# Trump honours Elon Musk’s turbulent tenure with symbolic White House farewell



In a notable farewell ceremony at the White House, President Donald Trump presented Elon Musk with a ceremonial key, marking the billionaire's exit from the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). The event, which celebrated Musk's brief but impactful tenure, illustrated a significant shift in U.S. government operations, as noted by various media outlets. Trump praised Musk as one of "the greatest innovators in the world," crediting him with spearheading ambitious reforms intended to streamline federal operations amidst a backdrop of bureaucratic inertia.

Despite the bold promises made by Musk during his time leading DOGE, results fell short of expectations. While he aimed to eliminate $1 trillion in wasteful government spending, reports suggest that the actual savings achieved were significantly lower—estimated at around $175 billion, with verified reductions closer to just $19 billion. Even with these limitations, Musk's leadership challenged entrenched practices within the U.S. government, prompting both praise and internal dissent. These reforms included substantial downsizing, with thousands of jobs cut, leading to protests and unease among stakeholders including shareholders of companies such as Tesla and SpaceX.

Musk's resignation, ostensibly to refocus on his private sector ventures, was accompanied by assurances that he would remain an informal adviser to Trump. His exit raised questions about the future of government reform initiatives, with Musk acknowledging the complexities of reducing governmental bureaucracy. The farewell was laden with symbolism, as Trump described the key presented to Musk as a tribute for "special people," encapsulating the camaraderie that characterised their working relationship.

In the UK, the defence sector has recently become a focal point for discussions amid rising global security concerns. Defence Secretary John Healey announced plans to increase the UK’s defence spending to 2.5% of GDP by 2027, with aspirations to reach 3% by the next parliamentary session. This policy shift is seen as a response to the evolving geopolitical landscape, particularly given the sustained Russian aggression in Ukraine. Healey's assertions reflect a broader reassessment of national security in light of recent threats.

While some media narratives suggest that the U.S. has influenced the UK's defence spending strategies, Healey has actively pushed back against this notion. He clarified that the UK's decision to ramp up defence budgets was not solely a reaction to pressures from Washington but rather a necessity prompted by changes in the global situation. Simultaneously, the U.S. government has expressed strong support for this move, indicating a close alignment between the two nations on matters of security.

The intersection of government reform and defence spending illustrates a complex landscape in which both the U.S. and UK are navigating unprecedented challenges. As these developments unfold, stakeholders on both sides of the Atlantic are left to decipher the implications of leadership changes and policy shifts that may define the coming years. The collaborative yet contentious relationship between key figures in both nations further underscores the intricate interplay of politics and security in an increasingly uncertain world.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cm26yjd15vjo), [[2]](https://apnews.com/article/e09ac9f31cb2eb2e2d815a66cdffb7ba)
* Paragraph 2 – [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-lauds-musk-oval-office-billionaires-turbulent-tenure-ends-2025-05-30/), [[4]](https://www.huffingtonpost.es/global/trump-presume-recortes-musk-acto-despedida-casa-blanca-estoy-convencido-volver.html), [[5]](https://elpais.com/internacional/2025-05-30/trump-y-musk-comparecen-en-el-despacho-oval-para-explicar-el-adios-del-magnate-a-la-casa-blanca.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[6]](https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk/america-endorses-british-defence-spending-boost/), [[7]](https://news.sky.com/story/defence-secretary-denies-trump-is-reason-for-uk-defence-spending-boost-13317269)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cm26yjd15vjo> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://apnews.com/article/e09ac9f31cb2eb2e2d815a66cdffb7ba> - On May 30, 2025, President Donald Trump held an official farewell in the Oval Office for Elon Musk, who was stepping down from his role leading the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). Musk, praised for instigating 'colossal change' in federal operations, accepted a ceremonial key from Trump. During his tenure, Musk led significant government reforms, including staff cuts and restructuring, though the savings achieved were less than the ambitious targets set. Musk announced plans to refocus on his businesses but expressed optimism about DOGE's future impact.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-lauds-musk-oval-office-billionaires-turbulent-tenure-ends-2025-05-30/> - U.S. President Donald Trump and billionaire Elon Musk presented a united front as Musk ended his 130-day tenure leading the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). During his brief but impactful stint, Musk spearheaded major federal government downsizing efforts, eliminating thousands of jobs and slashing billions in spending, including foreign aid. Despite ambitious goals to cut $2 trillion, DOGE has only saved an estimated $175 billion, with verified reductions closer to $19 billion—less than 0.5% of total federal expenditures. Musk’s aggressive style and controversial decisions drew internal criticism, sparked protests, and alarmed shareholders of his companies like Tesla and SpaceX. He has announced plans to scale back political donations and refocus on his businesses but affirmed he would remain a Trump adviser. At a White House farewell, Trump praised Musk’s patriotic service and gifted him a symbolic golden key. Musk acknowledged the challenges of government reform, citing entrenched bureaucracy, but remained optimistic about DOGE’s future impact.
4. <https://www.huffingtonpost.es/global/trump-presume-recortes-musk-acto-despedida-casa-blanca-estoy-convencido-volver.html> - In a farewell ceremony at the White House, President Donald Trump praised Elon Musk for his leadership of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). Trump described Musk as 'one of the greatest innovators in the world' and presented him with a golden key as a 'gift for special people,' highlighting his impact on reforming the U.S. government. Despite Musk's announcement to resign and focus on his businesses, he assured he would continue as an informal adviser to the president. During his tenure, Musk led efforts to reduce government spending, aiming to cut $1 trillion in waste, and was instrumental in transforming the organizational structure of the government, marking a historic reform.
5. <https://elpais.com/internacional/2025-05-30/trump-y-musk-comparecen-en-el-despacho-oval-para-explicar-el-adios-del-magnate-a-la-casa-blanca.html> - President Donald Trump officially bid farewell to Elon Musk as head of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) in a ceremony at the Oval Office. Musk, who had previously announced his decision to leave the government to focus on his companies, was praised by Trump as one of the 'greatest innovators in the world.' The president expressed that, although Musk is leaving the position, he will continue to collaborate and informally advise. During his tenure at DOGE, Musk led efforts to reduce government spending, with the goal of cutting $1 trillion in waste. Trump highlighted Musk's impact on transforming the government's organizational structure, calling his work key to a historic reform. The event also addressed recent decisions, including the veto of admitting foreign students to Harvard, accusing them of being 'troublemakers,' and defended limiting student visas.
6. <https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk/america-endorses-british-defence-spending-boost/> - The United States has publicly welcomed the UK’s decision to increase defence spending to 2.5% of GDP, with US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth calling it 'a strong step from an enduring partner.' Hegseth, a key figure in President Trump's administration, confirmed on social media that he had spoken with UK Secretary of State for Defence John Healey, who reaffirmed the British government’s commitment to increasing its defence budget. Hegseth also suggested that the UK intends to push beyond the 2.5% target in the future. This endorsement follows Prime Minister Keir Starmer’s recent announcement that the UK will raise defence spending to 2.5% of GDP from April 2027, with a long-term ambition of reaching 3% in the next parliament. The policy has been positioned as a response to increasing global instability, including Russian aggression in Ukraine and broader geopolitical tensions. While the spending increase had already been made public, Hegseth’s statement marks the first direct US government reaction, signalling strong support from Washington.
7. <https://news.sky.com/story/defence-secretary-denies-trump-is-reason-for-uk-defence-spending-boost-13317269> - Defence Secretary John Healey has denied Donald Trump is the reason UK defence spending is being increased to 2.5% of GDP. Asked by Wilfred Frost on Sky News Breakfast whether it is fair to say the UK would not be boosting defence spending if it were not for the US president, Mr Healey said: 'No, it's not.' He said the government yesterday announced it was increasing defence spending from the current 2.3% to 2.5% by 2027 - funded by cuts to the foreign aid budget - 'because the world has changed'.