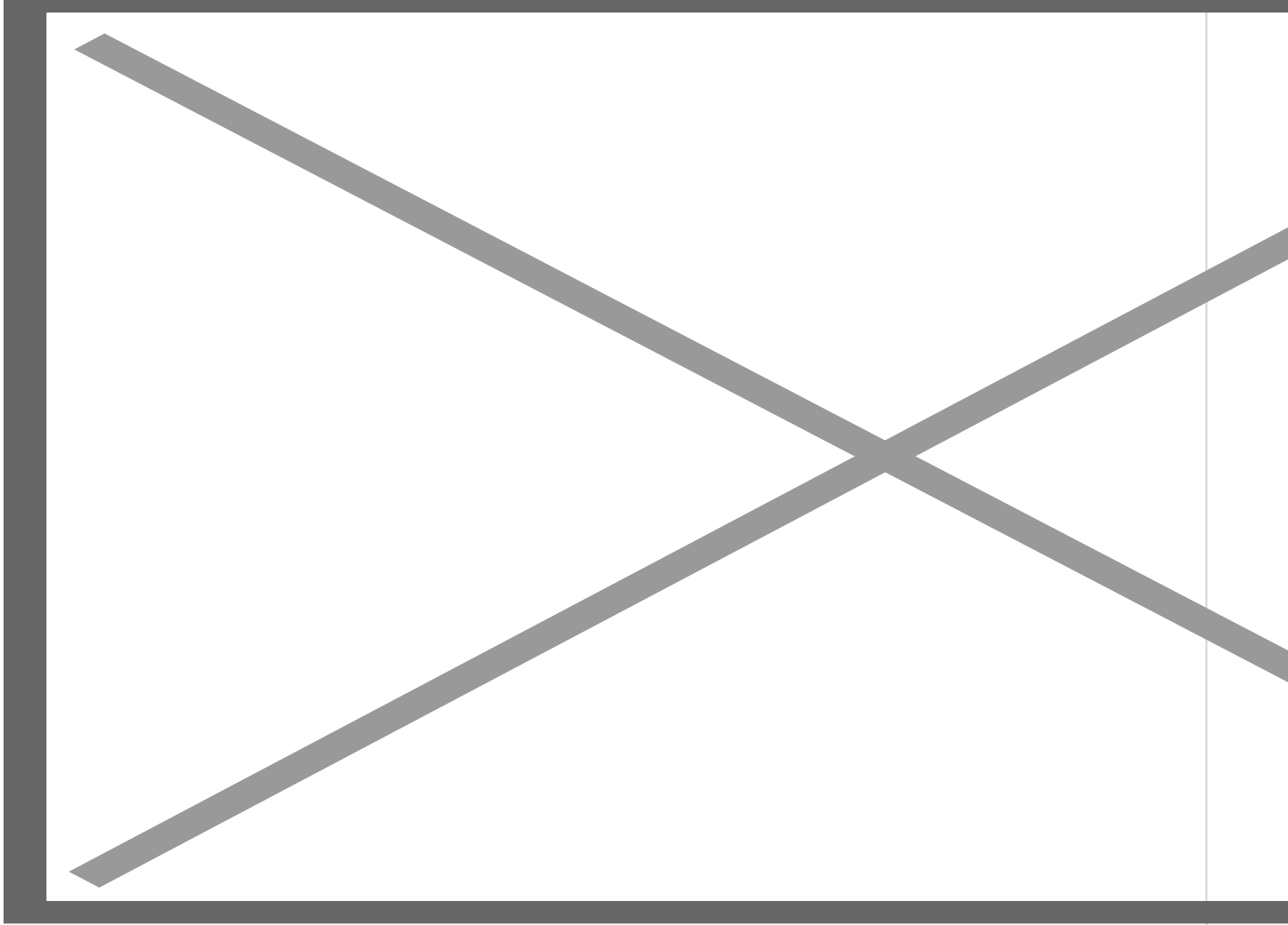


U.S. State Department says contract for \$400 million of armored Teslas on hold after explosive outcry

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Washington, February 15 (RHC)-- Critics exploded in fury when news reports emerged that the U.S. State Department was planning to purchase \$400 million worth of "armored Teslas."

The scandal emerged as fingers pointed to Elon Musk's massive conflict of interest, charging that he was locking down a huge government contract while acting as hatchet man for the federal budget.

As Gizmodo reported, it's a bit fuzzy whether those funds were actually going to Tesla; the State Department, it pointed out, spends a lot of money getting contractors to add armor to vehicles used for sensitive purposes.

But the optics were clearly bad. The State Department hurriedly deleted the word "Tesla" from the document, which now allocates the funds for the more generic "armored electric vehicles."

And now, a State Department spokesperson told The Hill that the contract is "on hold and there are no current plans to issue it" — so while it's anyone's guess what'll happen next, political observers say this shows that the Trump administration isn't yet just stuffing money into Musk's pockets while he pillages the U.S. Treasury.

In fact, the budget item predates the second Trump administration; it's the result of the Biden administration asking the State Department to "explore interest from private companies to produce armored electric vehicles," the spokesperson clarified.

According to The Hill, only one company responded to the department's public request for information to gauge interest in producing "high quality and armored electric vehicles." It's unclear whether that company was Tesla or not.

Musk has attempted to distance himself from the blowback, tweeting that "I'm pretty sure Tesla isn't getting \$400 million." He added: "No one mentioned it to me, at least."

However, there's already plenty of evidence of the billionaire's naked conflict of interest. SpaceX holds roughly \$22 billion worth of government contracts, which appear unlikely to be ripped up as the Trump administration makes deep cuts to healthcare and education.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt claimed that Musk would "excuse himself" if he were to come "across a conflict of interest with the contracts and the funding that DOGE is overseeing," during a briefing last week.

It's a laughable claim, because Musk has already torn into agencies responsible for regulating his business interests.

That doesn't mean the electric vehicle industry will thrive under Trump; the new administration has quickly rolled back former president Joe Biden's "EV mandate," including big investments in charger infrastructure expansion.

[SOURCE: FUTURISM]

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