

Harsh findings on Trump's aid freeze kept secret by USAID watchdog. By [Lisa Rein](#) and [John Hudson](#), *Washington Post*, 27 Feb 2025

Two reports showing dire impacts on Africa and Gaza have not been released in fear of Trump's wrath, official says.

The watchdog for the U.S. Agency for International Development has yet to release two critical reports on the consequences of President Donald Trump's funding freeze on crucial services in Africa and the Middle East, amid fears of retaliation from the White House, according to interviews and documents obtained by The Washington Post.

One of the unreleased reports says the cutbacks threaten the ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, jeopardizing more than \$300 million in humanitarian aid for the devastated Palestinian enclave, according to three people familiar with the situation, who like others spoke on the condition of anonymity to talk about sensitive matters.

And an unpublished global audit found security dangers, risks of widespread looting and disease, and tens of millions of dollars in new costs brought about by the withdrawal of foreign aid and mass relocation of USAID staff, according to documents and interviews. Conditions are particularly dire across southern Africa, South Sudan and Senegal, where initial findings by auditors in the field predict heightened hunger and desperation caused by the ongoing dismantling of USAID, documents show.

The reports were both planned for release about two weeks ago, but remain in draft form in the email inboxes of acting deputy inspector general Marc Meyer — the [de facto inspector general](#) — and his top staff out of fear that the critical findings will prompt the White House to come after the agency in retaliation, according to an official familiar with their thinking.

The USAID watchdog office, with 275 investigators and auditors, has operated without a permanent leader since [Inspector General Paul K. Martin was fired](#) one day after issuing a critical report on the chaos created by the USAID retreat. Trump has also [fired 17 other inspectors general](#) across the government.

“The fate of in-house, independent oversight is at a tipping point,” Martin said.

As soon as the White House moved to withhold aid and sideline thousands of foreign aid employees, Martin directed his staff, with offices across the developing world, to examine the effects on the ground.

The Gaza report, drafted two weeks ago, has not just been kept from the public but also from Congress, which has requested a copy because of the gravity of the findings. The report's conclusions and some details were described to The Post by three people familiar with the inquiry. Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-Virginia), the ranking Democrat on the House

Oversight Committee, asked for a copy last week but has yet to receive it, congressional aides said.

The impasse over the work's release comes as Trump's envoy, Steve Witkoff, prepares to travel to the Middle East to push for an extension of the fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, an agreement conditioned on an influx of aid to Gaza.

Investigators found that the placement of nearly all USAID employees on administrative leave has left few, if any, staff members left to work with aid groups, the United Nations, Israel and Egypt to arrange and oversee the distribution of food, shelter, health supplies and other aid to the Palestinian enclave. The freezing of funds also has shut down USAID's partner unit responsible for vetting aid distributors for ties to terrorist organizations.

The inspector general's office now finds itself in a particularly precarious spot. The aid agency that it is supposed to monitor has been assailed by tech billionaire Elon Musk as a "criminal organization" that needs to "die." The main USAID office in the Ronald Reagan Building has been shuttered, and the agency lacks an official leader.

"This is what happens with the wanton removal of 17 inspectors general at once, and the sudden removal of another one who did his job and kept the public in the know," said Hannibal "Mike" Ware, who was fired Jan. 24 as watchdog at the Small Business Administration and the acting inspector general at the Social Security Administration.

"They're deathly afraid of losing their jobs if they do their jobs," said Ware, who also led the association of federal inspectors general until his dismissal. "But the role of the IG requires full courage in speaking truth to power. Absent that you have a one-sided, partisan telling of the tale."

On Feb. 6, the head of the inspector general's audit division told Foreign Service auditors stationed in 12 countries that an "alert is being pulled together" on the effects of the USAID pullout, according to an email viewed by The Post.

In South Sudan, a region already vulnerable to famine after three years of civil war, auditors found significant risks posed by the foreign aid freeze and a decision to send Foreign Service officers home. Local media was depicting the aid agency as a "departing airplane with South Sudanese falling to their deaths, invoking the disastrous Afghanistan withdrawal," auditors' initial findings said. They cited a serious risk that food and medical services might not reach "intended populations." They noted a collapse of local partnerships and "heightened (potentially very significant) security risks."

"Clinics and other sites will be looted by desperate citizens," auditors wrote. HIV drug distribution to 16,000 South Sudanese "who are alive because AID provides HIV treatment" was at deep risk, they said.

"If we stop, they will die," auditors wrote.

In Senegal, the abrupt departure of USAID staff members has left local employees in the lurch, with no attempt to find them jobs or assure continued health insurance, the auditors found. The abrupt termination of local contractors could lead to litigation and costly damages. And the withdrawal puts West Africa and the Sahel at risk for increased terrorism, illegal immigration, drug trafficking and increased Russian influence, they wrote.

In southern Africa, USAID employees and their families are now at risk of targeting and violence because of disparaging rhetoric used by Trump and Musk toward the agency. The cost to repatriate 116 families in the USAID mission will come to about \$5.6 million, which, multiplied for the entire staff abroad, will reach \$80 million for 1,400 Americans and their families. China's influence in the region, already on the rise, will only grow, auditors said.

The decision to withhold the audit's release has created deep frustration in the inspector general's office.

"Foreign Service officers tasked by audit leadership to obtain critical information for an urgent report feel betrayed," said one staff member, speaking on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue. "We did the hard work, and then a decision was made in Washington to shelve it. This is inexcusable, and if they are too scared to issue reports critical of the Trump administration, they should resign."

A spokeswoman for the inspector general's office declined to respond to questions on the record, but said the office "continues to prioritize aggressive, independent oversight of USAID's humanitarian assistance programming in Gaza" and is engaged in "ongoing work" in several countries in Africa.

USAID did not respond to a request for comment.

The secrecy around the Gaza report also has begun to anger House Democrats.

"I requested this report because the American people — the entire world — needs and deserves to know what the inspector general found," Connolly said. "This is exactly why we have inspectors general, and they must be free to do their jobs, respond to Congress and work on behalf of the American people without fear of retribution."

The ceasefire deal between Hamas and Israel was sealed by Witkoff alongside the outgoing Biden administration. Trump hailed it as an early example of his dealmaking prowess, but it has nearly collapsed on multiple occasions amid threats from Hamas to stop releasing hostages if Israel doesn't comply with its side of the deal, which includes an [end to delays and disruptions](#) of humanitarian aid.

Phase one of the ceasefire expires on Saturday, and Israel and Hamas — along with U.S. and Arab government mediators — appear [far from reaching an agreement to proceed to](#)

[the second phase](#), which would involve the release of all living Israeli hostages still held by Hamas, Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and a permanent end to the war.

Investigators found that the staffing reductions and loss of access to computer systems authorized by Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio had an immediate negative impact on coordinating assistance to Gaza. In particular, USAID's disaster assistance response team based in Jerusalem was reduced to three employees from 17, and the response management team supporting Gaza aid was down to seven employees from 20. As a result of the reductions, USAID staff were no longer attending meetings with the Joint Coordination Board, which is responsible for the coordination of aid delivery into Gaza between the government of Israel, U.N. agencies and USAID.

"This shows that the basic functions of USAID are falling apart," said Jeremy Konyndyk, a former USAID official and the president of Refugees International. "The destruction of USAID now threatens the Gaza ceasefire that President Trump's own envoy brokered."