

October 6, 2022

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Majority Leader United States Senate  
S-221, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader United States Senate  
S-230 Capitol Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Republican Leader  
H-204, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McConnell, and Republican Leader McCarthy:

We write to express deep concern over the opaque details of Elon Musk's acquisition of Twitter, Inc., one of the world's most powerful information platforms. While Mr. Musk's behavior has been increasingly erratic for months, the timing of his latest decision to reverse his previous course and instead move forward with the acquisition raises serious questions about Mr. Musk's motivations, financial backing, and possible conflicts of interest.

Given the potentially grave consequences for American democracy and national security, we ask that Congressional leaders immediately investigate the following questions, including by, if necessary, subpoenaing Mr. Musk for relevant records or testimony:

- 1. Is Elon Musk in communication with foreign actors – including senior officials in the Kremlin or Chinese Communist Party – who could use this acquisition to undermine American national security interests?**

On October 3, 2022, just one day before Mr. Musk's abrupt attempt<sup>1</sup> to avoid being deposed by agreeing to purchase Twitter under the original terms of his deal, Mr. Musk attracted international scrutiny for tweeting a so-called "peace" proposal to end Russia's invasion of Ukraine.<sup>2</sup> The proposal was widely viewed as Russian propaganda and received the explicit support of the Kremlin, with Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov saying, "It's very positive that such a person as Elon Musk is trying to look for a peaceful settlement."<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cbsnews.com/pittsburgh/news/elon-musk-deal-for-twitter-takeover-44-billion/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://twitter.com/elonmusk/status/1576969255031296000>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.npr.org/2022/10/04/1126714896/elon-musk-ukraine-peace-plan-zelenskyy>

In addition, in late 2020, Mr. Musk's company Tesla Inc. began mass-purchasing metal from Russian aluminum giant, Rusal,<sup>4</sup> whose founder — Oleg Deripaska — was recently indicted for U.S. sanctions violations.<sup>5</sup>

Mr. Musk's use of Twitter to spread Russian war propaganda, and his economic ties to Kremlin-linked oligarchs, raise serious national security concerns given Mr. Musk now seeks to acquire Twitter. His actions demand further scrutiny to ensure America's interests are not at risk.

*For example: Has Elon Musk been in communication with senior officials in the Kremlin? If successful in acquiring Twitter, will Mr. Musk keep in place the critical safeguards Twitter has implemented to limit the reach and impact of Russian war propagandists and state-backed media? Is Tesla still purchasing materials from Rusal, or any other Russian company?*

These concerns are not limited to Russia. In January 2022, Mr. Musk's company Tesla Inc. opened a showroom in China's controversial Xinjiang region.<sup>6</sup> The decision was widely seen as a major political victory for China's President Xi Jinping. As Senator Marco Rubio noted, Tesla and Mr. Musk were undermining efforts by the United States to prevent forced labor in China and "helping the Chinese Communist Party cover up genocide and slave labor in the region."<sup>7</sup>

These actions, and Tesla's dependence on China's consumer market — the company's second largest market in the world<sup>8</sup> — raise significant national security concerns for the United States.

*For example: Has Elon Musk been in communication with senior officials in the Chinese Communist Party? If successful in acquiring Twitter, will Mr. Musk preference or otherwise encourage the spread of Chinese disinformation or propaganda in exchange for Tesla maintaining access to China's consumer market? Will Mr. Musk preference posts or advertisements by Chinese companies over American companies on the social media platform?*

## **2. Has Musk disclosed all the foreign actors financially supporting his acquisition?**

Without fully understanding the extent of Mr. Musk's funding for the \$44 billion dollar purchase, it is impossible to rule out the possibility that Mr. Musk's acquisition threatens the national security interests of the United States.

The Committee on Foreign Investment in the U.S. (CFIUS), which has broad authority to scrutinize mergers and acquisitions involving foreign investors, and to block, modify, or unwind transactions as necessary for threat mitigation, is reportedly already scrutinizing Elon Musk's Twitter acquisition.<sup>9</sup> For good reason: To finance the deal, Mr. Musk is relying on investments from Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Al Saud and the sovereign wealth fund of Qatar — two nations run by repressive regimes that suppress free speech and often make decisions at odds with the national security interests of the United States.<sup>10 11</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/14/tesla-has-bought-aluminum-from-russian-supplier-rusal-since-2020.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/29/us/politics/russian-oligarch-sanctions-citizenship.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-59863859>

<sup>7</sup> Id.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/business/autos-transportation/exclusive-tesla-weighs-reset-china-retail-strategy-even-sales-boom-2022-09-15/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/06/01/elon-musk-twitter-investors/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.thedailybeast.com/qatars-repressive-regime-will-help-fund-musks-twitter-deal>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/richardnieva/elon-musk-twitter-free-speech-saudi-arabia-qatar-funding>

However, fuller details about Mr. Musk's sources to finance the acquisition remain unclear. Now that the deal is set to close, the public deserves answers about the investors behind his sudden turn of course.

*For example: Are other foreign investors involved in the deal? Will the deal's existing foreign investors – including the Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Al Saud and the sovereign wealth fund of Qatar – have influence over Twitter's content recommendations or moderation policies?*

**3. Would Musk exploit Americans' safety and/or sensitive user data to benefit foreign actors?**

Mr. Musk's behavior as CEO of Tesla indicates he is more than willing to exploit access to people's personal data and online activities. During his tenure as CEO, Tesla reportedly paid a public relations firm to surveil employees' social media accounts as they sought to unionize.<sup>12</sup> Tesla also rolled back privacy protections last year, leaving customers with little option but to submit to the company's collection of in-car video and voice recordings along with precise location data<sup>13</sup> – the kind of data that could jeopardize the safety of American citizens if sought by foreign entities. This raises serious national security questions.

*For example: Will the deal's existing foreign investors – including the Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Al Saud and the sovereign wealth fund of Qatar – have access to sensitive data Twitter maintains about U.S. citizens and elected representatives including direct messages and other Twitter user data?*

While this situation remains fluid, news reports indicate that Musk could gain control of Twitter, Inc. as early as next week. It is critical that Congress immediately investigate the national security implications of this acquisition and take steps, as necessary, to protect American democracy and independence.

Sincerely,

Nicole Gill, Co-founder and Executive Director  
Jesse Lehigh, Co-founder and Senior Advisor  
Accountable Tech

CC:

The Honorable Sherrod Brown, Chairman, United States Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

The Honorable Patrick Toomey, Ranking Member, United States Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

The Honorable Bob Menendez, Chairman, United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

The Honorable James Risch, Ranking Member, United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

The Honorable Maxine Waters, Chairwoman, United States House Committee on Financial Services

The Honorable Patrick McHenry, Ranking Member, United States House Committee on Financial Services

The Honorable Gregory Meeks, Chairman, United States House Committee on Foreign Affairs

The Honorable Michael McCaul, Ranking Member, United States House Committee on Foreign Affairs

---

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2022/06/03/tech/tesla-monitor-employees/index.html>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/21/cars/tesla-fsd-privacy/index.html>