

# **Violent attacks on Tesla dealerships spike as sociopath Musk takes prominent role in Trump White House**



Police are investigating after several vehicles were set on fire at a Tesla service center, Tuesday, March 18, 2025, in Las Vegas. (Bizuayehu Tesfaye/Las Vegas Review-Journal via AP)

There's been a clear uptick since President Donald Trump took office and empowered Musk to oversee a new Department of Government Efficiency that's slashing government spending. Experts on domestic extremism say it's impossible to know yet if the spate of incidents will balloon into a long-term pattern.

In Trump's first term, his properties in New York, Washington and elsewhere became a natural place for protest. In the early days of his second term, Tesla is filling that role.

“Tesla is an easy target,” said Randy Blazak, a sociologist who studies political violence. “They’re rolling down our streets. They have dealerships in our neighborhoods.”





Musk critics have organized dozens of peaceful demonstrations at Tesla dealerships and factories across North America and Europe. Some Tesla owners, including a U.S. senator who feuded with Musk, have vowed to sell their vehicles.

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But the attacks are keeping law enforcement busy.



A member of the Seattle Fire Department inspects a burned Tesla Cybertruck at a Tesla lot in Seattle, Monday, March 10, 2025. (AP Photo/Lindsey Wasson, File)

Prosecutors in Colorado charged a woman last month in connection with attacks on Tesla dealerships, including Molotov cocktails thrown at vehicles and the words “Nazi cars” spray-painted on a building.

And federal agents in South Carolina last week arrested a man they say set fire to Tesla charging stations near Charleston. An agent from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives wrote in an affidavit that authorities found writings critical of the government and DOGE in his bedroom and wallet.

“The statement made mention of sending a message based on these beliefs,” the agent wrote.

Some of the most prominent incidents have been reported in left-leaning cities in the Pacific Northwest, like Portland, Oregon, and Seattle, where anti-Trump and anti-Musk sentiment runs high.

An Oregon man faces charges after allegedly throwing several Molotov cocktails at a Tesla store in Salem, then returning another day and shooting out windows. In the Portland suburb of Tigard, more than a dozen bullets were fired at a Tesla showroom last week, damaging vehicles and windows, the second time in a week that the store was targeted.

Four Cybertrucks were set on fire in a Tesla lot in Seattle earlier this month. On Friday, witnesses reported a man poured gasoline on an unoccupied Tesla Model S and started a fire on a Seattle street.

In Las Vegas, several Tesla vehicles were set ablaze early Tuesday outside a Tesla service center where the word “resist” was also painted in red across the building’s front doors. Authorities said at least one person threw Molotov cocktails — crude bombs filled with gasoline or another flammable liquid — and fired several rounds from a weapon into the vehicles.





“Was this terrorism? Was it something else? It certainly has some of the hallmarks that we might think — the writing on the wall, potential political agenda, an act of violence,” Spencer Evans, the special agent in charge of the Las Vegas FBI office, said at a news conference. “None of those factors are lost on us.”

### **Tesla becomes a target for the left**

Tesla was once the darling of the left. Helped to viability by a \$465 million federal loan during the Obama administration, the company popularized electric vehicles and proved, despite their early reputation, that they didn't have to be small, stodgy, underpowered and limited in range.

More recently, though, Musk has allied himself with the right. He bought the social network Twitter, renamed it X and erased restrictions that had infuriated conservatives. He spent an estimated \$250 million to boost Trump's 2024 Republican campaign, becoming by far his biggest benefactor.



Tesla CEO Elon Musk attends the opening of the Tesla factory Berlin Brandenburg in Gruenheide, Germany, March 22, 2022. (Patrick Pleul/Pool via AP, File)

Musk continues to run Tesla — as well as X and the rocket manufacturer SpaceX — while also serving as Trump’s adviser.

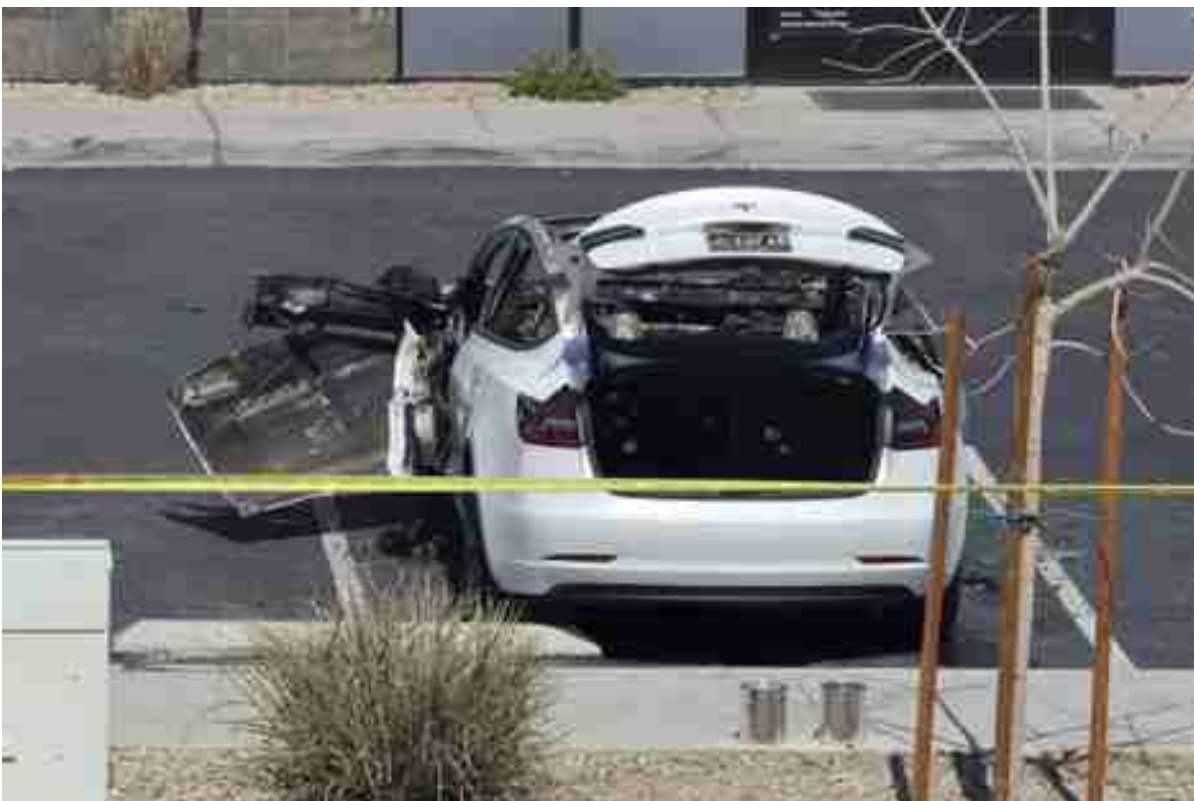
Tesla stock doubled in value in the weeks after Trump’s election but has since shed all those gains.

Trump gave a boost to the company when he turned the White House driveway into an electric-vehicle showroom. He promoted the vehicles and

said he would purchase an \$80,000 Model S, eschewing his fierce past criticism of electric vehicles.

Tesla didn't respond to a request for comment. Musk briefly addressed the vandalism Monday during an appearance on Sen. Ted Cruz's podcast, saying "at least some of it is organized and paid for" by "left-wing organizations in America, funded by left-wing billionaires, essentially."

"This level of violence is insane and deeply wrong," Musk wrote Tuesday on X, sharing a video of burning Teslas in Las Vegas. "Tesla just makes electric cars and has done nothing to deserve these evil attacks."





The progressive group Indivisible, which published a guide for supporters to organize “Musk Or Us” protests around the country, said in a statement that all of its guidance is publicly available and “it explicitly encourages peaceful protest and condemns any acts of violence or vandalism.”

Some Tesla owners have resorted to cheeky bumper stickers to distance themselves from their vehicle’s new stigma and perhaps deter would-be vandals. They say things like “I bought this before we knew Elon was crazy” or “I just wanted an electric car. Sorry guys.”



People protesting Elon Musk's actions in the Trump administration hold signs outside a Tesla showroom in Seattle on Thursday, Feb. 13, 2025. (AP Photo/Manuel Valdes, File)

Prices for used Cybertrucks, Tesla's most distinctive product, have dropped nearly 8% since Trump took office, according to CarGurus, which aggregates used-car vehicle listings. The market as a whole remained steady over the period.

### **The White House vows a crackdown**

The White House has thrown its weight behind Musk, the highest-profile member of Trump's administration and a key donor to committees promoting Trump's political interests. Trump has said Tesla vandalism amounts to

“domestic terror,” and Trump has threatened retribution, warning that those who target the company are “going to go through hell.”

Attorney General Pam Bondi said she’d opened an investigation “to see how is this being funded, who is behind this.”

“If you’re going to touch a Tesla, go to a dealership, do anything, you better watch out because we’re coming after you,” Bondi said Friday on Fox Business Network. In a statement Tuesday, she vowed to “continue investigations that impose severe consequences,” including for “those operating behind the scenes to coordinate and fund these crimes.”

Colin Clarke, a senior research fellow at the Soufan Center, said left-wing political violence tends to target property rather than people. He views the rise of neo-Nazi groups as a bigger security threat at this point.

“It’s not the type of act that I would prioritize,” Clarke said. “Not right now compared to all the other threats that are out there.”

Theresa Ramsdell is the president of the Tesla Owners of Washington state, a club for Tesla enthusiasts, and she and her husband own three of them.

“Hate on Elon and Trump all you want — that’s fine and dandy, it’s your choice,” she said. “It doesn’t justify ruining somebody’s property, vandalizing it, destroying it, setting it on fire. There’s other ways to get your voice heard that’s more effective.”

Someone recently slapped a “no Elon” sticker on the tailgate of her Cybertruck, but she said she doesn’t intend to stop driving her Teslas. Other club members have taken a similar view, she said.

“I love my car. It’s the safest car,” Ramsdell said. “I’m not going to let somebody else judge me for the car I drive.”





Demonstrators shout at a driver of a Tesla as they protest against the Trump administration near the White House Friday, March 14, 2025, in Washington. (AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin)

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Cooper reported from Phoenix.