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Pentagon's plans to move into Trump Tower raise ethics concerns

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Trump Tower is seen in New York in March 2016. The U.S. military is looking to rent space at Trump Tower for use when President Donald Trump returns to his longtime home in New York City.

NEW YORK >> The Department of Defense is planning to lease space in New York's Trump Tower, the 68-story building where President Donald Trump has his home and business headquarters, and ethics experts are not happy about it.

"We shouldn't be in a place where we have to put questions of conflict of interest against questions of national security," said Jordan Libowitz of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics, a Washington-based watchdog.

The leased space would be "necessary for the personnel and equipment who will support the POTUS at his residence in the building," Defense Department spokesman J.B. Bridle said in a statement released Tuesday.

It is not unprecedented for the U.S. government to lease space in order to provide support services for the president when he travels home; the Pentagon rented space at President Barack Obama's Chicago home. Trump Tower, however, happens to be an unusually expensive address where a floor with 13,000 to 15,000 square feet of space rents for about \$1.5 million a year.

The Secret Service and New York Police Department are already installed in the building to provide security for Trump's wife, Melania, and son, Barron, who have not yet moved to the White House, and for the president when he visits.

According to public records filed Jan. 26, Trump transferred ownership of Trump Tower to the Donald J. Trump Revocable Trust as part of a promise to turn over the business to his sons. Critics say he still benefits from the trust.

Trust documents obtained by the nonprofit news outlet ProPublica state that the "purpose of the Trust is to hold assets for the exclusive benefit of Donald J. Trump."

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