

Amazon wants Trump testimony about huge Pentagon contract

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Amazon, which is challenging the US government decision to award a multibillion-dollar cloud computing contract to Microsoft, wants testimony from President Donald Trump about possible political interference

Amazon is seeking testimony from US President Donald Trump and

other top officials about how the tech giant was shut out of a \$10 billion US military cloud computing contract, according to court documents made public on Monday.

As part of an evidence gathering phase of an appeal on the awarding of the "JEDI" contract to upgrade the US military's computing networks, Amazon asked a judge to call for depositions of Trump and other administration figures including Defense Secretary Mark Esper and his predecessor, James Mattis.

"President Trump has unique knowledge about his involvement in the bid process, including private conversations with and instructions to others about the process and the award," the filing read.

The other individuals "can testify about specific conversations he had with them," Amazon's lawyers said.

Amazon has alleged that Trump improperly intervened in the procurement process to deny the company the massive contract in late October.

An Amazon spokesperson said Trump "has repeatedly demonstrated his willingness to use his position as president and commander in chief to interfere with government functions—including federal procurements—to advance his personal agenda."

The court should require evidence on whether a decision was made "to screw Amazon," the spokesperson added.

The Department of Defense strongly opposes Amazon's effort to question some of its leaders, DoD spokesman Lt Col Robert Carver said in response to an AFP inquiry.

"The request is unnecessary, burdensome and merely seeks to delay getting this important technology into the hands of our warfighters," Carver said.

The 10-year contract for the Joint Enterprise Defense Infrastructure program, better known as JEDI, will ultimately see all military branches sharing information in a system boosted by artificial intelligence.

An earlier court filing by Amazon detailed alleged errors that ended with Microsoft being chosen over its Amazon Web Services (AWS) cloud computing division, part of the technology group led by Amazon chief Jeff Bezos.

Bezos, who also owns The Washington Post, is a frequent target of the US president.

Amazon was considered the lead contender to provide technology for JEDI, with AWS dominating the cloud computing arena and the company already providing classified servers for other government outfits including the CIA.

The Pentagon's mistakes in the contract were "hard to understand and impossible to assess" when separated from Trump's "repeatedly expressed determination to, in the words of the president himself, 'screw Amazon,'" court documents filed by Amazon argued.

The bid protest filed in US Court of Federal Claims urges that the rival JEDI bids be re-evaluated and a new decision reached.

The lawsuit filed by Amazon will not delay implementation of the project, a senior Pentagon official said in December.

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