



Pictured at left: An old Tesla car headed for the scrapyard was hit at a London event staged Thursday to protest Elon Musk, organized by the group Everyone Hates Elon. The FBI has launched a task force to investigate widespread vandalism of Teslas. AP.



Rising ‘assassination culture’ puts Trump, Musk in liberal crosshairs

By Susan Ferrechio [THE WASHINGTON TIMES](#), April 11, 2025

Left-wing “assassination culture” is on the rise.

A recent survey found that about half of liberal-leaning U.S. residents could justify the assassinations of President Trump and his government efficiency adviser, Elon Musk.

More than half of liberals say that destroying Tesla dealerships is acceptable. They also support Luigi Mangione, the 26-year-old man accused of gunning down UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson, according to the survey by the Network Contagion Research Institute.

The Rutgers-based institute, in a brief released this week, said political violence targeting Mr. Trump and Mr. Musk “is becoming increasingly normalized,” and

President Trump is still facing violent threats after surviving an assassination attempt at a campaign rally in July in Butler, Pennsylvania.

The left-leaning social media platform Bluesky “plays a significant and predictive role in amplifying radical ideation.”

The researchers warned about the growing chance of “real world escalation” unless political and cultural leaders condemn the pro-violence chatter.

Mr. Trump and Mr. Musk are deeply unpopular among those who identify as left-of-center or liberal.

On Bluesky, Trump critics post hateful commentary and memes labeling Mr. Trump as evil, a fascist or a Nazi. Posts suggest using violence against Mr. Trump or Mr. Musk, the CEO of Tesla, and call for “a Luigi” to kill them or shoot up a Tesla dealership.

Mr. Musk has scoured the federal government to eliminate waste, fraud and abuse. He has helped slash billions of dollars in government spending and reduced the federal workforce by thousands of jobs through buyouts and layoffs. Those actions have enraged many on the left, who say critical jobs and programs are being eliminated.

A person with the Bluesky handle Trump Hater Dan posted a photo of Mr. Musk alongside an image of a guillotine this week. The same person posted last month that Mr. Musk “needs a Luigi.”

Bluesky poster Shell Bonmots called for “any Luigi’s out there that really hate Musk, Trump, all his Cabinet picks, and the GOP in general.”

Researchers at the NCRI said “time spent on Bluesky” was a significant predictor among those who justified violence against Mr. Trump and Mr. Musk. The data also showed “a structured endorsement” of political violence targeting the two men that is not on the fringes but reflects “an emergent assassination culture.”

Among those who identified as center- left, nearly 21% said the killing of Mr. Trump would be completely justified or nearly completely justified. More than 12% felt the same about the assassination of Mr. Musk.

No more than half said that killing Mr. Trump or Mr. Musk would be completely unjustified.

Violent sentiments against Mr. Trump and Mr. Musk, the researchers said, are grounded in far-left authoritarianism and then normalized in online banter.

In addition to Bluesky, the social media platform Reddit is a source of pro-assassination chatter.

Several Reddit groups are dedicated to supporting Mr. Mangione, who has been charged with first-degree murder in Mr. Johnson's death.

Mr. Mangione is accused of fatally shooting Mr. Johnson in the back on the morning of Dec. 4 outside a hotel in midtown Manhattan. U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi plans to seek the death penalty in the case.

A "Free Luigi" Reddit group has 38,000 members, and a "Luigi Mangione-Justice" page is followed by 14,000 Reddit users who debate whether he committed the crime.

The escalation in left-wing violent sentiment follows two assassination attempts on Mr. Trump, while protesters angry about Mr. Musk's Department of Government Efficiency cuts have torched his Tesla dealerships and vandalized Tesla cars and Cybertrucks. Thousands of protesters gathered in major cities last weekend to protest government cuts and job reductions. In Washington, footage showed protesters carrying fake guillotines and throwing objects at images of Mr. Musk.

The FBI has launched a task force to investigate firebombings of Tesla dealerships and charging stations and the vandalism of Tesla cars. It labeled the acts as domestic terrorism.

A Bluesky user recently wrote a "tribute" to Mr. Mangione and the two would-be Trump assassins, Thomas Matthew Crooks, who was killed by Secret Service when he shot at and hit Mr. Trump's ear at a July campaign rally in Butler,

Pennsylvania, and Ryan Wesley Routh, who is charged with attempting to assassinate Mr. Trump with a semiautomatic rifle on his West Palm Beach golf course in September.

“Today I am paying tribute to 3 Great American Patriots who cared enough about you and I that they put their lives on the line to fight against the American Oligarchy. These men are true martyrs of a just cause and deserve respect,” wrote a person using the handle Mr. Bluesky.

Routh, a convicted felon, also tried to buy a rocket-propelled grenade launcher to blow up Mr. Trump’s campaign plane, prosecutors say.

The violence isn’t limited to the United States. Vancouver police are investigating how a 2-pound rock smashed through the windshield of a Tesla last week, injuring a pregnant passenger. Police said they didn’t know what caused it to hit the vehicle but were investigating 28 incidents involving violent acts against Tesla cars, charging stations and dealerships.

The NCRI survey found that nearly 58% of left-of-center respondents said that destroying Tesla dealerships is partially acceptable.

The survey, which included 1,264 responses, was weighted based on race, age, gender, education and political party.

Researchers said the study did not address sentiments among conservatives supporting assassinations focused on left-leaning figures, but overall, surveys about violence directed at political figures showed “significantly more support” from those identifying as Democrats.

“Given the current economic volatility of and institutional distrust, the online normalization of political violence may increasingly translate into offline action,” the researchers wrote.