

A Bay Area group of tech fascists are aiding Elon Musk's efforts to freeze government functions

By Joe Garofoli, Senior Political Writer

President Donald Trump has designated Elon Musk as the unelected head of the Department of Government Efficiency, an office Trump created through an executive order but does not have power over other government agencies.

Brandon Bell/TNS

WASHINGTON — Congressional Democrats and public policy experts are sounding the alarm about a government “coup” led by Elon Musk — an effort that is being aided by cyber experts with Bay Area connections, including from Stanford and UC Berkeley. Musk’s allies have gained access to classified federal government data and trillions in taxpayer dollars, and there is little that Democrats can unilaterally do to stop it.

Helping Musk are a half-dozen cyber experts under the age of 24, none of whom have government experience or security clearances, according to Wired magazine. One of the engineers working with Musk is Akash Bobba, who “has attended UC Berkeley, where he was in the prestigious Management, Entrepreneurship, and Technology program,” Wired reported. Bobba was an “investment engineering intern at the Bridgewater Associates hedge fund as of last spring and was previously an intern at both Meta and Palantir,” Wired wrote.

Another Musk associate, Gavin Kliger, whose LinkedIn lists him as a special adviser to the director of OPM, attended UC Berkeley until 2020, Wired reported. “All of the young aides have working government emails and A-suite level clearance, which means that they work out of the Government Service Agency’s top floor and have access to all physical spaces and IT systems,” according to Wired. Musk wrote that another was from Stanford, but didn’t specify which one. Two have connections to Peter Thiel, the longtime Bay Area resident and Silicon Valley entrepreneur.

“If you are concerned about your private information and you are an American citizen, you should be concerned about what Elon Musk and his band of bros are doing. They’re stealing everyone’s information right now, and God knows who they’re going to sell it to or give it to,” Rep. Robert Garcia, D-Long Beach, said Monday.

Before Trump’s inauguration, the New York Times reported that a group of Silicon Valley investors close to Musk was heavily involved in helping set up the agency.

Musk seemed unfazed by the attention on his team. On Monday, he responded to criticism that his team is young and inexperienced by listing their educational backgrounds and work background: “Their youth is an asset: it brings fresh perspectives, fluence in emerging technologies, and the agility to iterate rapidly in a fast-evolving space. Far from being ‘unqualified’ their track records of solving complex problems, often ahead of industry curves, position them among the nation’s brightest minds,” Musk wrote on X, the social media platform he owns.

Democrats said it was “insane” that Musk, the world’s richest man, has gained access to the Department of the Treasury payments system, which includes the flow of more than \$6 trillion annually in payments to Americans, as well as confidential and personal information related to Social Security and Medicare recipients, among others.

Musk is not a federal employee, nor has President Donald Trump appointed him to lead an agency. The Senate has not confirmed him to any leadership role. Trump appointed him to lead the Department of Government Efficiency, an office Trump created through an executive order on Jan. 20.

The agency does not have power over other government agencies. It is a rebranding of the agency formerly known as the United States Digital Service, and it is charged, according to the order, with “modernizing Federal technology and software to maximize governmental efficiency and productivity.” But Musk has become even more dangerous than

what Republicans have long decried as the ultimate bogeyman: an unelected federal bureaucrat.

“Elon Musk was not elected by the American people and should be nowhere near our Treasury payments system,” said Garcia, who is a member of the House Oversight Committee. “Our Social Security, Medicare benefits and private information are off-limits, and it’s insane that the world’s richest man is being given access to our records. As a Democratic member of the DOGE Subcommittee, I will make sure we’re pushing back hard on this breach in security. No matter how hard President Trump tries, we will refuse to roll over as Elon Musk tries to take over our government.”

Others called what Musk is doing a “coup.” He and other tech experts have also gained access to the Office of Personnel Management and General Services Administration. “Two top security officials at the (U.S. Agency for International Development) were put on administrative leave Saturday night for refusing members of the Department of Government Efficiency access to systems at the agency, even when DOGE personnel threatened to call law enforcement,” CNN reported Sunday.

USAID, established in 1961, acts as the nation’s international extension of soft diplomacy. It distributes money to help address poverty, diseases, famines and natural disasters. It also promotes democracy-building and development by supporting non-government organizations, independent media and social initiatives.

Last week, 60 senior USAID staff members were put on leave after being accused of trying to thwart Trump’s executive order to freeze foreign aid for 90 days, CNN reported.

On Monday, Sen. Andy Kim, D-N.J., a former USAID employee, said while standing outside the agency that security officials told him they had “specific orders to prevent employees of USAID from entering the building today. I just find that to be absolutely ridiculous. This is no way to govern. This is no way to treat public servants. And this is no way for us to conduct our foreign policy.”

He said he hoped Congress would take action, but that he was unsure of what the action would be.

“Even the executive order (creating DOGE) uses quotes in the title. It’s perfectly fine to have a marketing gimmick like this, but DOGE does not have power over established government agencies, and Musk has no role in government. It does not matter that he is an ally of the President. Musk is a private citizen taking control of established government offices. That is not efficiency; that is a coup,” wrote Seth Masket, a professor of political science and director of the Center on American Politics at the University of Denver on his Substack. On Monday, House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries said he would introduce legislation “to prevent unlawful access to the Department of Treasury Bureau of the Fiscal Service payment system that contains highly confidential and personal information related to Social Security and Medicare recipients, taxpayers, households, nonprofits, businesses and federal contractors.”

But Jeffries conceded that there is little Democrats can do unilaterally since they remain in the minority in the House and Senate. And Republicans have shown almost no desire to contradict Trump. Garcia hoped that increased attention on Musk’s action would inspire blowback from the public and force Republicans to back down, much like what happened last week when the OMB rescinded its attempt to freeze the federal funds that have been approved by Congress, usurping the role of the House, the constitutionally endowed co-equal branch of government. Two federal judges paused the move as well, and a third said Monday she would likely implement another restraining order against the freeze.

Jeffries urged Republicans Monday to “stop doing the bidding of their billionaire buddies.”

Instead, they’re doing the opposite. President Donald Trump’s acolytes quickly promised to protect Musk’s operatives.

Ed Martin, a former conservative talk show host and Jan. 6 insurrection defender whom Trump appointed as interim U.S. attorney for Washington

D.C., told Musk on Monday that he would pursue “any and all legal action against anyone who impedes your work or threatens your people.”