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# Trump's Second Term Is Expected to Bring Big Change to Top U.S. Cyber Agency

Republican lawmakers and Project 2025 have criticized the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency for overreach

*Catherine Stupp and James Rundle*

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Tensions between President-elect Donald Trump and the agency he created in 2018 go back years.  
PHOTO: ALLISON ROBBERT/BLOOMBERG NEWS

America's primary federal agency for cybersecurity faces an uncertain future in President-elect [Donald Trump](#)'s second term.

Trump's [expected turn to a business-friendly regulatory approach](#), and attacks from Republican lawmakers in recent years, might lead to changes in the focus and structure of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. Any potential changes would come at a crucial time, as companies closely watch moves

that could affect a coming, controversial CISA rule that would **force critical infrastructure operators** to report cyberattacks.

Critics say CISA's work has expanded beyond its core focus of federal and critical infrastructure protection into areas such as disinformation. The Trump administration "would refocus the agency," said Brian Harrell, a former senior official in the Department of Homeland Security during the first Trump administration.

New priorities under Trump might include more robust abilities for the agency to detect and respond to cyber threats, and better coordination with state and local governments on cybersecurity, he said.

A CISA spokesman said the agency is "fully committed to a seamless transition."

On Tuesday, Trump named **Tesla** Chief Executive **Elon Musk** and Vivek Ramaswamy, a former Republican presidential candidate, to lead an initiative to **cut government spending and restructure** federal agencies.



Trump named Vivek Ramaswamy, a former Republican presidential candidate (above), and Tesla CEO Elon Musk to lead an initiative to cut government spending and restructure federal agencies. PHOTO: KAMIL KRZACZYNSKI/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

"The American people re-elected President Trump by a resounding margin, giving him a mandate to implement the promises he made on the campaign trail. He will deliver," a spokeswoman for the Trump transition team said.

One way to reshape CISA would be to cut its funding, said Michael Bahar, co-lead of global cybersecurity and data privacy at law firm Eversheds Sutherland. Bahar was previously a deputy legal adviser to the National Security Council at the White House

under former President Barack Obama.

Some Republican lawmakers have criticized the agency for its handling of election disinformation threats. The House Committee on the Judiciary and the Select

Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government published a report last year saying CISA's "mission creep" included monitoring online disinformation, including Americans' speech, and reporting it to tech companies.

CISA has "metastasized into the nerve center of the federal government's domestic surveillance and censorship operations on social media," the report said.

Project 2025, a policy agenda compiled by the Heritage Foundation and former Trump officials, calls for moving the agency to the Transportation Department and restoring its "important but narrow mission" after "the Left weaponized" it to censor speech and affect elections. Trump has distanced himself from Project 2025 in public comments.

Some observers see Project 2025's objectives for CISA as unlikely, given the importance of the agency's mission. Jake Braun, executive director of the Harris School of Public Policy Cyber Policy Initiative at the University of Chicago, said that while the incoming administration may freeze hiring or stop new initiatives at CISA, dissolving the agency isn't in the cards.

"There are members of Congress on both sides of the aisle who would really go to the mat to protect it," said Braun, who until July was the acting principal deputy national cyber director at the White House.

Tensions between Trump and the agency he created in 2018 go back years. Trump [publicly fired its first director, Christopher Krebs](#), in 2020 after Krebs said the 2020 election was secure from rigging and tampering.

Since then, the agency has grown and stepped up its work on government and infrastructure cybersecurity. Under the Biden administration, CISA's budget has expanded from around \$2 billion in fiscal year 2021 to \$3 billion for 2025.

The agency's current director, Jen Easterly, said last year that the agency hired 560 people in 2022 and planned to hire more in 2023. CISA created the [Joint Cyber Defense Collaborative in 2021](#) to improve how cybersecurity companies, the federal government and critical infrastructure providers share information. Members include [Amazon.com](#), [Microsoft](#) and Google.

The Trump administration will likely scrutinize whether cyber experts, who are often difficult to attract to government jobs, are spread throughout the federal

government in the best way, said Michael McLaughlin, co-leader of the cybersecurity and data privacy group for law firm Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney, and a former senior counterintelligence adviser for U.S. Cyber Command.

Although CISA isn't a regulator, corporate cyber executives complain that the growth of the agency's work has led to unnecessary overlaps with other federal agencies that enforce cyber rules. The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, for example, [polices businesses for compliance to its cyber rules](#). The Transportation Security Agency [sets cyber rules for pipelines and transportation operators](#) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services requires companies to notify individuals if their health data is exposed.

CISA is working to create cyber rules of its own, empowered by the Cyber Incident Reporting for Critical Infrastructure Act, which Congress passed in 2022. CISA would gain powers to enforce the rules, which it must set by October 2025.

Businesses submitted [more than 300 responses](#) to a proposal CISA issued in April, saying the rules would force them to duplicate efforts for several federal agencies.

Stuart Madnick, professor of information technology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Sloan School of Management, warned that big changes to established systems can have unintended consequences, particularly in a volatile area such as cybersecurity.

"If anyone's trying to change the existing system to something different, it's got to be done with a certain amount of caution," he said.

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