

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 15, 2024

Honorable Robert P. Storch
Inspector General
Department of Defense
800 Mark Center Drive
Alexandria, VA 22350

Honorable Merrick Garland
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Mr. Storch and Attorney General Garland:

We write with serious concern regarding open source reporting detailing conversations between Russian officials and the CEO of SpaceX, Elon Musk. On October 25, the Wall Street Journal reported that Mr. Musk had multiple, high level conversations with Russian President Vladimir Putin as early as 2022, and sustained contact with high-level Russian officials, including Putin's deputy chief of staff, Sergei Kiriyenko.¹ At the same time, Mr. Musk asserts that he holds a Top Secret level security clearance. These relationships between a well-known U.S. adversary and Mr. Musk, a beneficiary of billions of dollars in U.S. government funding, pose serious questions regarding Mr. Musk's reliability as a government contractor and a clearance holder. We urgently call upon the U.S. government to open an investigation up to and including a determination by the senior debarment official of the Department of Defense, consistent with section 4654 of title 10 United States Code, to determine whether this behavior should force a review of Mr. Musk's continued involvement in SpaceX's varying contracts with the Department of Defense and Intelligence Community.

As you know, space equipment is at the crux of the communications that underpin our most sensitive military and intelligence operations. Russia's ambitions in the space domain pose a direct threat to U.S. national security. In May of this year, the Pentagon confirmed Russia's deployment of a counter-space weapon, "presumably capable of attacking other satellites in low-earth orbit."² This is in addition to the sensitive communications and intelligence collection that are enabled by space-based assets – and could put U.S. national security in grave danger if exploited.

Communications between Russian government officials and any individual with a security clearance have the potential to put our security at risk. That is why there exists a strict reporting regime for any such foreign contacts. SpaceX is deeply integrated into our defense and intelligence space programming. Mr. Musk is a prime contractor on the Space Force's National Security Space Launch (NSSL) program, is building a government-exclusive Starshield satellite network for the Space Force, and holds a \$1.8 billion dollar classified contract with the National Reconnaissance Agency (NRO).

¹ <https://www.wsj.com/world/russia/musk-putin-secret-conversations-37e1c187>

² <https://www.reuters.com/world/us-assesses-russia-launched-space-weapon-near-american-satellite-last-week-2024-05-21/>

United States Senate

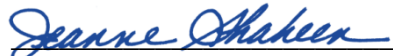
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

Further, Mr. Musk's conversations with Mr. Kiriyenko are deeply concerning amidst the Justice Department's recent seizure of 32 internet domains used to spread Russian government propaganda on multiple social media platforms, including Mr. Musk's platform, X. The Justice Department found multiple Russian officials behind this effort, including Mr. Kiriyenko. The affidavit states that "First Deputy Chief of Staff of the Presidential Executive Office Sergei Vladilenovich Kiriyenko, used these domains, among others, to covertly spread Russian government propaganda with the aim of reducing international support for Ukraine, bolstering pro-Russian policies and interests, and influencing voters in U.S. and foreign elections, including the U.S. 2024 Presidential Election."³

For these reasons, we urge an immediate review to ascertain whether Mr. Musk's relationship with multiple high-level Russian officials warrant an investigation and a determination by the Department of Defense's senior debarment official whether SpaceX should exclude Mr. Musk's involvement in current or future U.S. Government contracts.

We urge you to take appropriate action immediately. Thank you for your response and for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator

CC: Mr. Michael Casey, Director, Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency

³ <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-disrupts-covert-russian-government-sponsored-foreign-malign-influence>