

Elon Musk admits exhaustion as Tesla tweet storm deepens

● Tesla produced only slightly more than 100,000 vehicles last year

● Company has been struggling to boost production of its Model 3, which is less expensive

● Musk in talks with Saudi fund and others for funding for going private

● The news shocked investors who did not see it coming

Washington, United States

Entrepreneur Elon Musk has acknowledged exhaustion from overwork, as he deals with a reported probe by regulators into a plan divulged on *Twitter* to take his auto company Tesla private. "This past year has been the



Tesla founder Elon Musk

most difficult and painful year of my career," Musk told the *New York Times* in an interview Thursday. "It was excruciating."

The paper said the electric car company's swashbuckling boss choked up at times during the interview as he talked about working marathon hours trying to meet production deadlines.

Musk, who founded Tesla in 2003 to push cars into a new tech era, said he saw last week's

tweet -- which included an assurance that funding for going private was secured -- as an attempt to be transparent.

The news sent Tesla shares soaring so much that trading was suspended in New York.

It shocked investors, market analysts and reportedly even Tesla board members who did not see it coming, as well as attracting the attention of regulators.

Tesla shares fell this week on

reports by Fox Business and the *New York Times* that the US Securities and Exchange Commission has subpoenaed Musk to talk about the tweet.

Normally such a major announcement -- taking a huge company private -- would be explained in detail beforehand to regulators.

He and other board members are preparing to meet with SEC officials as early as next week,

the *Times* said. Musk acknowledged that no one read his *Twitter* post before he sent it, but said he did not regret it. "Why would I?" he said.

in fact contacted him to discuss the *Twitter* post.

Musk added he had agreed not to tweet again about taking the firm private unless he had discussed it with the board. The tycoon has caused controversy by turning to his *Twitter* following of more than 22 million to vent frustrations in recent months.

In one bizarre moment in July, Musk labeled a British caver a "pedo" -- or pedophile -- after the rescuer dismissed the Tesla chief's idea for bringing 12 trapped Thai boys to safety in a miniature submarine.

The *Times* report said board members had raised concerns over his "workload but also about his use of Ambien", a sleeping drug.

Musk responded to speculation that his comment that he wanted to launch the buyout at \$420 a share was an oblique reference to cannabis counter-culture.

"But I was not on weed, to be clear. Weed is not helpful for productivity," he told the *Times*.



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Trump threat to security clearances of critics

President Donald Trump revoked the security clearance of former CIA Director John Brennan, citing a constitutional responsibility to protect classified information.

The Associated Press reports that Trump cited "erratic conduct and behaviour" by President Barack Obama's CIA director as justification for revoking Brennan's security clearance. Trump also accused Brennan of "lying"

and "wild outbursts." At a news conference last month in Finland, Trump stood alongside Russian President Vladimir Putin and openly questioned US intelligence agencies' conclusions that Moscow tried to influence the 2016 election in his favour. Afterwards, Brennan criticised Trump's performance as "nothing short of treasonous" and accused him of being "wholly in the pocket of Putin."



John Brennan
Ex-CIA chief's security clearance revoked after calling Trump's summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin "nothing short of treasonous"



James Comey
Trump fires FBI Director and revokes security clearances in May 2017 over bureau's probe into Russia's involvement in Trump election campaign



James Clapper
Former intelligence chief says Watergate scandal "pales in comparison" to Russia collusion inquiry dogging Trump presidency



Michael Hayden
Former Director of National Security and past CIA Director slams Trump over his immigration policy of separating mothers and children



Susan Rice
Ex-National Security Adviser writes in July that U.S. has "so much to lose and so little to gain" from Trump-Putin summit in Finland



Andrew McCabe
Security clearances deactivated after Trump sacks Deputy FBI Director, days before he can retire with full pension benefits



Sally Yates
Acting Attorney General is fired in 2017 after refusing to enforce Trump's travel ban on residents of several Muslim countries



Peter Strzok
FBI agent working on Robert Mueller's Russia probe is fired from bureau over anti-Trump text messages sent to FBI lawyer



James Baker
FBI General Counsel resigns after being abruptly reassigned in December 2017, amid scrutiny over his involvement in Russia probe

Pictures: Associated Press, C-Span

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Lack of funding leaves world's roads in disrepair, says report

Road quality highest in the United Arab Emirates with Singapore in second place

Paris, France

In an age of austerity and budget cutbacks, the deadly bridge collapse in Genoa, Italy, has put the spotlight clearly on the lack of public funding for road networks across the globe, from France and Germany, to the United States and beyond.

A report by the World Economic Forum published late last year found that, out of 137 countries, road quality was highest in the United Arab Emirates, with Singapore in second place.

Switzerland came third. Among its European partners, the Netherlands followed in fifth place, France in seventh, Germany 15th, Italy 45th and Belgium 46th.

In France, a recent government-commissioned audit found that one out of every three bridges is in need of repair.

In Belgium, around 80 bridges, viaducts and tunnels have been placed under heightened scrutiny due to their state of disrepair, according to a *De Standaard* newspaper report.

In Germany, "it's only a matter of time before a similar catastrophe happens," the head of the DIW economic think-tank, Marcel Fratzscher, said on national radio.

In Bulgaria, the EU's poorest member whose infrastructure is notoriously dilapidated, Prime Minister Boiko Borissov has called for the renovation of all of the country's bridges.

In the United Kingdom, public debate about the state of the country's roads tends to focus



In the UK, more than 3,000 bridges were found not fit to carry the heaviest vehicles (Representative picture)

more on potholes than on the condition of tunnels and bridges. The RAC Foundation however published a report last year which found that more than 3,000 bridges were not fit to carry the heaviest vehicles.

The US Transportation Department estimated last year that more than two thirds of American roads and nearly 143,000 bridges were in need of urgent repair or improvement.

Budget cutbacks

In Spain, where motorways and fast roads are relatively new, the Spanish Road Association AEC expressed concern, particularly about the state of the regional road networks, which has deteriorated as a result of successive budget cutbacks following the 2008 financial crisis.

In the wake of the collapse of the decades-old Morandi bridge in Genoa, Italy, which killed 38 people, Italy's hardline eurosceptic Interior Minister Matteo Salvini accused the European Union of prioritising balanced budgets over safety, austerity over public need.

Germany, which has a budget surplus, has frequently been called on by the likes of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to be "more energetic" in its public investment.

In 2018, the government earmarked 3.9 billion euros (\$4.4 billion) in investment for roads and bridges. The DIW think-tank calculates that closer to 10 billion euros is needed.

In France, the government-commissioned audit recommends substantially boosting funds for the maintenance and modernisation of national roads, compared with the annual average of 666 million euros earmarked between 2007 and 2017. French Transport Minister Elisabeth Borne said in May she intended to spend one billion euros, compared with 800 million euros in 2018 and 700 million euros in 2017.

US President Donald Trump has announced plans to spend \$1.5 trillion on infrastructure, but no concrete details for the roll-out of such plans have so far been forthcoming.

