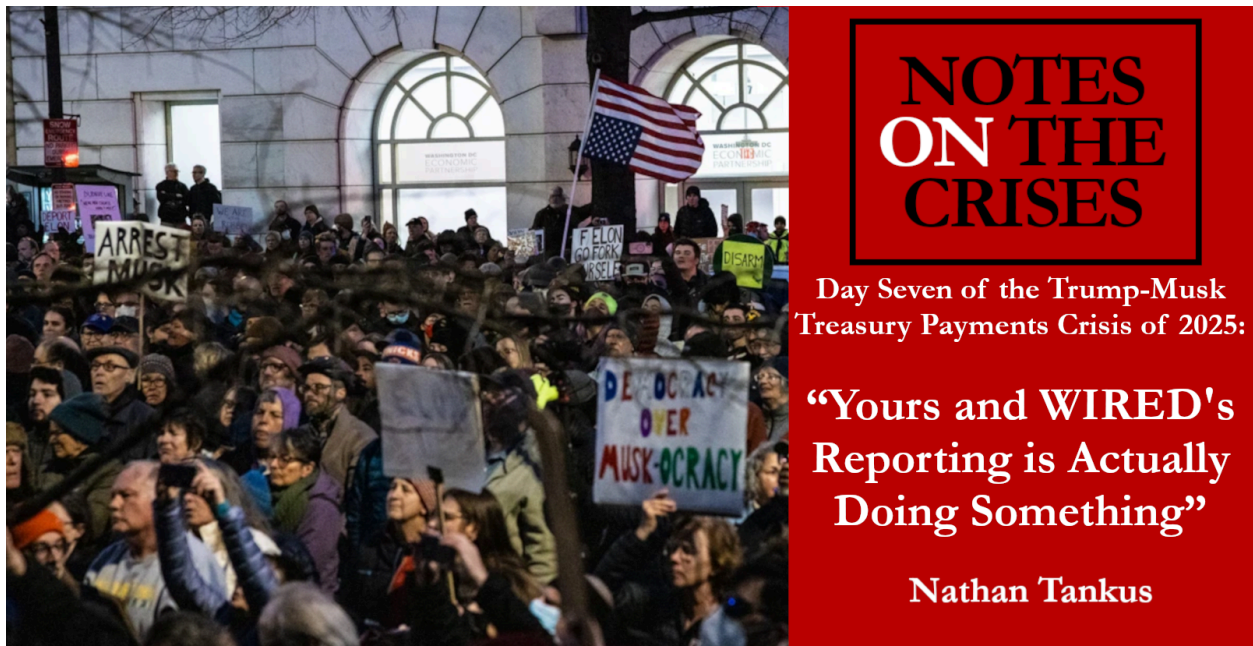**Day Seven of the Trump-Musk Treasury Payments Crisis of 2025: "Yours and WIRED's Reporting is Actually Doing Something"**

Notes on the Crises

www.crisesnotes.com/day-seven-of-the-trump-musk-treasury-payments-crisis-of-2025-yours-and-wireds-reporting-is-actually-doing-something/

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By Nathan Tankus

If you are a **current or former career Bureau of the Fiscal Service Employee**, especially if you're a legacy IT programmer with years of experience **and especially if you are a COBOL programmer currently working on the PAM, SPS or any other adjacent team,** contact me over email or over signal — linked here. My Signal username is "NathanTankus.01". Legal counsel sources and payments level sources at the Federal Reserve are also helpful. I am also looking for sources at FINCEN

This is a free piece of Notes on the Crises. I will not be paywalling any coverage of this crisis for as long as it persists, so please take out a paid subscription to facilitate performing that public service. If you're rich, take out the **Trump-Musk Treasury Payments Crisis of 2025 Platinum Tier** subscription. The additional thing you get is me trying to stop the Treasury's internal payment system from melting down or Musk taking your confidential information, along with everyone else's. So far, nowhere near enough rich people are paying their fair share.

I originally was going to do a media roundup but it was getting so long that it would distract from my original reporting. I may have a whole piece devoted to a media roundup this afternoon. Anyway, time to dive in.

The war over "Read and Write" continues. [In court](#), in [congress & in the press](#) on Wednesday the Trump administration had been officially denying that DOGE programmers had Read and Write access. For the first time, the administration has acknowledged by name that Marko Elez has access to the top secret systems of the Bureau of the Fiscal Service's payment systems. No one in government had publicly acknowledged that the 25 year old former Spacex programmer had such sensitive access. Their "defense" of this is that this is "read only" access.

We'll return to whether that is true in a moment. For now it's important to step back and understand how enormous of an acknowledgement that is. To have "read only" access would involve enormous security risks and the ability to exploit extremely, absurdly, sensitive information to the benefit of Elon Musk, Trump and his inner orbit or anyone else that Marko Elez or DOGE employees (and in some cases, seemingly not employees) feels like it. For more on this, read the end of my [first article yesterday](#).

For now, there seems to be a tiny bit of good news which also confirms the previous reporting by [Wired](#), myself and [Turning Points Memo](#) that Marko Elez **had** "read and write" privileges. A source familiar with the situation stated to me:

> It's **likely yours and WIRED's reporting is actually doing something**. On Saturday, they had given Marko read/write access and **marked his access request as completed and closed**. There was no mistake in their wording: **they explicitly said they had given Marko read/write access to SPS**. On Wednesday, **they reopened his access request and stated his permissions were now read only**. [Emphasis Added]

So the reporting on this had a dramatic effect on the U.S. Treasury. They are hearing the outside voices and the increasing alarm emerging throughout the country and they are reacting, however limited that reaction is.

It's important to understand that this happened [before the injunction](#) which as of this writing was agreed to late on wednesday between [Three Federal Unions](#) and the Department of Justice over access to Treasury records. Unconscionably in my view, though I can't speak to the legal specifics of the case (too much to do), the [Union's lawyers have agreed to "read only"](#) access for Thomas Krause and Marko Elez. I hope the judge blocks the injunction and pushes for something more stringent.

A source familiar with the situation who I asked about the current circumstances and the latest state of play of "read only" versus 'read and write" had this to say:

> Again, it's a distinction that **doesn't matter too much to me**. He shouldn't have access to this almost 5 trillion dollar payment flow, even if it's "read-only". **He shouldn't even be at Fiscal Service**. None of this should be happening and it's only going to get worse the longer "DOGE" is here and the **more they learn about what they can do and get away with**.

In other words, while it's good news that they are reacting to our reporting, the situation still remains catastrophic at best and we can't relent until this has been resolved. The courts also need to do a better job here (to the extent that's even possible).

I will also say that I've had the most consistent, most detailed and most up-to-date reporting so I do not think it is any exaggeration to say that this is uniquely related to my efforts. I have been doing interviews non-stop and, notably, Bloomberg's Oddlots [posted their episode at 4 AM](). Oddlots is the first mainstream financial press publication which has taken this issue seriously (outside of similar "straight laced" news coverage like the Times or the Wall Street Journal has been doing). It also helps that my contribution was the most dramatic, concerning and specific Joe Weisenthal and Tracy Alloway could have gotten from a guest (that was willing to speak on the record). If you have personal knowledge of the release of my Oddlots episode or any other reporting causing concern or alarm at the White House, at DOGE or the U.S. Treasury please contact me by email or securely over signal.

Still, the question remains, is Marko Elez actually "read only"? I can exclusively report here for the first time that the answer is **"kind of"**. Specifically, a source familiar with the situation knows for a fact that Marko Elez's access was set to "insert" for the Secure Payment System (SPS), which is distinct from "alter". According to a source unfamiliar with the situation this type of permission lets you "add a row to a table" which is a "**type of write access but very limited**". According to my source who is unfamiliar with the situation it lets you "create data but not change its structure or delete it, create tables etc."

What can be done with this permission? By definition, my source unfamiliar with the situation can't say. My unfamiliar source points out that "a lot of that also does depend on the structure of the overall system, inserting things into tables could certainly do things like stop payments!". Of course, this source is simply speculating. The only way to know for sure is to hear from a current COBOL programmer working on PAM, SPS or another highly sensitive system which makes sure trillions of dollars of Treasury payments go out each year.

It can't be confirmed with 100% certainty how many systems Marko Elez's permissions were switched to "insert only". A source familiar with the situation says that:

> PAM [Payment Automation Manager] I am still trying to figure out.

A source familiar with the situation states that there is some evidence that these changes were identical across "object schemas" but as of this writing the only change to "insert only" access that can be confirmed is the Secure Payment System (SPS).

So from what we know as of this moment, DOGE's Marko Elez's permissions got switched from "read and write" **to "read and limited write"** for SPS, and there is reason to believe, but not confirmation, that this was true across systems. The capacity for "insert" to wreak havoc is not currently known by any source I have or any publicly known information. It requires understanding the system architecture and business logic of the most top secret mainframes in the world- well most top secret until Marko Elez got into them. Given DOGE's outside, insecure equipment throughout the Federal Government and ability to get alone time with systems elsewhere, it can't be ruled out that Marko Elez can break into the system and **give himself his full "read and write" privileges back**.

In short, keep it up and let's keep on escalating the scale of the objections to this profoundly dire situation. You are not powerless, however the rush shock of this terrifying moment makes you feel.