

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 1, 2025

Mr. Steven A. Stebbins
Acting Inspector General
U.S. Department of Defense – Office of Inspector
General
4800 Mark Center Drive
Alexandria, VA 22350-1500

Dear Mr. Stebbins,

We write to request that your office conduct a review of the Pentagon's process to award the "Golden Dome" missile defense shield contract, including any involvement by Elon Musk in that process.

President Donald Trump directed the Department of Defense (DoD) to develop "a next generation missile shield," also known as the Golden Dome, in a January 2025 executive order,¹ and experts estimate it could cost trillions.² Reuters recently reported that SpaceX, which was founded by Mr. Musk and where he continues to serve as CEO, is a frontrunner to win a crucial part of the contract, raising serious concerns about potential conflicts of interest in the process.³ This same report indicated that "[o]ne of the sources familiar with the talks described them as 'a departure from the usual acquisition process. There's an attitude that the national security and defense community has to be sensitive and deferential to Elon Musk because of his role in the government.'" This is a deeply troubling report.

Mr. Musk, in addition to his role at SpaceX, is a Special Government Employee (SGE), Senior Advisor to President Trump, and a key official at the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). Mr. Musk's formal or informal participation in any process to award a government contract raises serious conflict of interest concerns, including the possibility that SpaceX is a top contender for the Golden Dome contract because of Mr. Musk's position in the government. As an SGE, he is subject to OGE regulations governing the conduct of executive branch employees. One of those standards, OGE regulation 5CFR § 2635.702, prohibits using public office for private gain.⁴ Mr. Musk is also subject to the criminal prohibition in 18 U.S.C. § 208 against participating in a particular matter in which he has a financial interest, which carries a penalty of up to five years in prison.⁵

If Mr. Musk were to exercise improper influence over the Golden Dome contract, it would be another example of a disturbing pattern of Mr. Musk flouting conflict of interest rules. DOGE has directed cuts to agencies that regulate his companies⁶ and gained sensitive data about Americans and his companies' competitors.⁷ In April,

¹ The Iron Dome for America," The White House, January 27, 2025, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/02/03/2025-02182/the-iron-dome-for-america>.

² "Trump's 'Iron Dome' Space Weapons Plan Ignores Physics and Fiscal Reality," *Scientific American*, February 19, 2025, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/trumps-iron-dome-space-weapons-plan-ignores-physics-and-fiscal-reality/>.

³ "Exclusive: Musk's SpaceX is frontrunner to build Trump's Golden Dome missile shield," *Reuters*, April 17, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/musks-spacex-is-frontrunner-build-trumps-golden-dome-missile-shield-2025-04-17/>.

⁴ 5 CFR § 2635.702

⁵ 18 U.S.C. § 216; 18 U.S.C. § 208; Office of Government Ethics, "Letter to a Designated Agency Ethics Official," August 23, 2006, [https://www.oge.gov/web/oge.nsf/News+Releases/1A19064302E29310852585BA005BED0A/\\$FILE/06x8_.pdf](https://www.oge.gov/web/oge.nsf/News+Releases/1A19064302E29310852585BA005BED0A/$FILE/06x8_.pdf).

⁶ "The CFPB took aim at Big Tech. Then Elon Musk moved to dismantle it.," *The Washington Post*, February 11, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2025/02/11/elon-musk-doge-cfpb-regulations/>.

⁷ "A whistleblower's disclosure details how DOGE may have taken sensitive labor data," *NPR*, April 15, 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/04/15/nx-s1-5355896/doge-nlr-elon-musk-spacex-security>.

the Space Force assigned lucrative contracts to Mr. Musk's SpaceX and made SpaceX the Pentagon's leading launch provider.⁸ A Commerce Department broadband grant is reportedly being redesigned so Mr. Musk's company, Starlink, can receive a contract.⁹ After news reports brought to light that the State Department planned to funnel a \$400 million contract towards Mr. Musk's Tesla, the Trump Administration reportedly misled the public about the nature of that deal.¹⁰

We are also concerned that the Pentagon is reportedly considering a highly unusual "subscription model," for SpaceX services. This "subscription model" would "skirt some Pentagon procurement protocols" and give SpaceX ongoing control over a taxpayer funded system, causing DoD to be "locked into a subscription and lose control over its ongoing development and pricing."¹¹ The Congressional Budget Office found a similar proposal for the Air Force to lease rather than buy aircraft would cost billions more.¹² A subscription model would also give Mr. Musk unacceptable ongoing leverage over United States national security. Mr. Musk could, as he allegedly did in Ukraine,¹³ determine when to provide the U.S. government with access to Golden Dome satellite systems.

Reporting indicates the administration would like to move on an accelerated timeline to develop the Golden Dome, which could advantage Mr. Musk's companies and could result in a faulty end product that wastes billions of dollars and leaves our country with a false sense of security.¹⁴ Experts have raised serious concerns about the feasibility of creating an effective Golden Dome system, especially on an accelerated timeline.¹⁵ Acting DoD official Steven J. Morani called it a "monster systems engineering problem"¹⁶ and Retired Rear Adm. Mark Montgomery stated creating a ballistic missile defense system could take 7-10 years, and, even then, would have severe limitations.¹⁷

The exact form of the Golden Dome has not been determined, but experts estimate a ballistic missile defense system of this magnitude could cost anywhere from hundreds of billions of dollars to several trillion dollars.¹⁸ The Golden Dome contract comes at a time when the Pentagon has failed to ever pass an audit¹⁹ and this year's

⁸ "With new contracts, SpaceX will become the US military's top launch provider," *Ars Technica*, April 4, 2025, <https://arstechnica.com/space/2025/04/with-new-contracts-spacex-will-become-the-us-militarys-top-launch-provider/>.

⁹ "Trump's changes to a \$42 Billion broadband program could be a win for Musk's Starlink," *NPR*, April 1, 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/03/28/nx-s1-5338963/musk-starlink-broadband-commerce>.

¹⁰ "A new document undercuts Trump admin's denials about \$400 million Tesla deal," *NPR*, February 24, 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/02/24/nx-s1-5305269/tesla-state-department-elon-musk-trump>.

¹¹ "Exclusive: Musk's SpaceX is frontrunner to build Trump's Golden Dome missile shield," *Reuters*, April 17, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/musks-spacex-is-frontrunner-build-trumps-golden-dome-missile-shield-2025-04-17/>.

¹² "Kill the Boeing Tanker Deal," Project on Government Oversight, October 6, 2003, <https://www.pogo.org/analysis/kill-boeing-tanker-deal>.

¹³ "Musk acknowledges he turned off Starlink internet access last year during Ukraine attack on Russia military," *The Hill*, September 8, 2023, <https://thehill.com/policy/defense/4193788-musk-acknowledges-he-turned-off-starlink-internet-access-last-year-during-ukraine-attack-on-russia-military/>.

¹⁴ "Exclusive: Musk's SpaceX is frontrunner to build Trump's Golden Dome missile shield," *Reuters*, April 17, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/musks-spacex-is-frontrunner-build-trumps-golden-dome-missile-shield-2025-04-17/>.

¹⁵ "Saying the quiet part out loud: All that glitters is not 'Golden Dome'," Responsible Statecraft, March 28, 2025, <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/golden-dome/>.

¹⁶ "DOD's Acquisition Community Already Working on Golden Dome, Big Team Effort Required," U.S. Department of Defense, March 19, 2025, <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/article/4127682/dods-acquisition-community-already-working-on-golden-dome-big-team-effort-requi/>.

¹⁷ "Trump wants a 'Golden Dome' capable of defending the entire US: 'Strategically, it doesn't make any sense'," *CNN*, March 22, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/03/22/politics/pentagon-golden-dome-scrumble/index.html>.

¹⁸ "Trump's 'Iron Dome' Space Weapons Plan Ignores Physics and Fiscal Reality," *Scientific American*, February 19, 2025, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/trumps-iron-dome-space-weapons-plan-ignores-physics-and-fiscal-reality/>.

¹⁹ "Department of Defense Completes Seventh Consecutive Department-Wide Financial Statement Audit," U.S. Department of Defense, November 15, 2024, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3967009/departement-of-defense-completes-seventh-consecutive-department-wide-financial-s/>.

budget is already expected to top \$1 trillion,²⁰ and when DOGE has taken a sledgehammer to government programs supporting Americans, and while Congressional Republicans propose cuts to Social Security and Medicaid to pay for tax cuts for billionaires.

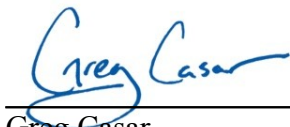
All of this raises concerns about whether defense contracts to build a Golden Dome are an effective way to protect Americans or are meant to enrich Mr. Musk and other elites.

We ask that you immediately conduct a review of the Pentagon's handling of the process to award the Golden Dome missile defense shield contract. If you find that Mr. Musk is using his role in the federal government to secure a Golden Dome contract for SpaceX, we ask that you refer the case to the Department of Justice for a criminal investigation. Finally, we ask that you provide us with an assessment of the following:

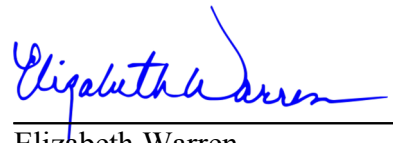
1. An accounting of Elon Musk's — and any employees of DOGE or SpaceX — formal or informal involvement in the process of developing requirements for Golden Dome or awarding Golden Dome contracts.
2. An assessment of whether the DoD is attempting to curry favor with Mr. Musk by awarding SpaceX this contract or whether Mr. Musk had any undue influence over other elements of the procurement process.
3. An assessment of the cost and readiness risks associated with a "subscription-based" model for the Golden Dome.
4. An assessment of safety risks that could arise if the government deploys the Golden Dome on an accelerated timeline, and whether that accelerated timeline inappropriately advantages SpaceX's bid.
5. The process for estimating the costs of a Golden Dome system, program justification, and technological feasibility.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

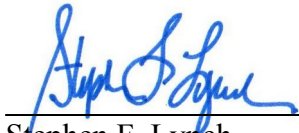


Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress

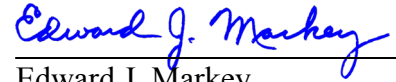


Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

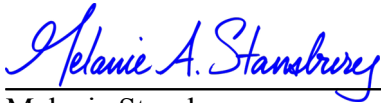
²⁰ "Trump, Hegseth promise record \$1 trillion Pentagon budget," *Politico*, April 7, 2025, <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/04/07/hegseth-trump-1-trillion-defense-budget-00007147>.



Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



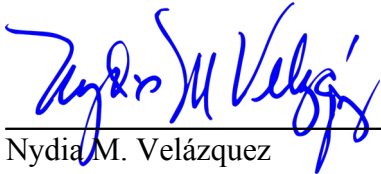
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Cleo Fields
Member of Congress



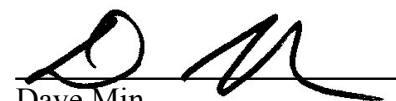
Robert Garcia
Member of Congress



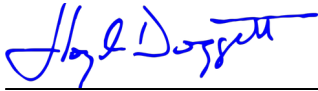
Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



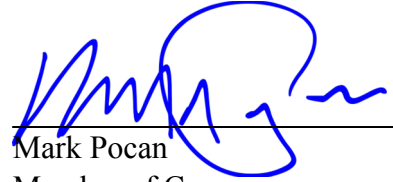
Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



Dave Min
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



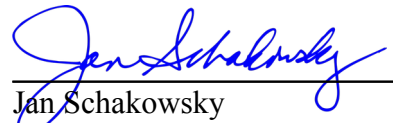
Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



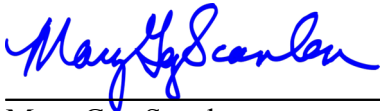
André Carson
Member of Congress



Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



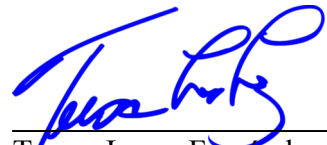
Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress



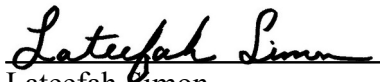
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



Teresa Leger Fernandez
Member of Congress



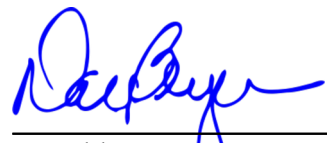
Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



Maxine Dexter
Member of Congress



Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



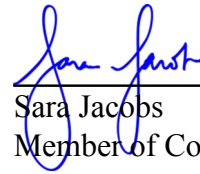
Bill Foster
Member of Congress



Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



JM Tokuda
Member of Congress



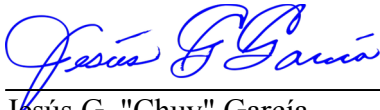
Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Maxine Waters
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress