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Federal judge blocks DOGE from accessing sensitive U.S. Treasury Department material

UPDATED FEBRUARY 8, 2025 · 2:01 AM ET

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 By The Associated Press

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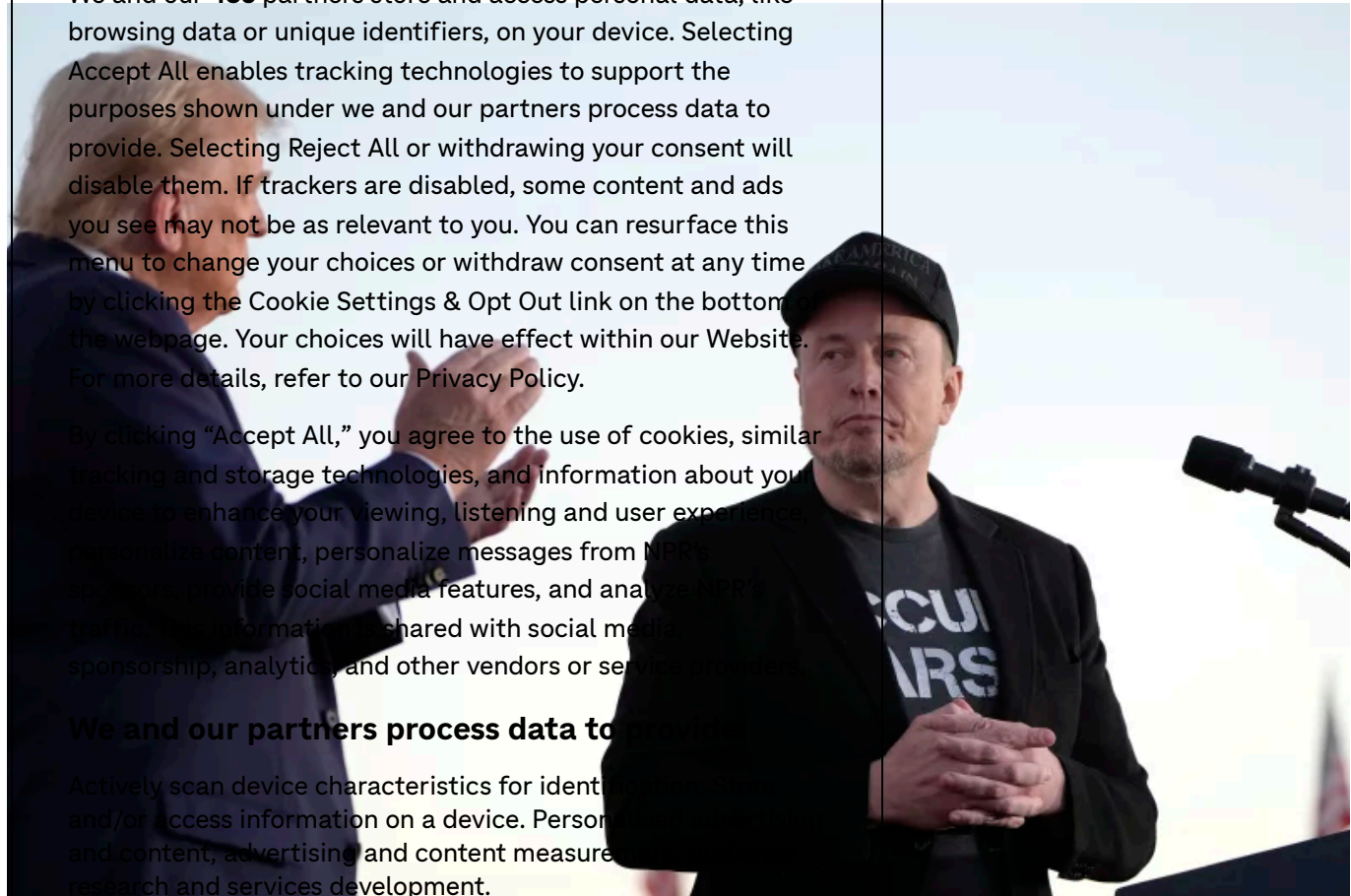
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Republican presidential nominee former President Donald Trump, left, claps as Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk prepares to depart after speaking at a campaign event at the Butler Farm Show, on Oct. 5, 2024, in Butler, Pa.

Alex Brandon/AP

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A federal judge early Saturday **blocked** Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency from accessing **Treasury Department** records that contain sensitive personal data such as Social Security and bank account numbers for millions of Americans.



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POLITICS

Musk at the inauguration of President Trump on Jan. 20 in Washington D.C.

the inauguration of President Trump on Jan. 20 in Washington

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U.S. District Judge Paul A. Engelmayer issued the preliminary injunction after 19 Democratic attorneys general sued President Donald Trump. The case, filed in federal court in New York City, alleges the Trump administration allowed Musk's team access to the Treasury Department's central payment system in violation of federal law.

The payment system handles tax refunds, Social Security benefits, veterans' benefits and much more, sending out trillions of dollars every year while containing an expansive network of Americans' personal and financial data.

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Engelbrite, who was appointed by President Barack Obama, also said anyone prohibited from having access to the sensitive information since Jan. 20 must immediately destroy all copies of material downloaded from Treasury Department systems.

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which is used for analytics and other methods described in our privacy policy. The White House previously did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the lawsuit being filed.

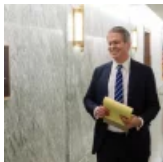
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Musk's Department of Government Efficiency, also known as DOGE, was created to discover and eliminate what the Trump administration has deemed to be wasteful government spending. DOGE's access to Treasury records, as well as its inspection of various government agencies, has ignited widespread concern among critics over the increasing power of Musk, while supporters have cheered at the idea of reining in bloated government finances.

Musk has made fun of criticism of DOGE on his X social media platform while saying it is saving taxpayers millions of dollars.

New York Attorney General Letitia James, whose office filed the lawsuit, said DOGE's access to the Treasury Department's data raises security problems and the possibility for an illegal freeze in federal funds.



NEWS

Musk's team takes control of key systems at Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

"This unelected group, led by the world's richest man, is not authorized to have this information, and they explicitly sought this unauthorized access to illegally block payments that millions of Americans rely on, payments for health care, child care and other essential programs," James said in a video message released by her office Friday.

James, a Democrat who has been one of Trump's chief antagonists, said the president does not have the power to give away an American's private information to anyone he chooses, and he cannot cut federal payments approved by Congress.

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Also on the lawsuit are Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wisconsin.

The suit alleges that DOGE's access to the Treasury records could interfere with funding already appropriated by Congress, which would exceed the Treasury

Department's statutory authority. The case also argues that the DOGE access violates federal administrative law and the U.S. Constitution's separation of powers doctrine.

It also accuses Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent of changing the department's longstanding policy for protecting sensitive personally identifiable information and financial information to allow Musk's DOGE team access to its payment systems.



ECONOMY

Trump's pick for Treasury Secretary is Scott Bessent. Here's what to know

People Consent & Sponsorship Choices

We and our 483 partners store and access personal data, like your name, address, phone number, and email address. This decision failed to account for legal obligations to protect such data and ignored the privacy expectations of federal fund recipients, including states, veterans, retirees, and taxpayers, the lawsuit says. Accept All enables tracking technologies to support the purposes shown under we and our partners process data to provide. Selecting Reject All or withdrawing your consent will disable them. If trackers are disabled, some content and ads connected to Attorney General William Tong said it's not clear what DOGE is doing with the information in the Treasury systems.

menu to change your choices or withdraw consent at any time by clicking the Cookie Settings & Opt Out link on the bottom of the webpage. Your choices will have effect within our Website. This is the largest data breach in American history," Tong said in a statement Friday. "DOGE is an unlawfully constituted band of renegade tech bros combing through confidential records, sensitive data and critical payment systems. What could go wrong?" By clicking "Accept All," you agree to the use of cookies, similar tracking and storage technologies, and information about your device to enhance your viewing, listening and user experience, personalize content, personalize messages from NPR's sponsors, provide social media features, and analyze NPR's traffic. This information is shared with social media, sponsorship, analytics, and other vendors or service providers. The Treasury Department has said the review is about assessing the integrity of the system and that no changes are being made. According to two people familiar with the process, Musk's team began its inquiry looking for ways to suspend payments made by the U.S. Agency for International Development, which Trump and Musk are attempting to dismantle. The two people spoke with The Associated Press on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation.

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Separately, Democratic lawmakers are seeking a Treasury Department investigation of DOGE's access to the government's payment system.

Also, labor unions and advocacy groups have sued to block the payments system review over concerns about its legality. A judge in Washington on Thursday temporarily restricted access to two employees with "read only" privileges.

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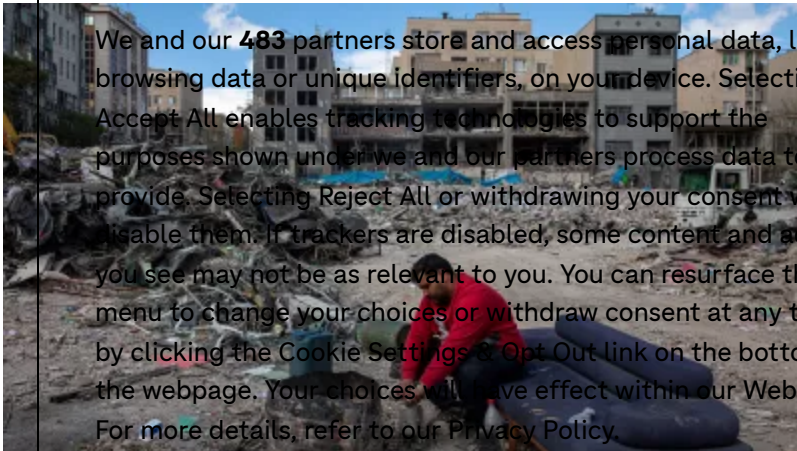
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U.S. and Iran agree to 2-week ceasefire, suspending Trump's threat to annihilate Iran



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A Trump official quits over the Iran war and Israel kills 2 top Iranian commanders



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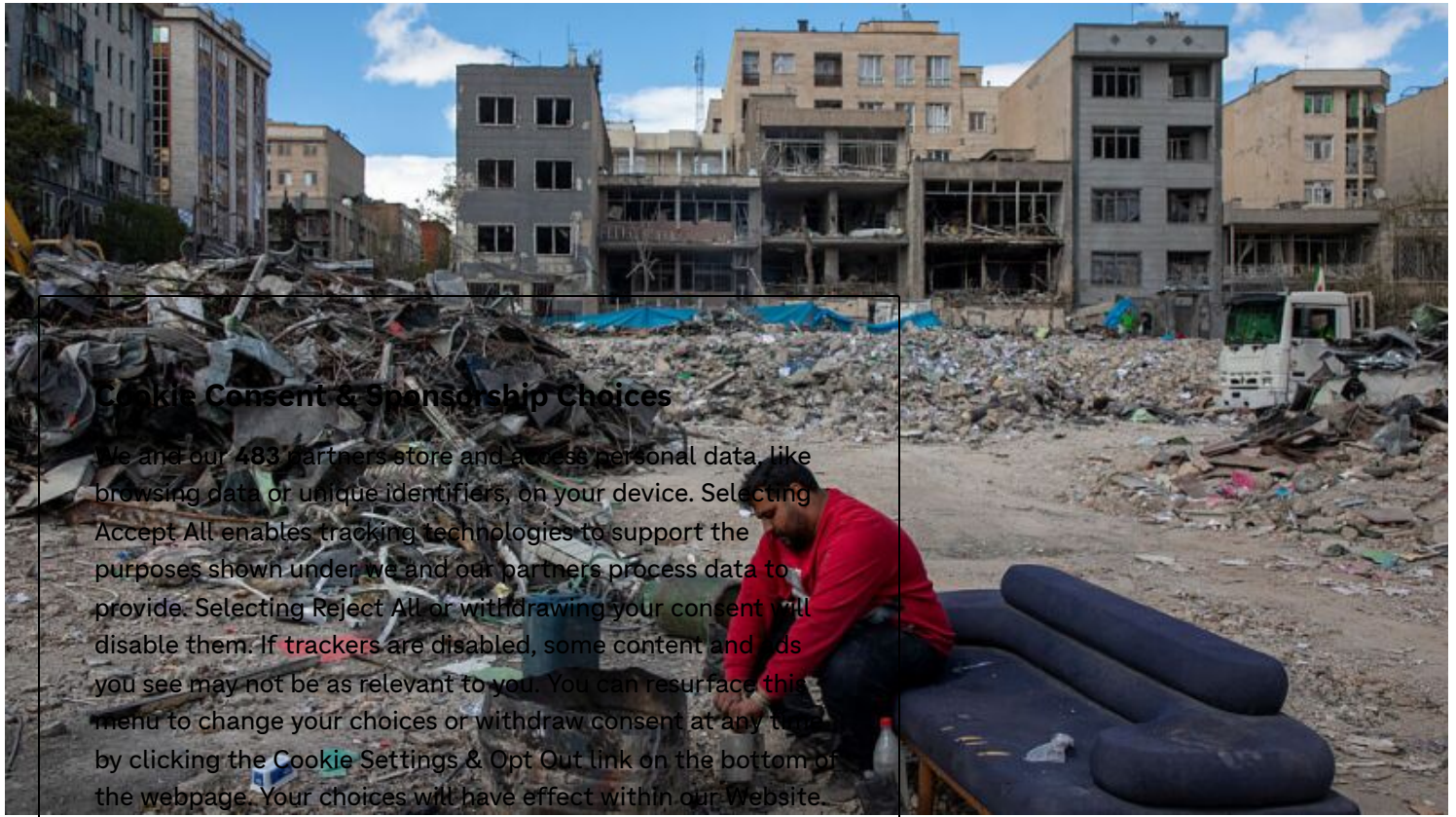
What can Artemis II astronauts see that satellites haven't captured?

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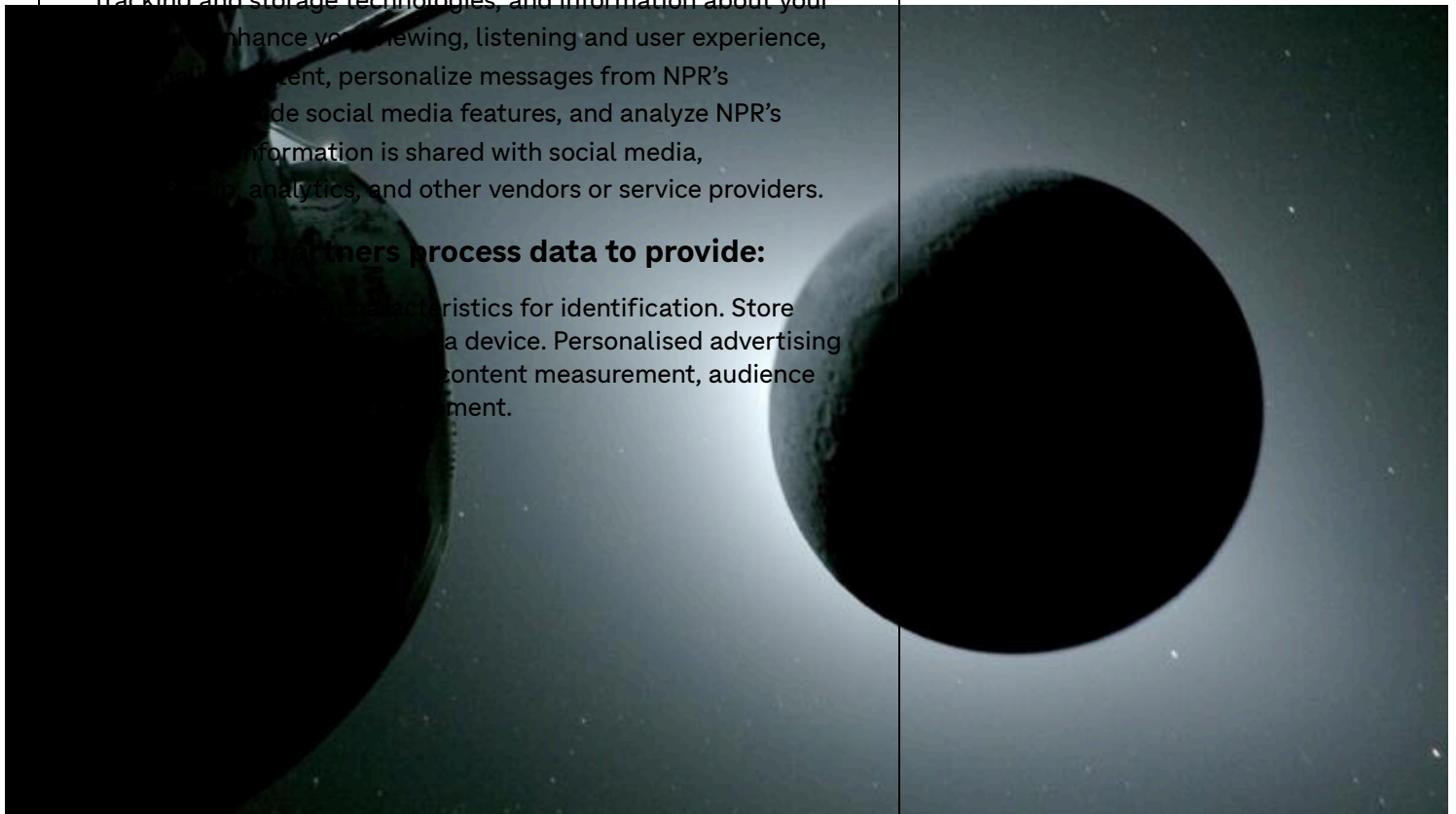
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THE PICTURE SHOW

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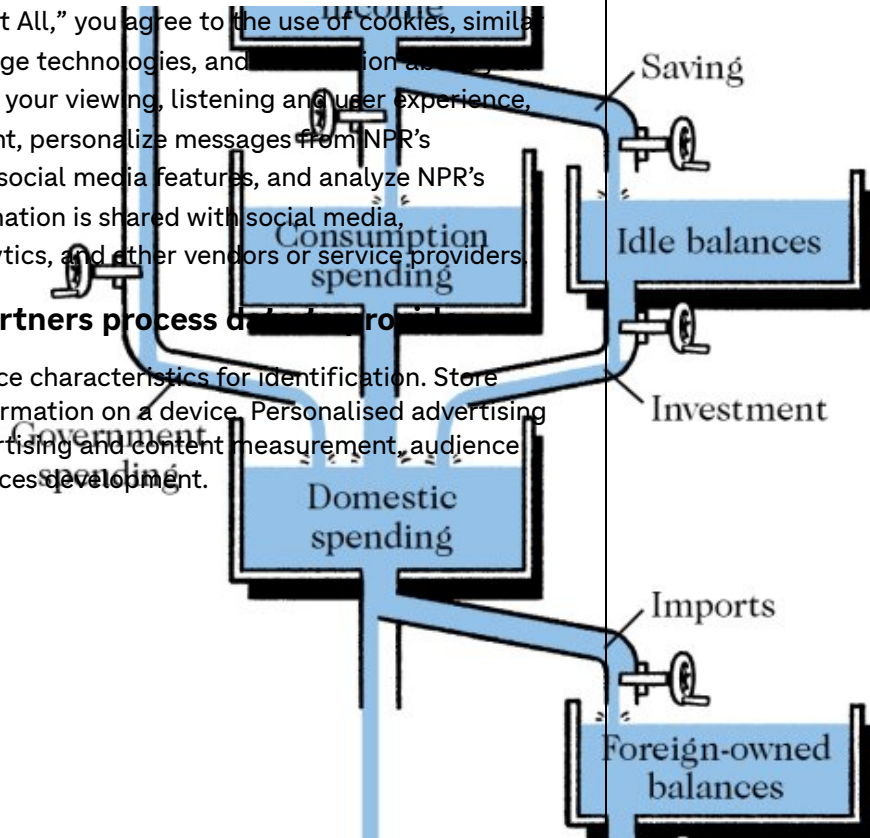
Australia charges ex-soldier with 5 war-crime murders in Afghanistan

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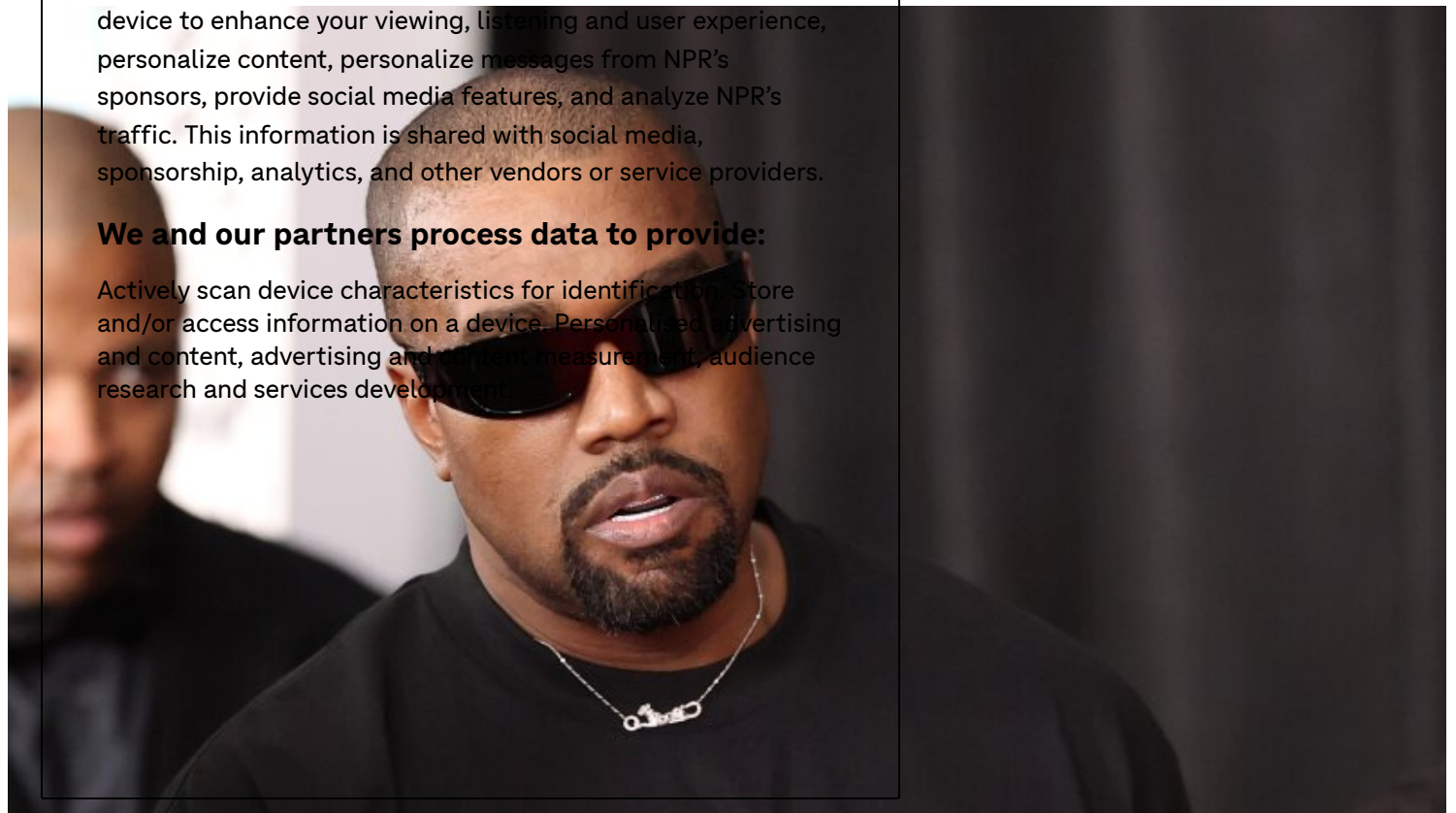
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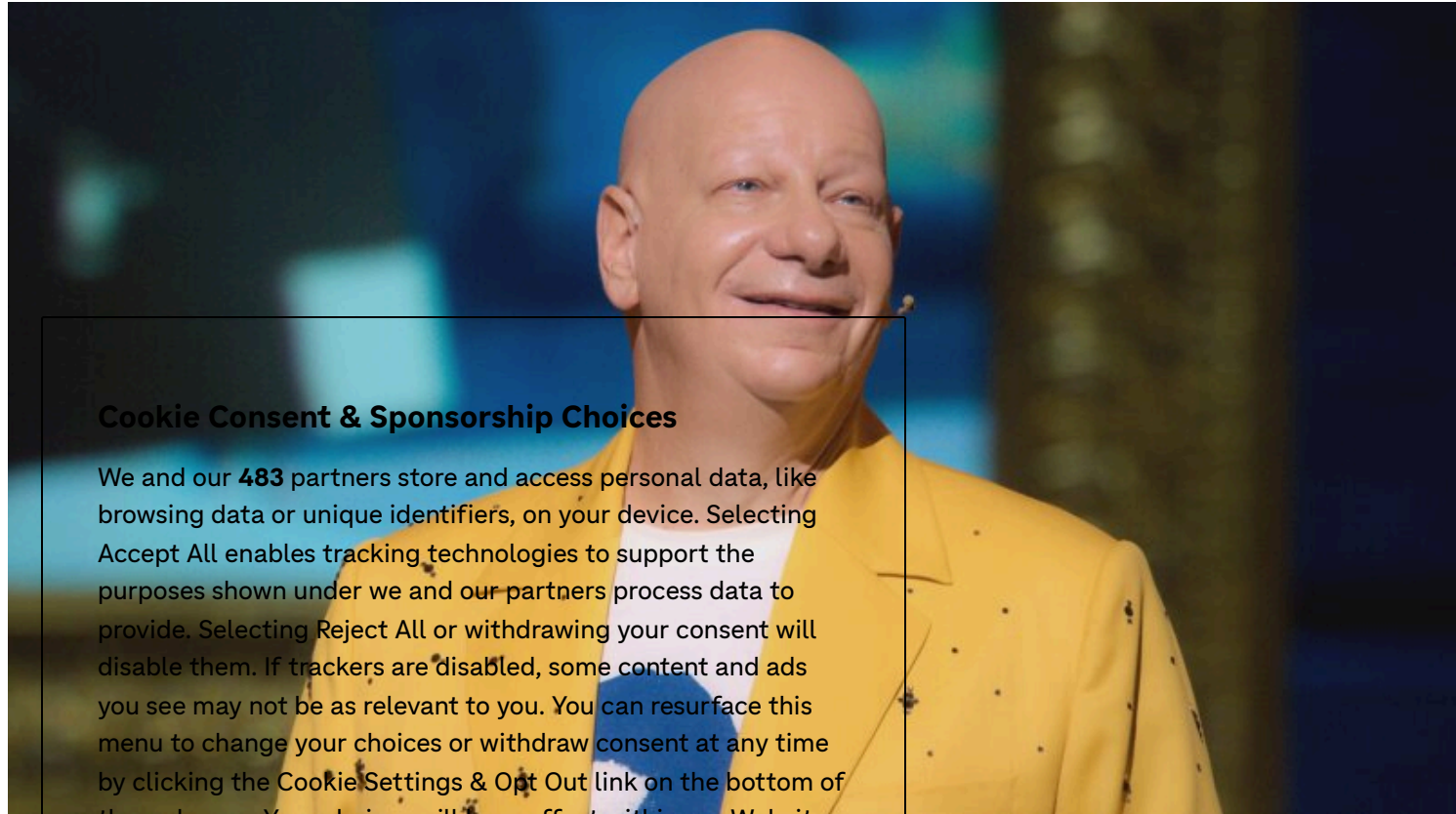
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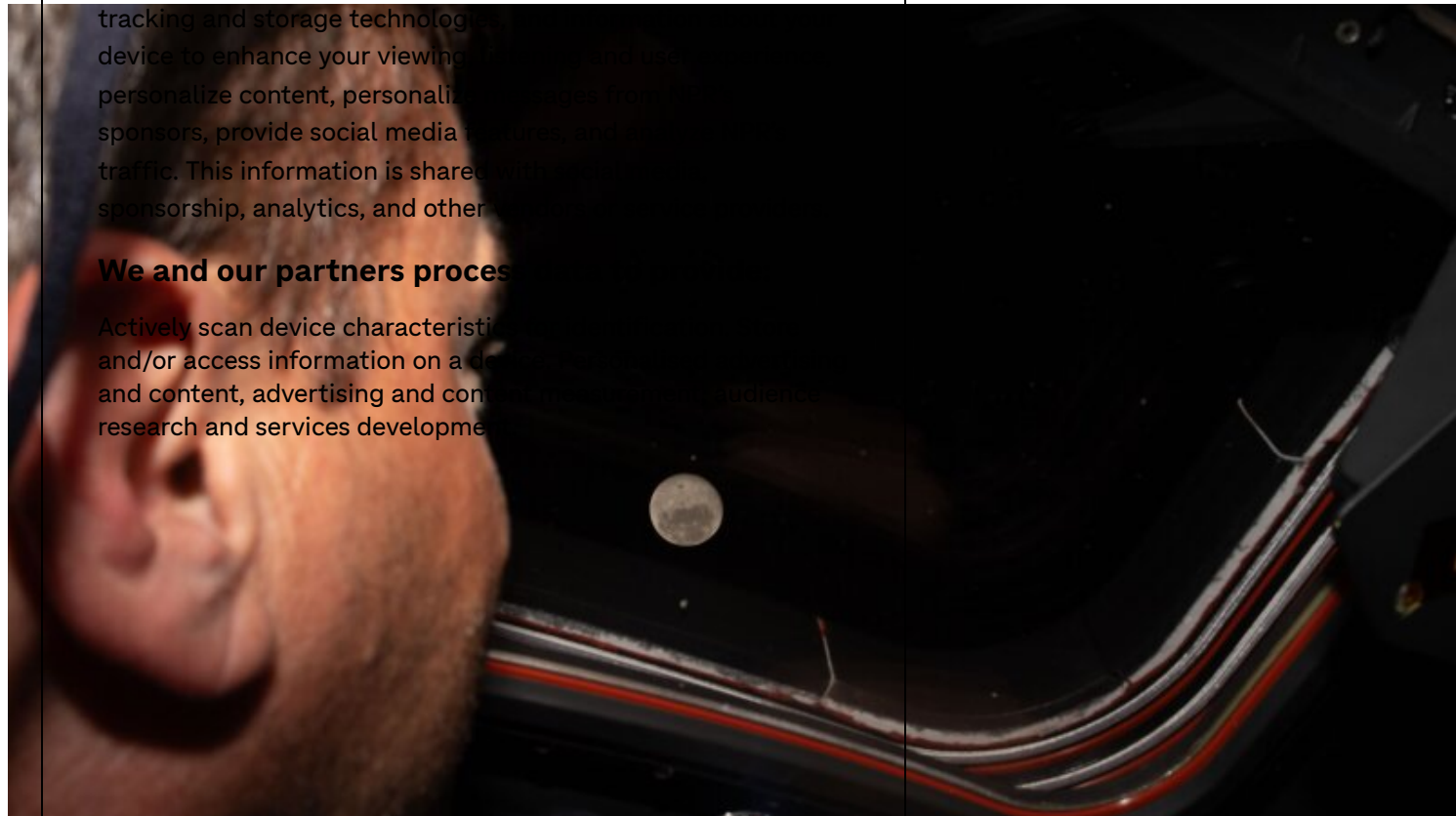
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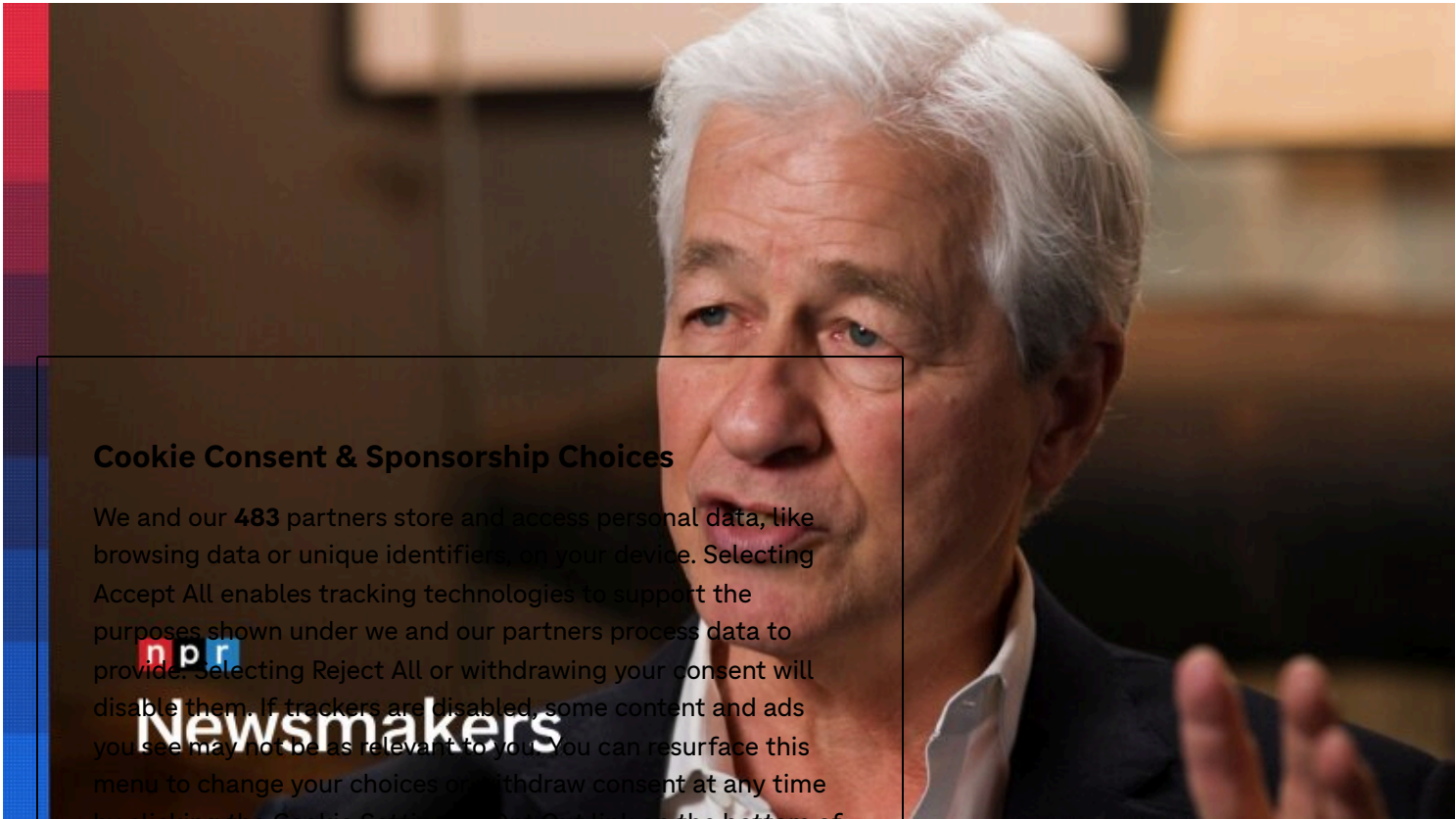
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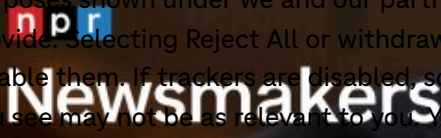
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Astronauts suggest naming a moon crater 'Carroll' after their commander's late wife



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