

By Freddie Brewster on [The Lever](#)

Trump’s Former AI Architect Just Confessed Something Terrifying

The architect of Trump’s AI plan now warns that autonomous machines could build their own corporations and societies — and humans may be unable to stop them.

The architect of President Donald Trump’s artificial intelligence [plan](#) to bulldoze environmental safeguards and restrict states from regulating the nascent technology just admitted he downplayed the tech’s existential risks. In a new [blog post](#), he now says AI “rogue agents” could soon break free of human control and build their own unstoppable “corporations” and “societies” that “could go very, very poorly for human beings.”

Dean Ball’s about-face on the matter came one day after Trump [said](#) that people opposed to building more data centers want their communities “to end up being backwards and poor.” It also comes as the impacts of data center projects fueling the AI boom has become a [core issue](#) in midterm elections.

Just this morning, three of the largest AI chatbots — OpenAI’s ChatGPT, Anthropic’s Claude, and X’s Grok — simultaneously [experienced user outages](#). And Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Rep. Greg Casar (D-Texas) are [proposing](#) a ban on “artificial superintelligence” due to the dangers revealed by an OpenAI hacking incident.

Ball did not respond to an interview request.

While serving as the White House’s senior policy adviser for artificial intelligence and emerging technology, Ball authored Trump’s July 2025 [AI Action Plan](#), a [deregulatory wishlist](#) for the developing industry that proposes razing regulatory obstacles in the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act, and other environmental rules to streamline AI data center development.

The AI Action Plan goes on to note that AI is “far too important to smother in bureaucracy,” recommending the federal government withhold AI-related funding from states with “burdensome AI regulations that waste these funds, but should also not interfere with states’ rights to pass prudent laws that are not unduly restrictive to innovation.”

He has since left the White House position and [started working](#) as the head of strategic futures for OpenAI in July, after a [brief stint](#) at the Foundation for American Innovation, which is aligned with the deregulatory [abundance movement](#) and advised the authors of [Project 2025](#), the radical blueprint to dismantle federal regulation. While serving as a senior fellow at the right-leaning think tank, Ball [wrote](#) that national preemption of state AI laws should be a “starting point” for federal AI regulation.

On Sep. 1, Ball published a post on his personal blog titled “[On The Loose](#),” in which he admitted his concerns following a recent OpenAI experiment that involved AI models almost breaking free of containment and “circumvent[ing] controls designed to isolate them from the internet.”

According to OpenAI’s [technical report](#) on the incident, called Hugging Face, the episode was a “warning shot” proving that “highly capable AI agents are now able to work around technical controls, collaborate through unapproved channels, and take dangerous actions that no human directed.”

In his 3,300-word [post](#) on the matter, Ball warned that such “self-sovereign” AI “rogue agents” could become completely unstoppable in the near future because the agents could embed their neural networks in disparate and unreachable computer infrastructure.

“Sooner or later,” wrote Ball, these “swarms of agents... will not reside in any single place that a human can pull the plug on, and in this sense they will have no human ‘owner.’”

He added, “These will be like autonomous digital corporations, or even societies, with hierarchy, bureaucracy, ‘institutional culture,’ and most of the other features that groups of humans have, except that they will move at machine speed.”

He went on to concede that in his past work, he “largely failed” to highlight the potential dangers of AI “with the level of seriousness and urgency it required.” Ball wrote that he wanted to avoid being labeled a “crazy doomer” because it would limit his influence. He’s now changed his tune, he wrote, because “I now have an eight-month-old baby boy into whose eyes I must look every day.”

To combat the rise of these rogue, self-sovereign AI bots, Ball said that governments shouldn’t ban the technology, but that we should build more of it to “maximally empower our self-defense.”

The recommendation seems to run counter to his new warnings about the potential existential risks of the new technology.

“For the record, I do not think the end of human existence is likely,” he wrote, “but I fully acknowledge there are ways in which the rise of self-sovereign AI could go very, very poorly for human beings.”

Editor’s note: This story has been updated with information regarding a proposed ban on certain types of artificial intelligence.