

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 21, 2025

The Honorable Pete Hegseth  
Secretary of Defense  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington D.C., 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Hegseth:

We write seeking clarity on the meetings held by Elon Musk at the Pentagon today, with questions about whether he received a “top-secret briefing on U.S. war plans for China” that media reports from last night indicated would have provided him with access to information that is “among the military’s most closely guarded secrets.”<sup>1</sup>

Initial reports from the *New York Times*, later confirmed by the *Wall Street Journal*, indicated that Mr. Musk was scheduled to receive such a briefing today, “because he asked for one.”<sup>2</sup> But in a tweet late last night, you implied that the reports of the top-secret briefing were not accurate, indicating that “this is NOT a meeting about ‘top secret China war plans.’”<sup>3</sup> And President Trump posted on social media that “China will not even be mentioned or discussed.”<sup>4</sup>

Mr. Musk arrived at the Pentagon earlier today.<sup>5</sup> But it remains unclear exactly what information he received, and whether you or other Pentagon officials modified plans for him to receive top-secret information “on the U.S. military’s plan for any war that might break out with China.”<sup>6</sup>

We hope that you did not share top-secret war plans with Mr. Musk today and do not do so in the future. Although they may satisfy his curiosity, there is no legitimate national security or other rationale for providing this information to Mr. Musk – who is not a military or national security expert, is not a member of the President’s cabinet, and is not even serving as a permanent federal

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<sup>1</sup> New York Times, “Musk Set to Get Access to Top-Secret U.S. Plan for Potential War With China,” Eric Schmitt et. al., March 21, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/20/us/politics/musk-pentagon-briefing-china-war-plan.html>; Wall Street Journal, “Elon Musk Arrives at Pentagon for Discussions About China,” Alexander Ward and Nancy A. Youssef, March 21, 2025, <https://www.wsj.com/politics/national-security/musk-to-receive-top-secret-briefing-on-u-s-war-plans-for-china-922eafdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Wall Street Journal, “Elon Musk Leaves Pentagon After Discussions About China and Tech,” Alexander Ward and Nancy A. Youssef, March 21, 2025, <https://www.wsj.com/politics/national-security/elon-musk-pentagon-china-us-meeting-922eafdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Tweet by Pete Hegseth, March 20, 2025, 10:33 P.M., <https://x.com/petehegseth/status/1902911311102820635?s=46&t=9gTQ-IKMsicKqN8jEaCYvQ>.

<sup>4</sup> New York Times, “Musk Set to Get Access to Top-Secret U.S. Plan for Potential War With China,” Eric Schmitt et. al., March 21, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/20/us/politics/musk-pentagon-briefing-china-war-plan.html>; Wall Street Journal, “Musk to Receive Top-Secret Briefing on U.S. War Plans for China,” Alexander Ward and Nancy A. Youssef, March 20, 2025, <https://www.wsj.com/politics/national-security/musk-to-receive-top-secret-briefing-on-u-s-war-plans-for-china-922eafdf>; Truth Social by Donald J. Trump, March 20, 2025, <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/114198186465713235>.

<sup>5</sup> Wall Street Journal, “Elon Musk Leaves Pentagon After Discussions About China and Tech,” Alexander Ward and Nancy A. Youssef, March 21, 2025, <https://www.wsj.com/politics/national-security/elon-musk-pentagon-china-us-meeting-922eafdf>.

<sup>6</sup> New York Times, “Musk Set to Get Access to Top-Secret U.S. Plan for Potential War With China,” Eric Schmitt et. al., March 21, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/20/us/politics/musk-pentagon-briefing-china-war-plan.html>;

employee.<sup>7</sup> Although Mr. Musk is ostensibly engaged in an effort to cut wasteful spending with his Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), there is no need for him to obtain access to some of our most sensitive secrets in order to do so.

Mr. Musk has significant conflicts of interest that raise questions about his preparedness to handle this closely guarded material. Mr. Musk has extensive business interests in China through his automotive company, including a flagship factory in Shanghai that “was built with special permission from the Chinese government” and “now accounts for more than half of [the company]’s global deliveries.”<sup>8</sup> He is also the chief executive of SpaceX, a major Pentagon supplier, raising yet additional concerns about potential conflicts given Mr. Musk’s “extensive financial interests in China.”<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, in public, Mr. Musk has “avoided criticizing Beijing and signaled his willingness to work with the Chinese Community Party [CCP].”<sup>10</sup> He has parroted CCP talking points – contrary to the current official U.S. foreign policy – that Taiwan is “an integral part of China”<sup>11</sup> and should become a special administrative zone like Hong Kong.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, if true, reports of Mr. Musk’s extensive use of illegal drugs – “including LSD, cocaine, ecstasy, mushrooms and ketamine” – would, under ordinary circumstances, prevent him from receiving a security clearance needed to obtain access to this information.<sup>13</sup> His own employees at SpaceX reportedly did not trust him with highly sensitive national security secrets because of his erratic behavior.<sup>14</sup> It is not clear what, if any, investigation into this reported behavior the Pentagon or other national security officials have conducted ahead of a possible decision to provide Mr. Musk with access to some of the country’s most sensitive military plans.

Finally, Mr. Musk and his companies already reportedly have a history of problems protecting national security information: a December 2024 report indicated that Mr. Musk and SpaceX “have repeatedly failed to comply with federal reporting protocols aimed at protecting state secrets, including by not providing some details of his meetings with foreign leaders.”<sup>15</sup>

The military’s top-secret information is classified as top secret for a reason. Even personnel with top security clearances are only allowed to access sensitive classified information if they have a

<sup>7</sup> Declaration of Joshua Fisher, State of New Mexico et al. v. Musk, Case No. 1:25-cv-429, Dkt. 24-1 (D.D.C. Feb. 17, 2025), <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.dcd.277463/gov.uscourts.dcd.277463.24.1.pdf>; New York Times, “Elon Musk Is a ‘Special Government Employee.’ What Does That Mean?,” Eric Lipton, February 5, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/05/us/politics/elon-musk-special-government-employee-explainer.html>.

<sup>8</sup> New York Times, “Musk Set to Get Access to Top-Secret U.S. Plan for Potential War With China,” Eric Schmitt et. al., March 21, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/20/us/politics/musk-pentagon-briefing-china-war-plan.html>.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> Reuters, “Taiwan blasts Elon Musk over latest China comments, Sep. 14, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taiwan-blasts-elon-musk-over-latest-china-comments-2023-09-14/>; Newsweek, “Elon Musk Doubles Down on Pro-China Analogy Rejected by Taiwan,” November 21, 2023, <https://www.newsweek.com/china-taiwan-elon-musk-tesla-space-x-1845470>.

<sup>12</sup> The Guardian, “Elon Musk suggests making Taiwan a ‘special administrative zone’ similar to Hong Kong,” October 7, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/oct/08/elon-musk-taiwan-china-special-administrative-zone-hong-kong>.

<sup>13</sup> Wall Street Journal, “Elon Musk Has Used Illegal Drugs, Worrying Leaders at Tesla and SpaceX,” January 6, 2024, <https://www.wsj.com/business/elon-musk-illegal-drugs-e826a9e1>.

<sup>14</sup> New York Times, “Elon Musk and SpaceX Face Federal Reviews After Violations of Security Reporting Rules,” Kirsten Grind, Eric Lipton, and Sheera Frenkel, December 17, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/17/technology/elon-musk-spacex-national-security-reporting.html>.

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

“need to know” it to protect U.S. national security.<sup>16</sup> The unauthorized disclosure of such information to any one of our adversaries could pose exceptionally grave national security risks.

It is not clear if the initial reports that you intended to “brief Elon Musk on the U.S. military’s plan for any war that might break out with China”<sup>17</sup> were accurate, nor is it clear precisely what information was provided to Mr. Musk today, or why. Given our concerns about this matter, we ask that you provide us with answers to the following questions no later than March 30, 2025:

1. Did the Pentagon today provide Mr. Musk with a top-secret briefing today on U.S. war plans for China?
  - a. If so, why was it necessary for Mr. Musk to receive this information?
  - b. Which Pentagon official determined that it was necessary?
  - c. Did any other individuals affiliated with Mr. Musk or with DOGE attend this briefing?
2. If not, what briefing did Mr. Musk receive today? What was the purpose of this briefing and what information did it contain?
3. Did the Pentagon change the plans for this briefing after initial public reports appeared on March 20, 2025?
4. If so, why did Pentagon officials make this change?
5. What clearance processes were in place with regard to Mr. Musk and his ability to receive this information?
  - a. Did the clearance process evaluate his potential conflicts of interest with regard to his business interests in China?
  - b. Did the clearance process evaluate his potential conflicts of interest with regard to his Pentagon contracts?
  - c. Did the clearance process evaluate reports alleging his illegal drug use?
  - d. Did the clearance process evaluate reports of Mr. Musk and his companies having a history of problems protecting national security information?

Thank you for your attention to this serious national security matter.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator

<sup>16</sup> Executive Order 13526, Classified National Security Information (December 29, 2009), Secs. 1.2, 4.1(a), <https://www.archives.gov/files/isoo/pdf/cnsi-eo.pdf>; U.S. Department of State, “Security Clearance FAQs,” <https://www.state.gov/security-clearance-faqs/#~:text=A%20security%20clearance%20allows%20an,signed%20a%20non%2Ddisclosure%20agreement>.

<sup>17</sup> New York Times, “Musk Set to Get Access to Top-Secret U.S. Plan for Potential War With China,” Eric Schmitt et. al., March 21, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/20/us/politics/musk-pentagon-briefing-china-war-plan.html>.