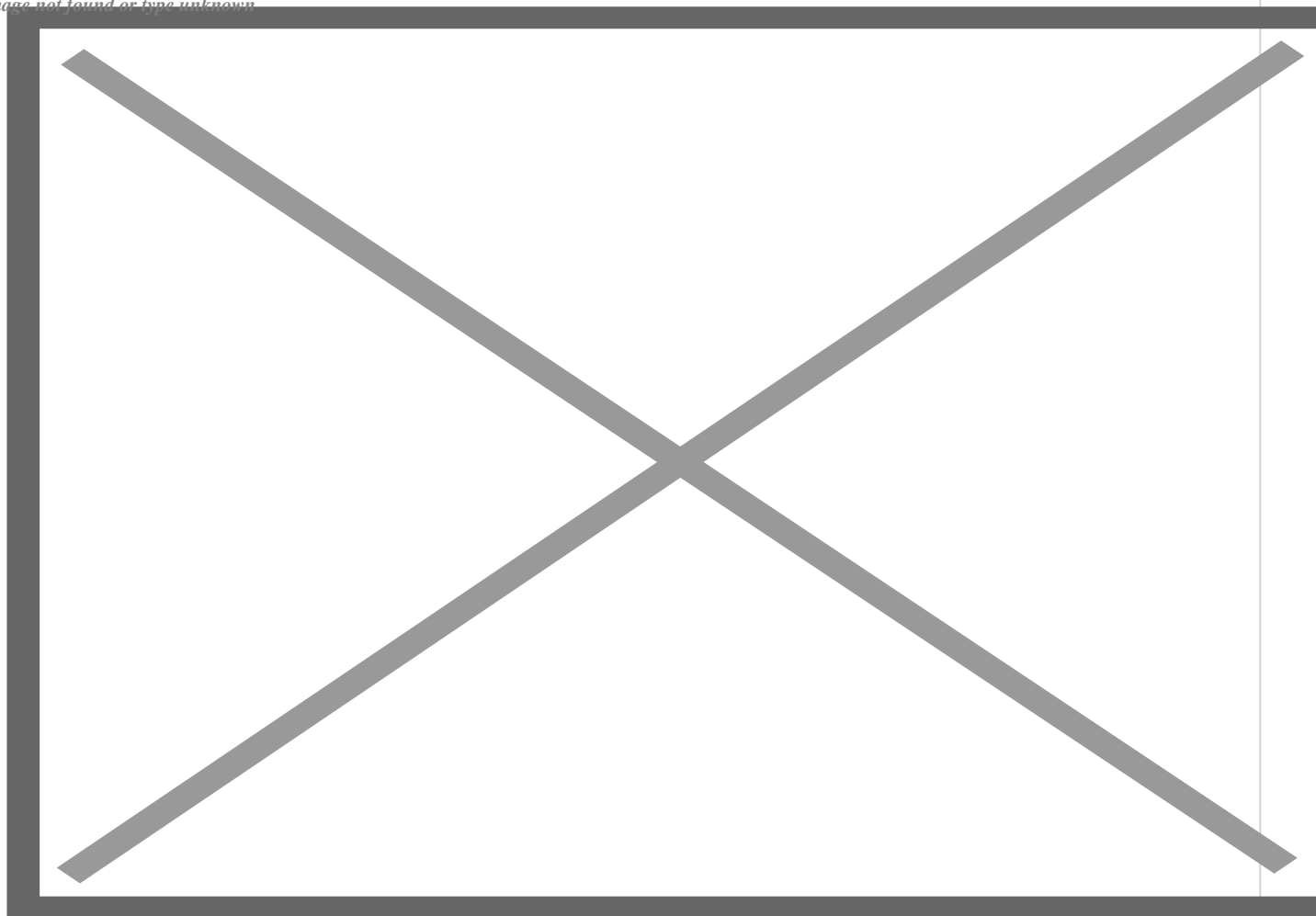


Elon Musk takes over Twitter in \$44 billion deal

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Elon Musk smiles from behind a microphone with his hands on his heart / [File: John Raoux/AP]

New York, October 27 (RHC)-- Elon Musk has officially taken control of Twitter after finalizing a \$44 billion deal to buy the social media network.

In one of his first decisions at the helm of the social media giant, Musk, the world's richest man, fired CEO Parag Agrawal and two other top executives, multiple U.S.-based media outlets reported on Thursday, citing people familiar with the matter.

Chief Financial Officer Ned Segal and Vijaya Gadde, the top executive for legal policy, trust and safety, were also let go, according to the reports. Sean Edgett, Twitter's general counsel, was also fired, the Washington Post reported, citing an unnamed source.

The Tesla CEO's purchase caps a six-month saga that saw Twitter initially resist Musk's purchase offer and then sue the billionaire after he signalled he would nix the deal over concerns about spam accounts and whistleblower claims about lax cybersecurity practices.

Musk's interest in the platform has become a lightning rod for the debate around free speech in the digital age. Critics have expressed concerns that Musk's reign could mean open slather for hate speech and misinformation, while many conservatives have heralded the takeover as a corrective to Big Tech censorship of politically incorrect views.

Musk, who describes himself as a "free speech absolutist," has criticised Twitter's moderation policies and objected to censorship that goes beyond the requirements of the law. In May, Musk said he would reinstate former United States President Donald Trump's Twitter account, which was removed for allegedly inciting violence in the wake of the January 6 riots at the U.S. Capitol.

In a lengthy message posted on Twitter before the purchase deadline on Friday, Musk, who earlier changed his Twitter bio to "Chief Twit," denied any intention to turn Twitter into a "free-for-all hellscape."

"The reason I acquired Twitter is because it is important to the future of civilization to have a common digital town square, where a wide range of beliefs can be debated in a healthy manner, without resorting to violence," he said.

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