

Hundreds fired at USAID. By [Edward Wong](#) and [Zolan Kanno-Youngs](#), *New York Times*, 22 Feb 2025

Trump Appointees Fire Hundreds at U.S.A.I.D. Working on Urgent Aid
The firings added to doubts about whether Secretary of State Marco Rubio, the agency's acting head, supports lifesaving humanitarian assistance, as he has said he does.

The firings add to doubts raised about whether Secretary of State Marco Rubio is allowing employees for the United States Agency for International Development, or U.S.A.I.D., to carry out lifesaving humanitarian assistance, as he had promised to do late last month during a [blanket freeze](#) of almost all foreign aid from the U.S. government.

Trump appointees have fired or put on paid leave thousands of employees of U.S.A.I.D. A task force of young engineers working for Elon Musk, the billionaire tech businessman who is advising President Trump, has shut down many technical systems in the aid agency and barred employees from their email accounts. Mr. Musk has posted dark conspiracy theories about U.S.A.I.D. on social media, asserting with no evidence that it is a “criminal organization” and that it was “time for it to die.”

The latest round of dismissals occurred on Friday night, when hundreds of people working for the agency's [Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance](#) got emails saying their jobs had been terminated. Two employees who got the emails said they were strange because they did not state any job titles specifically and did not have the recipients' names in the “to” field. They were generic emails sent out in a large wave.

The New York Times obtained a copy and confirmed those descriptions. The employees who agreed to speak for this story did so on the condition of anonymity because they did not want to jeopardize the 15 days of pay they were scheduled to receive after being given a termination notice. The two U.S. officials feared retaliation.

In addition, 36 people were fired from the [Office of Transition Initiatives](#), a unit in the agency's conflict prevention bureau that specializes in helping partner countries with political transitions and democratic initiatives, said the U.S. officials and recent agency employees.

About 400 people were fired in recent days from humanitarian assistance positions, one U.S. official said. About 200 of those were contractors for the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, the officials said, and another 200 were part of a unit called the Support Relief Group, a collection of crisis experts who helped the bureau in responding quickly to natural disasters and armed conflicts. Now only about a dozen people remain in that group.

The fired employees were contractors who were employed directly by the U.S. government. Some had worked for U.S.A.I.D. in various capacities for 25 years.

Many of the contractors for the Support Relief Group had worked for the agency in war zones, including in Ukraine, Syria and Afghanistan. They often lived in different places around the world and spent weeks or months at a time in crisis areas. One employee who got the email on Friday said they were being flown home next week from a U.S. diplomatic mission overseas.

Another fired employee said the hundreds of dismissals meant that the aid agency now had only a skeleton crew to respond to humanitarian crises.

The appointee running day-to-day operations at U.S.A.I.D. is [Pete Marocco](#), a State Department official overseeing foreign aid who was a divisive figure at the agency and other government departments in the first Trump administration. Early this month, Mr. Rubio announced he was taking over the aid agency as acting administrator.

Mr. Rubio has said all foreign aid will remain halted for 90 days during a review process. But officials and contractors working in foreign aid said they expected most of the aid to be cut permanently and many more employees to be fired, and what little remains of U.S.A.I.D. to be folded into the State Department. Although U.S.A.I.D. was created by Congress and lawmakers appropriated government money for foreign aid this year, few, if any, Republican lawmakers have raised objections to the aid freeze and the job cuts.

Foreign aid makes up less than 1 percent of the government budget.

Mr. Rubio said at the end of January that employees could apply for waivers to allow their aid programs, in particular “lifesaving humanitarian assistance,” to continue during the freeze. But few programs have gotten waivers. And even those with waivers could not operate because the U.S.A.I.D. payment system, known as Phoenix, had been rendered defunct, meaning partner groups could not get funds.

The State Department and a political appointee at U.S.A.I.D., Laken Rapier, who is said to be a press officer, did not return emails requesting comment for this story.