
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