The Elon Musk Demolition Crew

by Avi Asher-Schapiro, Christopher Bing, Annie Waldman, Brett Murphy, Andy Kroll, Justin Elliott, Kirsten Berg, Sebastian Rotella, Alex Mierjeski, Pratheek Rebala and Al Shaw •

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On President Donald Trump's authority alone, Elon Musk, the world's richest man, has been unleashed on federal agencies. Employees from Musk's companies and those of his allies, as well as young staffers he's recruited, are wresting authority from career workers and commandeering computer systems.

While some have been public about their involvement, others have attempted to keep their roles secret, scrubbing LinkedIn pages and other sources of data. With little information from the White House, ProPublica is attempting to document who is involved and what they are doing.

Musk's team, known as the Department of Government Efficiency, has already thrown entire swaths of the federal government and its programs into disarray — programs that serve millions of Americans.

Musk himself has made no secret of his intentions, saying that DOGE is a "wood chipper for bureaucracy" and that he is "deleting" agencies.

A White House spokesperson wrote, "Those leading this mission with Elon Musk are doing so in full compliance with federal law, appropriate security clearances, and as employees of the relevant agencies, not as outside advisors or entities." None of the people identified responded to requests for comment.

We are still reporting. Do you have information about any of the people listed below? Do you know of any other Musk associates who have entered the

federal government? You can reach our tip line on Signal at 917-512-0201. Please be as specific, detailed and clear as you can.

Jacob Altik, 32

Lawyer

Connected to: Executive Office of the President

Altik is a 2021 graduate of the University of Michigan Law School. He clerked for D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Neomi Rao, a Trump appointee known for critiquing the administrative state. For the last year and a half, he worked as a corporate litigation associate at Weil, where he co-authored a detailed legal analysis on administrative law jurisprudence at the Supreme Court. Last year, he was selected to begin a clerkship for Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch in the 2025 term, which is set to begin this summer.

Anthony Armstrong, 57

Senior Adviser to the Director

Connected to: Office of Personnel Management

Musk link: Worked on Musk's purchase of Twitter

Armstrong is a technology banker at Morgan Stanley who worked on Musk's $44 billion acquisition of Twitter — since rebranded as X — in 2022. He has been given an influential role at OPM, which handles personnel issues across the federal government. Since Trump took office, OPM has spearheaded the new administration's efforts to dramatically reduce the federal workforce and roll back telework and remote work policies.

Riccardo Biasini, 39

Senior Adviser to the Director

Connected to: Office of Personnel Management
Musk link: Former engineer at Tesla, executive at the Boring Company
Biasini is an engineer and former executive who has worked at two of Musk's companies, the Boring Company and Tesla. He has also taken a high-ranking role at OPM. Biasini was listed as the contact person for the government-wide email system put in place by the Trump administration and used to send messages directly from OPM to millions of federal workers across the government, according to a recent court filing.

Brian Bjelde, 44

Senior Adviser

Connected to: Office of Personnel Management
Musk link: Vice president of people operations at SpaceX
Bjelde is a longtime SpaceX employee who's spent more than 20 years at the company, according to his LinkedIn profile, where he's had a variety of jobs, including as managing director of the "food services group." He previously worked for NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. He's been referred to in press reports as a "top DOGE Lieutenant," working at OPM to slash head count. CNN previously revealed that Bjelde had informed OPM staff of a plan to cut 70% of the agency's workforce. The New York Times reported that Bjelde helped Musk cut staff at Twitter following its takeover.

Akash Bobba, 21

Senior Adviser to the Director

Connected to: Office of Personnel Management

Bobba was named by Wired magazine as part of a team of six young engineers picked by Musk for his DOGE team. A recent graduate of the University of California, Berkeley, Bobba worked as an intern at Meta, the social media company, and at Palantir, the software and data analytics firm that is a major defense contractor. Bobba is listed in personnel records as an "expert" at OPM, where he has reportedly been able to access internal databases. He graduated from high school in 2021; in his graduation speech, featured in the Spotlight New Jersey newspaper, he told his fellow graduates that, in life, the "answers we deserve demand discomfort."

James Burnham, 41

General Counsel

Connected to: Executive Office of the President

Burnham is a former litigation partner at Jones Day and a high-ranking Justice Department and White House official from the first Trump administration. The New York Times first reported his involvement with DOGE as a lawyer in January. His title at DOGE is listed internally as general counsel, according to records reviewed by ProPublica. Burnham previously served as a clerk to Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch. On a website for one of his past companies, Burnham is described as having played a "central role" in the selection and confirmation processes for Gorsuch, Justice Brett Kavanaugh and then-Judge Amy Coney Barrett.

Nate Cavanaugh, 28
Connected to: General Services Administration
Cavanaugh is an entrepreneur who has founded companies focused on intellectual property management and small-business finance. He has been interviewing staffers at the GSA as part of the DOGE team, according to those who have spoken with him. GSA procures technology tools, real estate, and other services for federal government agencies. In published interviews, Cavanaugh has expressed an admiration for tech luminaries, including Peter Thiel, Elon Musk, and Mark Zuckerberg, and has said he is "very interested in crypto."

Edward Coristine, 19
Expert
Connected to: Office of Personnel Management
Musk link: Interned at Neuralink
Coristine is a recent undergraduate student at Northeastern University and part of the group of young DOGE staffers detailed to OPM, the government's human resources office. Wired reported that Coristine interned at Neuralink, Musk's brain-computer interface company. Friends of Coristine told Northeastern University's independent student newspaper that Musk was one of Coristine's idols and that while he finished the fall 2024 semester, he did not return to school for the spring term. According to CBS News, Coristine has been seeking access to the Small Business Administration's internal records on behalf of DOGE.

Steve Davis, 45
Musk link: Longtime Musk lieutenant, CEO of the Boring Company
Davis has been a senior executive and close associate of Musk's for over two decades, working with him at SpaceX, X and the Boring Company. He was one of the first people to be associated with the DOGE effort last year. The New York Times reported he was on early calls with Musk as they conceived of the DOGE effort and explored ways to cut federal programs. Bloomberg reported that Davis has helped recruit staffers for DOGE.

Marko Elez, 25
Connected to: Treasury Department
Musk link: Worked as an engineer at X and SpaceX
Elez works at the Treasury Department, a staffer at the office of the Secretary of Treasury confirmed in a call with a ProPublica reporter. Wired reported Feb. 4 that Elez, who graduated from Rutgers in 2021 and studied computer science, has gained access to the highly sensitive payment systems of the U.S. Treasury Department. According to Elez's LinkedIn bio, which was recently deleted, he was most recently an engineer at X in New York for roughly a year and an engineer at SpaceX in the Los Angeles area for around three years before that. Elez reportedly resigned Feb. 6 after The Wall Street Journal reported that he has links to a social media account that posted racist comments online.

Luke Farritor, 23

Executive Engineer in the Office of the Secretary

Connected to: Department of Health and Human Services
Musk link: Former SpaceX intern
Farritor works as an executive engineer at the HHS, according to agency data. He studied computer science at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and interned at SpaceX, working on its Starlink Wi-Fi team and Starship launchpad software, according to his Linkedin profile. In March 2024, he received a Thiel fellowship, a two-year program founded by billionaire tech entrepreneur Peter Thiel that awards a $100,000 startup grant to students who drop out of college.

Stephanie Holmes, 43

Human Resources

Holmes is running human resources at DOGE, according to government workers who have been in meetings with her. A former lawyer with Jones Day, a firm that frequently represents Trump, she was previously the chief people officer at Oklo, a nuclear energy company chaired by OpenAI CEO Sam Altman. She also ran her own HR consulting firm, BrighterSideHR, which advised companies to pursue “non-woke” approaches to diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

Gautier “Cole” Killian, 24

Federal Detailee

Connected to: Environmental Protection Agency
Killian works at the EPA, according to agency data. His position is a federal detail, which typically allows government employees to transfer between

agencies for temporary roles. He studied math and computer science at McGill University, where he conducted blockchain-related research. He recently worked as an engineer at Jump Trading, an algorithmic financial trading company, and is a member of the DOGE team, according to recent media reports.

Gavin Kliger, 25

Senior Adviser to the Director

Connected to: U.S. Agency for International Development, Office of Personnel Management

Kliger is a senior adviser at OPM, according to his LinkedIn profile. He spent nearly five years as a software engineer at Databricks, a cloud-based AI company. He is widely reported to be part of Musk's DOGE team. On his personal Substack, he wrote an essay titled "Why I gave up a seven-figure salary to save America," according to press reports, and described failed U.S. attorney general nominee Matt Gaetz, who withdrew from Congress amid allegations of sexual misconduct, as a "victim" of the deep state. On Feb. 3, workers at USAID received an email announcing that their Washington offices would be closed that day. Replies to the email were directed to Kliger at a USAID email address.

Keenan D. Kmiec, 45

Lawyer

Connected to: Executive Office of the President

Keenan Kmiec's career veered from elite law to, more recently, crypto. After clerking for then-Judge Samuel Alito on a federal circuit court, he clerked on the Supreme Court for Chief Justice John Roberts in the 2006-

2007 term, according to his LinkedIn. He did a stint at a corporate law firm and had his own firm focused on insider-trading litigation. In 2021, Kmiec began working for a Swiss foundation that promotes a blockchain called Tezos, according to his LinkedIn. He then served for nine months as CEO of a now-defunct startup called InterPop, which described itself as "forging the future of digital fandom with comic, game, and collectible NFTs minted responsibly on the Tezos blockchain."

Tom Krause, 47

Expert

Connected to: Treasury Department

Krause is a part of DOGE's efforts to gain access to sensitive federal payment systems as part of Musk's larger effort to root out spending perceived as wasteful. According to the Treasury Department, Krause leads a team of people who have been granted "read-only" access to the code for the agency's Fiscal Service payment system, which processes payments for major programs such as Social Security and Medicare. The department has clarified he is designated as a "special government employee." The New York Times reported that Krause is affiliated with Musk's DOGE team.

Katie Miller, 33

Spokesperson

In December, during the transition, Trump named Miller, who served in the first administration as a press secretary to Vice President Mike Pence, as one of the first members of DOGE. She is the wife of White House deputy

chief of staff Stephen Miller. After reports that DOGE personnel accessed internal USAID data, Katie Miller defended the group, saying that “no classified material was accessed without proper security clearances.”

Justin Monroe, 36

Adviser

Connected to: FBI
Musk link: Senior director for security at SpaceX
Monroe is working as an adviser within the office of the director of the FBI, according to three people familiar with the matter. NBC News previously reported that an unnamed SpaceX employee has been placed in the FBI director’s office but said it could not confirm the individual’s identity. Monroe is a seasoned information security professional who previously served in the U.S. Navy as an information warfare officer.

Nikhil Rajpal, 30

Expert

Connected to: Office of Personnel Management
Musk link: Former Twitter employee
Rajpal is listed as an “expert” now working for OPM. An archived version of his personal website from 2018 lists his job title as an engineer at Twitter. Rajpal has extensive access to sensitive personnel data used by OPM, according to a source familiar with his role. Wired reported Feb. 5 that Rajpal also sought and was later granted access to data at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Wired magazine reported that he is part of the DOGE team.

Rachel Riley, 33

Senior Adviser in the Office of the Secretary

Connected to: Department of Health and Human Services

Riley works as a senior adviser at HHS, according to agency data. She previously worked for consultancy firm McKinsey & Company for about eight years, most recently as a partner leading teams advising the company's state and federal government clients. She has been working closely with Brad Smith, a former health official in Trump's first administration who ran DOGE during the transition period, according to media reports.

Michael Russo, 67

Chief Information Officer

Connected to: Social Security Administration

Musk link: Former chief technology officer of Starlink payment processor Shift4 Payments

Russo is a top-ranking technology official at the SSA, which disburses over $1.5 trillion in benefits annually. Russo spent over seven years as an executive and senior adviser with Shift4 Payments, a payment processing company that is both an investor in SpaceX and a payment processor for StarLink, according to his Linkedin. The CEO of Shift4 Payments, Jared Isaacman, has been nominated by Trump to lead NASA and is a friend of Musk's who has purchased multiple spacewalks with Musk's SpaceX company. Russo's office will oversee the SSA's over $2 billion IT budget.

Amanda Scales, 34

Chief of Staff

Connected to: Office of Personnel Management
Musk link: Previous employee of xAI
Scales' name came to light in the first week of the Trump administration as federal employees received a memo putting them on notice that diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility initiatives in the federal government were now barred through an executive order — and to report efforts to conceal them. The message listed Scales as the point of contact for questions. Scales worked in the human resources department at xAI, Musk's artificial intelligence company, prior to OPM. Before that, she worked in recruiting at ridesharing company Uber. She is reportedly an integral part of OPM's sweeping efforts to restructure the federal workforce.

Thomas Shedd, 28

Federal Acquisition Service Deputy Commissioner and Director of Technology Transformation Services

Connected to: General Services Administration
Musk link: Software engineer at Tesla
Shedd's work at Tesla focused on building software that operates vehicle and battery factories, according to a GSA press release. The office Shedd runs, known as TTS, helps federal agencies improve their tech practices. GSA leaders have told employees they plan to cut 50% of the budget. Shedd has told colleagues he plans to run TTS like a "startup software

company," according to Wired magazine, which will reportedly involve the use of artificial intelligence to analyze government contracts.

Brad Smith, 42
Smith was among the earliest names associated with DOGE outside of its founder. The New York Times reported he was helping lead the group. He served in a series of health-related policy roles during the first Trump administration, including being part of the board of Operation Warp Speed, the historic COVID-19 vaccine development program. According to The New York Times, which first reported Smith's involvement in DOGE, he is a friend of Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law.

Christopher Stanley, 33
Musk link: Senior director for security engineering at X and principal engineer at SpaceX
Stanley is an experienced information security professional who has worked at multiple Musk-related companies. He is reportedly an aide to Musk at DOGE, according to The New York Times, and has a role at the White House. He was part of the initial transition team after Musk purchased Twitter in 2022, according to his LinkedIn profile. On inauguration day, Stanley assisted in the release of individuals associated with the Jan. 6 riots, he wrote on X.
Others Named in Musk's Orbit
Beyond the figures ProPublica has confirmed, other media have reported on a few additional people close to Musk who work for DOGE or other federal agencies. ProPublica is working to confirm them as well:
Baris Akis, Nicole Hollander, Ethan Shaotran

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Bio images: Farritor via video screenshot from the University of Nebraska, Killian via McGill Artificial Intelligence Society, Kliger via his personal website, Riley via LinkedIn profile, Elez via Github profile, Russo via LinkedIn profile, Stanley via Linkedin profile, Bjelde via LinkedIn profile (SpaceX logo can be seen on his shirt), Coristine via Instagram profile, Davis via Adam S. Davis/Shutterstock, Cavanaugh via LinkedIn profile, Monroe via Linkedin profile, Scales via previous employer Human Capitol, Miller via Paul Morigi/Stringer/Getty Images, Krause via Linkedin profile, Shedd via Instagram profile, Kmiec via Justia Lawyers profile picture, Altik via his previous bio page at Weil, Gotshal and Manges, Burnham via his previous firm, King Street Legal, Biasini via Silicon Valley Study Tour.