

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 2, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

We write to express serious concern with reports¹ that senior White House advisor Elon Musk is exploiting his position within your administration to influence foreign governments for his own personal financial gain. Musk is reportedly taking advantage of his government role to coerce concessions from foreign governments for his own benefit, including unfettered market access as well as contracts with his companies, in exchange for favorable treatment by the U.S. government. Public servants must serve Americans, not their own bank accounts. These alleged actions are an egregious breach of public trust, degrade our credibility with allies and partners, and potentially violate U.S. laws. If any of these actions took place within the White House or the Blair House, as reported, it would reveal a shocking lack of respect for the oath that Musk took when sworn in as a special government employee. These allegations must be fully investigated.

The White House and the Blair House are not merely buildings – they are enduring symbols of American democracy and service. They represent the trust of the people, paid for and maintained by taxpayers, and held in reverence as they are places where the decisions that shape our nation's destiny have been made. These historic residences belong not to any individual, but to the American public. To use this public property for personal enrichment is not only a betrayal of the public trust – it also sends a dangerous signal that power is not a solemn responsibility, but an asset to be exploited for personal gain.

Disturbing allegations of Musk finding opportunities to misuse his position for his personal benefit continue to emerge. The Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) earlier this week informed Congress that it is in active trade negotiations with a number of countries, including India, Lesotho, and Vietnam. As noted in the *Washington Post*:²

After years of regulatory holdups, Starlink reached distribution deals in March with two giant internet providers in India, the world's most populous country, and

¹ Matt Bai, *Someone's actually winning the trade war. It's Elon Musk and Starlink.*, Washington Post (Apr. 30, 2025, 6:30 AM), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2025/04/30/elon-musk-starlink-bangladesh-tariffs/>.

² Bai, *supra* note 1.

won approval in neighboring Pakistan as well. Another of America's major trade partners, Vietnam, waived a rule that required Starlink to partner with a domestic company and said it would launch a five-year pilot program with Starlink. Bangladesh, the second-largest exporter of garments to the U.S., just announced its own deal with Starlink after months of stalled negotiations. And in Lesotho, officials brushed aside long-standing objections to Starlink's foreign ownership and granted the company a license.

According to press reporting, earlier this month officials in Bangladesh, seeking to delay your administration's newly-imposed tariffs on imports from that country, sent you a letter outlining steps that Bangladesh would take in exchange for postponement of the tariffs. Several days after that letter was sent, the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) initiated a process to grant a license to allow Starlink to operate in Bangladesh. The decision was characterized by a BTRC official as "the swiftest recommendation from the BTRC for any such [license]"³ and followed a highly unusual meeting between Musk and Mohammad Yunus, leader of the interim Bangladeshi government, in the White House complex, according to the *Washington Post* and other reporting.⁴ Similarly, when Musk met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Blair House, Starlink's pending approval in India was reportedly "a central agenda item," according to the *Post*.

In Musk's birth country of South Africa, the *Post* reported that, "the story about Bangladesh was making its way around political and business circles in South Africa, which is seeking its own crucial trade deal with the Trump administration," and that "[Some in South Africa now assume] that approval of a license for Starlink was a prerequisite for getting a favorable trade deal [...] a leading legislator just introduced a controversial measure to exempt Starlink from [South Africa's foreign-local equity share] partnership law." Musk has criticized South Africa's policy publicly, including using his pulpit on his social media platform X (formerly known as Twitter), and has for months tried, with local politicians, to change the country's laws for his benefit. We condemn in the strongest terms allowing Musk any influence on U.S. trade posture towards South Africa to coerce that country to cater to Musk's personal interests.

It is disturbing that the Senate, when exercising its Constitutional responsibilities to regulate foreign commerce, levy tariffs, and consider trade negotiations and treaties, has to consider the possibility of self-dealing by senior officials. The fear that officials are misusing their authority for self-enrichment, be it through government contracting or through corrupt interactions with foreign governments, is not one that Americans should have to countenance. Brazen corruption of that sort is seen in despotic regimes, not the United States of America.

³ Mahmudul Hasan, *BTRC Approves Licence for Starlink*, The Daily Star (Apr. 28, 2025, 10:56 AM), <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/btrc-approves-licence-starlink-3881736>.

⁴ SM Najmus Sakib, *Bangladesh approves Musk's Starlink satellite internet services*, Anadolu Ajansi (Apr. 6, 2025), <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/bangladesh-approves-musks-starlink-satellite-internet-services/3530001>.

We call for you to investigate these claims about Musk and to make public any findings. And we call for an accounting to Congress of Musk and his associates' use of government positions for personal benefit.

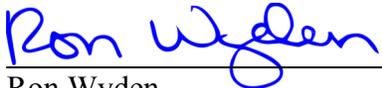
Sincerely,



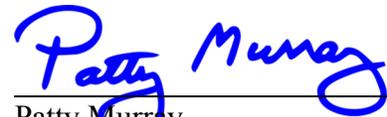
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