

Under Trump Shake-Up, Benefits for Musk Empire

Firings Undercut Litigation and Inquiries

By ERIC LIPTON and KIRSTEN GRIND

President Trump has been in office less than a month, and Elon Musk's vast business empire is already benefiting — or is now in a decidedly better position to benefit.

Mr. Trump and Mr. Musk, the world's richest man who has been given enormous power by the president, have been dismantling federal agencies across the government. Mr. Trump has fired top officials and pushed out career employees. Many of them were leading investigations, enforcement matters or lawsuits pending against Mr. Musk's companies.

Mr. Musk has also reaped the benefit of resignations by Biden-era regulators that flipped control of major regulatory agencies, leaving more sympathetic Republican appointees overseeing those lawsuits.

At least 11 federal agencies that



Elon Musk demanded the F.A.A. head resign. He obliged.

Funding Stops, As Do Answers, Amid a Freeze

This article is by David A. Fahrerthold, Sharon LaFraniere, Nicholas Nehamas and Coral Davenport.

WASHINGTON — Last year, the Ritenour School District in Missouri won a \$9.5 million grant from the Environmental Protection Agency to replace its worn-out diesel school buses with clean-running electric models.

By mid-January, the buses were almost there: waiting at a dealer's lot, just an hour away. All the district had to do was withdraw its grant money and make the last payment.

Then President Trump took office, and the E.P.A. refused to let the district take the money. The agency is still refusing, despite two court orders telling the Trump administration to end a freeze on federal grants.

The buses have not moved an inch.

"The buses are 52 miles away from us in small-town Illinois, and we can't get them here," said Chris Kilbride, the superintendent of the Ritenour district, which educates 6,500 students in the St. Louis suburbs.

The Trump administration is still freezing an unknown number of federal grants, according to nonprofits, government agencies and other recipients who say they cannot get access to money promised to them by past administrations.

After losses in court, however, Trump officials have shifted the rationale they've offered for freezing the funds — saying this is no longer a broad hold, but a targeted pause on specific grants it objects to, because they did not meet pre-

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A Call With Putin Spawns Peace Talks, Trump Says



PHOTOGRAPHS BY NANNA HEITMANN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Clockwise from top: A Russian soldier preparing to move to an artillery position; cadets at "Post No. 1," a center for military and patriotic education for schoolchildren in Kursk; a Russian trench created to impede any further advance by Ukrainian forces into the area.

Trump's Words Attack Morality Of Being Trans

By AMY HARMON

On his first day back in office, President Trump issued an executive order declaring that there are only two sexes, male and female, that a person's sex is established at conception and that it cannot be changed.

Then, through a series of executive orders, he issued a raft of policies targeted at transgender Americans, a population of roughly 1.6 million. The orders cover many areas of life — schools, medical care, prisons, housing and passports — and pull the government back from accepting trans people in the military, allowing them to participate in sports and protecting them under anti-discrimination laws based on sex.

Lawsuits have already been filed. More are on the way. But the sheer volume of orders, and their language and tone, suggest to both transgender advocates and Mr. Trump's supporters that the overarching intention is about more than policy — it's about undermining the very idea that transgender identities are legitimate and should be recognized.

Polls reflect a divisive debate: Many Americans want to protect trans people from discrimination but also think that society has gone too far in accommodating them. A Gallup poll conducted last month found that a majority of Americans support allowing transgender men and women to serve openly in the military, though that percentage has declined since 2019. And nearly 80 percent do not believe transgender female athletes should be al-

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Fiercest Fighting May Be in Russia, Not Ukraine

Undaunted Kyiv Forces Hold Sliver of Land

KURSK, Russia — A Russian special forces commander served on four battlefronts across eastern Ukraine after joining Russia's invasion nearly three years ago. He said the most ferocious fighting he has seen is now unfolding back home, as the Russian Army he serves struggles to liberate a sliver of national territory from Ukrainian forces.

sleepy county seat in the Kursk region, near the two countries' border.

"These are the most brutal battles — I haven't seen anything like this during the entire special military operation," the commander, who leads about 200 men fighting in Kursk, said in an interview near the front line late last year, using the Kremlin's euphemism for the war. He requested that he be identified only by his call sign, Hades, according to military protocol.

Both sides see Kursk as must-

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GRAHAM DICKIE/THE NEW YORK TIMES

To the Victor, a Little Spoiling

Monty, a regal giant schnauzer, won big at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show. Page D4.

No Role Specified Yet for Ukraine in Process

This article is by Maggie Haberman, Zolan Kanno-Youngs and Anton Troianovski.

President Trump said on Wednesday that he had a "lengthy and highly productive phone call" with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, characterizing it as the beginning of a negotiation to end the war in Ukraine.

It was the first confirmed conversation between the two men during Mr. Trump's second term, coming as Mr. Trump has made clear to advisers that finding a U.S.-backed end to a war that Russia began is a priority for his administration.

"We each talked about the strengths of our respective Nations, and the great benefit that we will someday have in working together," Mr. Trump wrote in a social media post. "But first, as we both agreed, we want to stop the millions of deaths taking place in the War with Russia/Ukraine." (An estimated several hundred thousand deaths have occurred in the conflict, not millions.)

For Mr. Putin, the call was a major milestone, signifying the collapse of Western efforts to isolate him diplomatically after he invaded Ukraine nearly three years ago. Ever since Mr. Trump's reelection in November, the Russian president has heaped praise on

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INTERNATIONAL A4-14

Chaos in Colombia

After finding refuge and building power in Venezuela, a rebel group has waged the worst violence in Colombia in a generation.

NATIONAL A15-21, 23

Senate Confirms Gabbard

A victory for one of President Trump's more divisive cabinet candidates was also a show of political control over the Republican Senate.

BUSINESS B1-5

Inflation Rises Unexpectedly

U.S. inflation reached 3 percent in January, strengthening the case for the Federal Reserve to extend its pause on interest rate cuts.

THURSDAY STYLES D1-8

A Black History Exercise

Outlandish, a hiking store and adventure group, is one of several organizations on a mission to encourage Black people to spend time outdoors. PAGE D1

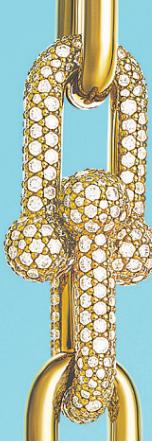
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Mara Gay

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