

DOGE IS XITTER FILES FOR GOVERNMENT

The other day, Fox News' Jesse Watters explained the difference between left and right wing messaging.

We are waging a 21st century information warfare campaign against the left and they are using tactics from the 1990s. They are holding tiny press conferences. Tiny little rallies. They're screaming into the ether on MSNBC. This is what you call top-down command and control. Your talking points, from a newspaper, and you put it on the broadcast network and it disappears.

What you're seeing on the right is asymmetrical. It's like grassroots guerrilla warfare. Someone says something on social media, Musk retweets it, Rogan podcasts it, Fox broadcasts it.. and by the time it reaches everybody, millions of people have seen it. It's free money. And we're actually talking about *expressing* information, they are suppressing information.

Only, Watters left several things out (unless it's what he meant by "expressing" information, whatever that is). The things Musk retweets are, almost without exception, false. Which means this massive asymmetrical guerrilla warfare feeds just propaganda. And Watters didn't admit (though he seemed to, on a Fox and Friends broadcast the other day when he confessed to making up the Hamas tie to the Gaza condom hoax) that after these false claims go viral, they get parroted by Trump's propagandist, Karoline Leavitt, and then Trump himself.

Still (as multiple disinformation experts noted), Watters offered a perfectly timed explanation of the information warfare the right is conducting.

And amid conflicting claims about what Elon's role in all this is, I would suggest that until someone confesses differently, his primary role is simply a propaganda one: taking excerpted data he totally misunderstands out of context and pushing false claims about it, one that will feed a baseless narrative of corruption.

Mike Masnick described this would happen weeks ago.

Later on, Musk (operating without any clear legal authority or Senate confirmation) made a whole bunch of wildly false claims about USAID, including that it is "a criminal organization," arguing that it funds all sorts of things it does not (including the idea that it funds "woke prosecutors"), that it's a "terror organization", and more. He even claimed it helped fund the creation of COVID-19.

The pattern is familiar: ExTwitter users spin elaborate red-yarn-on-corkboard conspiracy theories, and Musk treats each one as revealed truth. The result is a government increasingly run on paranoid hallucinated fever dreams rather than expertise – imagine NASA's Apollo Program being handed over to flat-earth conspiracy theorists while the actual engineers are sidelined, and you'll get the idea.

The danger isn't just bad policy – it's the replacement of accountable governance with conspiracy-driven chaos that threatens everything from disaster response to diplomatic relations.

And Renee DiResta described the familiar pattern today.

This is absolutely the Twitter Files for the government.

It's the same methodology boosted by the

same people.

Crawl through a bunch of stuff, find something that seems outrageous, make an online mob lose their minds. Destroy work, upend lives. Get it totally wrong, move to the next thing.

That's what we've seen.

First there was the lie Elon told about condoms in Gaza (as I noted, Watters seemed to confess the other day that he made up the bit about Hamas getting them).

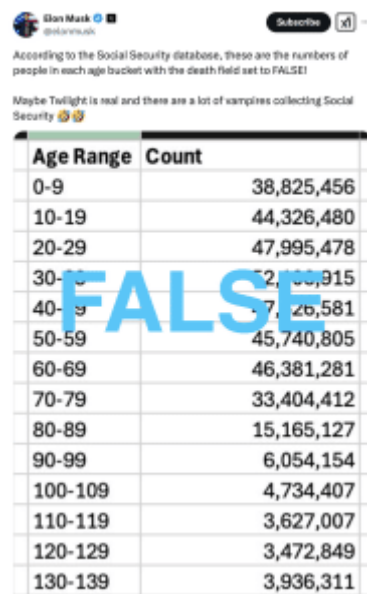
Elon Musk acknowledged Tuesday that there might not have been a federal plan to spend \$50 million on condoms for Gaza – two weeks after the White House press secretary told the false story at an official briefing and more than a week after the president baselessly doubled the phony figure to \$100 million and said the condoms were going to Hamas.

"Some of the things that I say will be incorrect, and should be corrected," Musk, the billionaire businessman who is leading a Trump administration initiative they call the Department of Government Efficiency, said when a reporter told him the Gaza story was wrong. "So, nobody's going to bat a thousand. I mean, any – you know, we will make mistakes, but we'll act quickly to correct any mistakes."

This correction was not particularly quick. Press secretary Karoline Leavitt's claim that President Donald Trump had thwarted \$50 million in condom funding for Gaza made headlines around the world in late January. Trump kept repeating the story, and inflating the figure, even after media outlets reported it was highly unlikely to be true.

The saga of the imaginary condom aid began when Leavitt **announced** during her debut White House press briefing on January 28 that Musk's team and the president's budget office had "found that there was about to be 50 million taxpayer dollars that went out the door to fund condoms in Gaza" before Trump imposed a freeze on foreign aid. Musk **promoted** Leavitt's words on the X social media platform he owns.

Then there was the lie about dead people receiving Social Security checks, an anomaly in Social Security data identified ten years ago and revisited in an Inspector General report released two years ago.



Elon Musk (@elonmusk)

According to the Social Security database, these are the numbers of people in each age bucket with the death field set to FALSE!

Maybe Twilight is real and there are a lot of vampires collecting Social Security 🧛🏻💰

Age Range	Count
0-9	38,825,456
10-19	44,326,480
20-29	47,995,478
30-39	52,100,915
40-49	57,265,581
50-59	45,740,805
60-69	46,381,281
70-79	33,404,412
80-89	15,165,127
90-99	6,054,154
100-109	4,734,407
110-119	3,627,007
120-129	3,472,849
130-139	3,936,311

In 2015,³ we reported that SSA had not established controls to annotate death information on the Numident records of numberholders who exceeded maximum reasonable life expectancies of age 112 or older and were likely deceased. At the time, only 35 known living individuals worldwide were age 112 or older, however, SSA's Numident included 6.5 million numberholders⁴ age 112 or older whose record did not contain death information. Therefore, the numberholders' information did not

appear in the full DMF. We recommended SSA add death information to approximately 1.5 million Numident records where the numberholders' death information appeared in SSA payment records. We also recommended SSA determine whether it could efficiently correct the approximately 5 million remaining records. SSA agreed to explore the legal and technical feasibility, as well as the cost, to establish an automated process to update the millions of Numident records for individuals who appeared to be alive and age 112 or older, but ultimately decided not to update these records.

Social Security decided not to address it because of cost.

In response to our 2015 report, SSA considered multiple options, including adding presumed death information to these Numident records. SSA ultimately decided not to proceed because the ". . . options would be costly to implement, would be of little benefit to the agency, would largely duplicate information already available to data exchange consumers and would create cost for the states and other data exchange partners."16 SSA also believed a regulation would be required to allow it to add death information to these records, and adding presumed death information to the Numident would increase the risk of inadvertent release of living individuals' personal information in the DMF.

Now there are the outrageous errors in the DOGE "receipts" page. Thus far, the reporting on this has been inadequate (though Washington Times published a slandering review, which I guess indicates DOGE knows its audience). For example, the NYT dedicated four reporters to call out

just the most embarrassing error – that the richest man in the world had mistaken an \$8 million payment over a multi-year contract and boasted instead that it represented \$8 billion in savings for the two years remaining on the contract.

Daily Beast did a better job, noting not just the order of magnitude error that NYT and others identified, but also that Elon, like Trump, is taking credit for savings made under Joe Biden.

The group boasted that its “estimated savings” for American taxpayers is \$55 billion so far, but the total it gave Monday adds up to just a third of that figure—and appears to claim credit for the closure of two government offices that were shuttered under Joe Biden.

Those closures are the National Archives centers in Hoffman Estates, Illinois, and in Fairfield, Ohio. DOGE’s site claims the latter location was a “True Termination – Agency Closed Office.” No other details are offered.

FAIRFIELD, OH	
\$39,851	\$478,213
Total Savings	Annual Lease Cost
True Termination— Agency Closed Office	

Close

The only details offered on a contract termination for the National Archives center in Fairfield, Ohio.DOGÉ

Those centers’ approximate closing dates were announced way back on Aug. 1, however, when Biden was still president.

“The records and artifacts of the Barack Obama Presidential Library, which have been held temporarily at Hoffman Estates, will be permanently moved to College Park, MD, in late FY 2025,” a news release from National Archives announced at the time.

Others have noted that many of the big savings are in reality subscriptions to media outlets, including (as Brad Heath noted, the SEC's subscription to Westlaw). Once all these necessary services get turned back on again, the imagined savings will be wiped away.

Still, DOGE's shoddy work, slapped up there after days of unfulfilled promises of transparency, needs to be more systematically mined, if for no other reason than to determine whether this is simply a reflection of the ignorance of the DOGE boys Musk has infiltrated into government, the shoddiness of the AI tools they're using, or simply a disinterest in giving a fuck, because once Elon claims this website says something, the right wing will follow along like sheep.

They don't need and maybe won't bother trying to find real proof of savings, because between Elon and Trump and Fox News, they will insist it is the truth, no matter how often it gets debunked.

Until this effort is exposed as the propaganda campaign it is, the lies Musk tells give even Republicans discomfited by all the job losses in their districts something to cling to: A claim that this is about auditing, rather than destruction, a claim that this is about fraud, rather than policies that even Republicans have protected for years, and for good reason.

The richest man in the world is conducting a con on Republicans in government, claiming he is fixing government when instead he is dismantling even the parts that the Republicans themselves cherish.

As Masnick said, "it's the replacement of accountable governance with conspiracy-driven chaos."

It remains the case that one of the foundational claims to which Trump's people continue to return is the one I identified a week ago: A GAO report from last year that spoke of \$2.7 trillion in improper payments over the last two

decades, but also a spike in recent years that almost entirely arises from fraud and management problems with the various COVID programs Trump rolled out his first term.

The factual claims of fraud – as opposed to the disinformation spun by Elon Musk – largely measure fraud that Trump created through his catastrophic response to COVID. And he fired several of the Inspectors General – most notably HHS IG Christi Grimm (whose work resulted in 193 charges last June), Department of Labor IG Larry Turner (who had already identified \$191 billion in improper COVID payments, many fraudulent, and was chasing \$135 billion more), and SBA IG Mike Ware (who had IDed around \$200 billion in COVID fraud, returning \$40 billion to the US Treasury and was still chasing more) – who were busy hunting it all down.

DOGE continues to rely on fraud Trump enabled to excuse their assault on government. And what they've found so far is that they lack any of the competencies they would need to audit or identify fraud, and Trump already fired the people who do have those competencies.

Update: Lawfare catches DOGE taking credit for savings due to Jimmy Carter's death.

Yet a brief glimpse of the data raises questions about its accuracy. One row describes a lease terminated for an "agency" called "Allowance to Former Presidents." Additional information shows that the property is 7,682 square feet, costs \$128,233 per year, and is in Atlanta, Georgia. The GSA maintains a database of property leased by the federal government. Cross-referencing the information on DOGE's website with GSA's database reveals that the federal government was leasing this property from "The Carter Center, Inc." The Carter Center is a nonprofit organization founded by former President Carter, who died on Dec. 29, 2024.

The Former Presidents Act provides former presidents with certain post-presidency benefits. Subsection (c) of that Act says, "The Administrator of General Services shall furnish for each former President suitable office space appropriately furnished and equipped, as determined by the Administrator, at such place within the United States as the former President shall specify." As one might expect, Carter's office was located in the Carter Center, and GSA leased office space for Carter from the Carter Center.

DOGE is likely not responsible for the termination of GSA's lease of the Carter Center. The benefits to Carter under the Former Presidents Act expired upon his death.

Update: NPR's review of this gets closer to the kind of real test of these claims. For example, it finds that some of the purport cuts have not yet been made.

Just over half of the contracts touted by DOGE, accounting for \$6.5 billion in alleged savings, haven't actually been terminated or closed out as of Wednesday, according to an NPR analysis of a federal government procurement database, even though the site's "wall of receipts" listed these items.

That includes a billion dollar IT support contract with the Social Security Administration that actually added \$1.8 million in obligated spending and additional funding for a Forest Service project management contract worth up to nearly \$30 million.

More than a third of the listed contracts posted online would not actually save any money if canceled, according to DOGE.

And it interviews contracting officers.

A smarter way to reform contracting would actually cost money in the short term," Riedl said. "Because it requires audits, it requires analysis, building new systems, building new controls rather than just going through with a chainsaw and trying to cut contracts almost randomly."

Byrne, whose contracting career spanned more than 20 years and included work with the General Services Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Navy, says DOGE's website is also missing basic information needed to track and understand federal spending, like the ID number, what type of agreement or contract method was used and whether the cancellation was for some or all of the spending. Several publicly available data sources already track and confirm changes to federal contracts, including the Federal Procurement Data System, USASpending.gov and the System for Award Management (SAM). Unlike DOGE, those sources list other relevant data like the current value of the contract, historical changes to the amount budgeted and spent for the contract and when the contracts begin and end.

Who also note that the government is going to have to pay for a lot of the programs cut.

Even government contracts that have been terminated before reaching their full value could end up costing taxpayers more to settle up. Jessica Tillipman, associate dean for government procurement law studies at The George Washington University Law School, previously told NPR that the termination for convenience clause used for many of these cancellations is

expensive.

"When the government terminates a contract for convenience, it's still obligated to pay for the work completed," she said. "This doesn't eliminate the government's responsibility for paying these sorts of costs."