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Now that Musk has turned his chainsaw on Trump, what happens to all the government data he accessed?

By **Brett Wagner**

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Elon Musk attends President Donald Trump’s news conference in the Oval Office on May 30, when they were still allies.

Evan Vucci/Associated Press



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Now that Musk has turned his chainsaw on Trump, what happens to all the government...

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For anyone who’s seen the quintessential slasher classic “The Texas Chainsaw Massacre,” the destructive power of a man wielding a chainsaw is the indisputable stuff of nightmares.

But the same could easily be said about this year’s remake featuring Elon Musk, where the dancing chainsaw slasher reenacted, for Conservative Political Action Conference theatergoers, a scene eerily reminiscent of the original. I’m thinking, specifically, of that unforgettable final scene, where Leatherface fades to black swinging his gas-powered murder weapon wildly through the air as he helplessly watches his last potential victim make her last-minute daring escape, dangling from the back of a stranger’s pickup truck.

Unfortunately for America — Musk’s America, Trump’s America — there is no stranger, there is no pickup truck. Only the chainsaw. And, of course, all those body parts.

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Social Security? Gutted.

Veterans programs? Gutted.

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Gutted.

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Museums, libraries, hospitals, childcare? You get the drift.

And what about all those thousands of federal workers whose jobs were cut?

It'll take us years to recover from these self-inflicted wounds.

Not to mention the generational damage wrought to our standing in the global community by what is possibly Musk's proudest personal achievement: the decimation of America's foreign assistance programs feeding starving children, combating human trafficking, fighting malaria and reducing the transmission of HIV. All summarized, of course, by the heartless tweet: "We spent the weekend feeding USAID into the wood chipper."

While the long-term consequences of these actions may be difficult to gauge, conservative estimates of those who have already lost their lives as a result are measured in the tens of thousands.

But now, apparently, our modern-day Leatherface has turned his power tool on the guy who gave him the chainsaw in the first place. Even implying that his former boss was involved in the Jeffrey Epstein sex trafficking conspiracy, and has since conspired to bury the evidence that would expose Trump's connections to Epstein's decades-long criminal activities — sort of hard to put *that* toothpaste back into the tube, wouldn't you say?

At first glance, this appears to have all the makings of an Ultimate Fighting Championship bout, fought in the middle of a monster truck rally. This calls to mind the 1990s Claymation TV show "Celebrity Deathmatch," where preposterously paired big-name personalities (Hillary vs. Monica? Prince Charles vs. Prince?) fought to the death. Promises to be one hell of a show!

What America may be in danger of losing sight of in the

ensuing spectacle is the real threat to our national security posed by the world's richest man, who, until quite recently, enjoyed unfettered access to everything the government knows about you.

Never before has the data your federal government collects about every American been consolidated into a single database. It has always, religiously, been “siloed” into disconnected data systems — some at the Treasury Department, some at the Education Department, some at the Veterans Affairs and the Social Security Administration, among other agencies — but always carefully stored and guarded by the separate entities collecting the data. [The New York Times](#), for example, recently published a comprehensive story detailing 314 specific personal details your government potentially knows about you. I suggest giving that a read.

A week ago, this casual observer would have assumed these two men, Trump and Musk, were acting with a single motive. Assembling the master data that could make possible Trump's ambitions for sweeping dictatorial powers, and for Musk's ambitions.

The sheer volume of data, of course, far outstrips anything that social media titans like Mark Zuckerberg or Musk could legally monetize. And, in any event, certainly not the quid pro

quo one might expect for a \$288 million campaign contribution. Musk seemed, instead, to be carving himself a unique role in a near-future authoritarian oligarchy, as the undisputed Richelieu to Trump's Louis XIII.

But, alas, that was not to be.

What is to be, is the shocking revelation that a man who just days ago was given the ceremonial key to the White House — and in the weeks prior, the key to just about every federal government data base — has now severed ties with the administration. And that same man (who we know talks regularly with Vladimir Putin) is now a free agent.

Did Musk take the data with him? To me, the answer seems obvious. The way his pot-smoking “college dropouts” sauntered into agency after rarified government agency, enjoying open access to virtually anything they wanted — and then they were called out by a whistleblower for uploading huge troves of data to an unsecured server. Data which, within minutes of being uploaded, and after Russian hackers had apparently been tipped off, was targeted for download by those hackers, using the correct passwords.

According to the whistleblower's disclosure shared with Congress, the DOGE team drew further suspicion, first by asking that their activities not be logged on the system, and then by appearing to try to cover their tracks. One might naturally wonder how many other similar occurrences may have taken place, where that team might have been more successful at covering their tracks.

We are told that in the end, the Russians were unable to access the data. Whether or not that denial is accurate and truthful, however, again, what should be obvious is that Musk’s team successfully spirited your personal information from secure government databases to god knows where.

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That is the reality to which we wake today, and now every day.

Let’s hope that after those two Claymation figures have beaten the clay out of each other, someone comes up with a plan to clean up the mess they made. Before it’s too late.

Brett Wagner, now retired, served as professor of national security decision making for the U.S. Naval War College and adjunct fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

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Brett Wagner

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