Elon Musk Lackeys Have Taken Over the Office of Personnel Management

Sources tell WIRED that the OPM's top layers of management now include individuals linked to xAI, Neuralink, the Boring Company, and Palantir. One expert found the takeover reminiscent of Stalin.

Centibillionaire Elon Musk's takeover of the former US Digital Service—now the United States DOGE Service—has been widely publicized and sanctioned by one of President Donald Trump's many executive orders. But WIRED reporting shows that Musk's influence extends even further, and into an even more consequential government agency.

Sources within the federal government tell WIRED that the highest ranks of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM)—essentially the human resources function for the entire federal government—are now controlled by people with connections to Musk and to the tech industry. Among them is a person who, according to an online résumé, was set to start college last fall.

Scott Kupor, a managing partner at the powerful investment firm Andreessen Horowitz, stands as Trump's nominee to run the OPM. But already in place, according to sources, are a variety of people who seem ready to carry out Musk's mission of cutting staff and disrupting the government.

Amanda Scales is, as has been reported, the new chief of staff at the OPM. She formerly worked in talent for xAI, Musk's artificial intelligence company, according to her LinkedIn. Before that, she was part of the talent and operations team at Human Capital, a venture firm with investments in the defense tech startup Anduril and the political betting platform Kalshi; before that, she worked for years at Uber. Her placement in this key role, experts believe, seems part of a broader pattern of the traditionally apolitical OPM being converted to use as a political tool.

"I don't think it's alarmist to say there's a much more sophisticated plan to monitor and enforce loyalty than there was in the first term," says Don Moynihan, a professor of public policy at the University of Michigan.

Sources say that Riccardo Biasini, formerly an engineer at Tesla and most recently director of operations for the Las Vegas Loop at the Boring Company, Musk's tunnel-building operation, is also at

the OPM as a senior adviser to the director. (Steve Davis, the CEO of the Boring Company, is rumored to be advising Musk on cuts to be made via DOGE and was integral in Musk's gutting of Twitter, now X, after his takeover of the company in 2022.)

According to the same sources, other people at the top of the new OPM food chain include two people with apparent software engineering backgrounds, whom WIRED is not naming because of their ages. One, a senior adviser to the director, is a 21-year-old whose online résumé touts his work for Palantir, the government contractor and analytics firm cofounded by billionaire Peter Thiel, who is its chair. (The former CEO of PayPal and a longtime Musk associate, Thiel is a Trump supporter who helped bankroll the 2022 Senate campaign of his protégé, Vice President JD Vance.) The other, who reports directly to Scales, graduated from high school in 2024, according to a mirrored copy of an online résumé and his high school's student magazine; he lists jobs as a camp counselor and a bicycle mechanic among his professional experiences, as well as a summer role at Neuralink, Musk's brain-computer interface company.

Among the new highers-up at the OPM is Noah Peters, an attorney whose LinkedIn boasts of his work in litigation representing the National Rifle Association and who has written for right-wing outlets like the Daily Caller and the Federalist; he is also now a senior adviser to the director. According to metadata associated with a file on the OPM website, Peters authored a January 27 memo that went out under acting OPM director Charles Ezell's name describing how the department would be implementing one of Trump's executive orders, "Restoring Accountability to Policy-Influencing Positions Within the Federal Workforce." This has to do with what's sometimes known as Schedule F —a plan to recategorize many civil service jobs as political appointees, meaning they would be tied to the specific agenda of an administration rather than viewed as career government workers. The order would essentially allow for certain career civil servants to be removed in favor of Trump loyalists by classifying them as political appointees, a key part of the Project 2025 plan for remaking the government.

"I think on the tech side, the concern is potentially the use of AI to try and engage in large-scale searches of people's job descriptions to try and identify who would be identified for Schedule F reclassification," says Moynihan.

Other top political appointees include McLaurine Pinover, a former communications director for Republican congressman Joe Wilson and deputy communications director for Republican congressman Michael McCaul, and Joanna Wischer, a Trump campaign speechwriter.

"OPM is not a very politicized organization," says Steven Kelman, a professor emeritus at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. "My guess is that typically, in the past, there have been only

one or maybe two political appointees in all of OPM. All the rest are career. So this seems like a very political heavy presence in an organization that is not very political."

Another OPM memo, concerning the government's new return-to-office mandate, appears, according to metadata, also to have been authored by someone other than Ezell: James Sherk, previously at the America First Policy Institute and author of an op-ed advocating for the president to be able to fire bureaucrats. Formerly a special assistant to the president during Trump's first term, he is now a part of the White House Domestic Policy Council.

The return-to-office policy, according to the November Wall Street Journal op-ed authored by Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy, is explicitly geared toward forcing the attrition of federal employees.

Last week, many federal workers received test emails from the email address HR@opm.gov. In a lawsuit filed last night, plaintiffs allege that a new email list started by the Trump administration may be compromising the data of federal employees.

"At a broadest level, the concern is that technologists are playing a role to monitor employees and to target those who will be downsized," says Moynihan. "It is difficult in the federal government to actually evaluate who is performing well or performing poorly. So doing it on some sort of mass automated scale where you think using some sort of data analysis or AI would automate that process, I think, is an invitation to make errors."

Last week, federal employees across the government received emails encouraging them to turn in colleagues who they believed to be working on diversity, equity, inclusion, and access initiatives (DEIA) to the OPM via the email address DEIAtruth@opm.gov.

"This reminded me," says Kelman, "of the Soviet Stalinism of turning in your friends to the government."

The OPM did not immediately respond to a request for comment, nor did the people whom sources say now sit atop the bureaucracy.

"I am not an alarmist person," says Kelman. "I do think that some of the things being described here are very troubling."

Tim Marchman contributed reporting.