

OneUSAID Community Updates

February 24, 2025

Today's Top Updates:

- **URGENT: Now is the time to step forward to protect foreign aid!**
 - Judge Ali has requested live witness testimony this Wednesday.
 - The legal team wants to identify witnesses who check the following boxes:
 - Within USAID or State
 - Know how payments were processed ordinarily before 1/20
 - Know how payments are processed now
 - Know when, how, and why changes were made
 - Can identify what communications and documents exist that would reflect the decision-making process (or lack thereof)
 - Would be a good witness—i.e., friendly to us, willing to testify, etc.
 - The more they know, the better. An anonymous declarant would be ok but not great. Ideally, we would have someone willing to testify live. And we could use similar witnesses who could testify about terminations/suspension/stop-work orders too.
 - If you think you have something of interest, contact Stephen.Wirth@arnoldporter.com
- **'What Did You Do Last Week?'** emails [from an unsigned OPM address](#) started arriving in the inboxes of federal workers across the U.S. government
- **USAID Reduction-in-Force (RIF) was issued that impacted 1,600 staff** based in the U.S. - reportedly including employees supposedly on the essential personnel list.
- **Keep Calling!** Members of congress are reacting in large part to concerns by their constituents over the chaos and cuts unleashed in the Federal government ([Politico](#)), with town halls during last week's recess filled with frustrated constituents.

More details below...

Following Expiration of the Temporary Restraining Order, DOGE and Pete Marocco Begin Final Blow to USAID

- In a [ruling Friday](#), U.S. District Judge Carl Nichols, a Trump appointee, ended the temporary restraining order he had placed on the Trump Administration's plan to place thousands of USAID direct hire staff (civil and foreign service) on leave and forcibly repatriate staff based overseas. The lifting of the temporary restraining order enabled the Trump Administration to proceed with its plans, which now seem to be underway. ([The Hill](#))
 - Plans began to unfold on Friday night when another 200 employees who were part of a unit called the Support Relief Group—a collection of crisis experts with the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance—and another 36 employees with USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives were fired. ([New York Times](#))
 - Efforts continued over the weekend and late into Sunday night. Director of the F Bureau at State and Acting Deputy USAID Administrator Pete Marocco has now

- put the remaining global workforce of USAID direct hires, except designated essential personnel, on administrative leave as of 11:59 pm EST on February 23.
- In addition, a notice was issued to begin implementing a Reduction-in-Force (RIF) that impacted 1,600 staff based in the U.S. – reportedly including employees supposedly on the essential personnel list. These notices indicate employees are being terminated because their “competitive area” is being eliminated, which seemed to apply to entire offices and bureaus. The first notices were received last night beginning around 10 pm EST and set a termination date of April 24 for domestic employees or May 26 for staff overseas who also received notice.
 - The way this unfolded will likely lead to additional lawsuits with questions remaining about the legality of the process and reasons provided for the RIF. It’s just one more example of the chaos and waste DOGE’s sledgehammer approach has caused.
 - All staff serving overseas are also being ordered to return home during this exercise, effectively shuttering USAID Missions in over 100 countries.
 - This seems to be the final move to fully dismantle the agency. It will mean that only a few hundred staff remain employed, down from over 13,000 around the world before these actions by DOGE began in late January.

RIF Further Harms USAID’s Partners

- The actions last night will further complicate the waiver process and the court-ordered payments to partners who are owed funds for work conducted prior to Trump’s inauguration. There will now be even fewer staff to process these waivers and payments, and the systems to process payments are reportedly still not working.
- The inability of the U.S. government to pay its bills will have an enormous impact on these USAID partners in the U.S. and abroad, requiring further layoffs, and potentially even bankrupting dozens if not hundreds of organizations committed to critical and life-saving humanitarian and development work around the globe.
- In response to this, USAIDstopwork.com is launching a “Pay Your Bills” campaign this week via social media and are asking organizations with outstanding invoices to speak up and share their stories. The website is also asking organizations with layoffs to reach out to them on Signal or email to share job loss numbers.
 - **Confirmed Job Losses:** 13,124 Americans have lost their jobs, been furloughed, or placed on administrative leave. 55,075 jobs globally (non-American) jobs have been lost as of February 19, 2025.

DOGE Creates More Chaos

- In a [tweet Saturday](#) just hours after President Trump spoke at CPAC, Elon Musk announced an order to federal employees: “Consistent with President @realDonaldTrump’s instructions, all federal employees will shortly receive an email requesting to understand what they got done last week. / Failure to respond will be taken as a resignation.” On Saturday afternoon, ‘What Did You Do Last Week?’ emails [from an unsigned OPM address](#) started arriving in the inboxes of federal workers across the U.S. government, including [staff of the judiciary branch, which is not subordinate to the executive branch](#). These emails asked workers, including those whose work is

sensitive and classified, to send explanations of what work they did last week back to the OPM inbox with their supervisor in CC.

- [Department heads](#) including [Trump's new FBI Director Kash Patel](#) have told employees not to immediately respond to the OPM email or that the Department would respond on their behalf.
- Unions have also advised their members not to respond and [promised to challenge any unlawful terminations](#).
- On social media, responses to this action by DOGE from USAID advocates, other agency advocates, and the public have focused on the [harm DOGE has done by dismantling USAID](#), the commitment of federal workers to uphold the Constitution, and other principled or satirical protest responses to the OPM email.

Republicans in Congress are starting to voice discomfort with DOGE actions

- Members of Congress are reacting in large part to concerns by their constituents over the chaos and cuts unleashed in the Federal government ([Politico](#)), with town halls during last week's recess filled with frustrated constituents.
 - Ohio, GOP Rep. Troy Balderson (who represents an R+18 district) "described President Donald Trump's flurry of executive orders as 'getting out of control' [and] expressed some pushback to the idea of sole decision-making power lying with Trump and billionaire advisor Elon Musk," the Columbus Dispatch's Samantha Hendrickson reports. "'Congress has to decide whether or not the Department of Education goes away,' Balderson asserted. 'Not the president, not Elon Musk.'"
 - Republican Rep. Rich McCormick of Georgia was reportedly caught off guard by the crowd of hundreds at his latest town hall who were prepared with pointed questions and accusatory comments about DOGE's cuts.
 - These examples show a potential opening both for action by Congress to stop the excessive – and potentially illegal – actions of DOGE, as well as exemplifying the importance of keeping the pressure on members of Congress to act.

Consistent Topline Messages (Talking Points)

Preserving Foreign Assistance as a U.S. Foreign Policy Tool

- An effort from the Trump administration and Congress to reform and streamline U.S. foreign assistance is welcome, but **the current approach is not a serious reform effort**: it is an ineffective, sloppy power grab that is – unintentionally or not – destroying the U.S. foreign assistance apparatus and depriving the U.S. of a critical soft-power tool. Foreign assistance keeps us safer here at home while demonstrating American generosity and saving millions of lives around the world.
- The clearest example of this is the **broken waiver process**. **Despite the Administration's claims, even those life-saving and critical national security projects that have been approved by Secretary Rubio are not able to receive funding** because hurried and careless efforts to alter USAID's financial system (Phoenix) have left it non-operational, and unable to process payments. This includes efforts to stem an Ebola outbreak that could infect Americans, HIV prevention and treatment, and sensitive work in conflict

zones.

- If the current efforts continue, **the United States will be left without the systems, experienced personnel, or partners necessary to responsibly and strategically implement foreign assistance.**
- Americans agree: foreign assistance is a powerful U.S. soft-power tool, and [89 percent](#) of Americans support spending at least 1 percent of our federal budget on foreign aid. For this reason, **Congress must halt these illegal actions by DOGE and instead implement a more strategic, sensible reform effort that restores the legislative branch’s important oversight function.**

USAID: The first, but not the last

- USAID is the playbook for President Trump and Elon Musk’s plan for a **rapid and potentially illegal overhaul of the U.S. government.** This is being done without the Congressional approval and oversight required for those agencies codified by statute. Reform is welcome, but what DOGE is doing is not reform, it is taking a sledgehammer to destroy a vital tool of U.S. national security.
- Rep. Bacon (R-NE) underscored this in his comments to the Wall Street Journal: “[USAID was] funding a lot of stupid stuff – that’s a fact. But they’re also doing a lot of good stuff too. So you don’t want to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Instead of taking a sledgehammer, let’s get out the scalpel.”
- Instead of undertaking a reform effort – working closely with Congress as is required by law – DOGE has taken a “burn it all down” approach including mass firings and major infringements on Congress’s power of the purse. This may work for tech firms, but it is a **dangerous approach for government institutions that must remain accountable to taxpayers, enforce laws, and deliver public goods.**

Current Impact

Health

- In Uganda, nearly every component of the country’s HIV response is supported by the U.S., primarily through the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).
 - Despite a waiver issued by the Department of State more than two weeks ago that allowed programs to restart some services, including the delivery of antiretrovirals, only a patchwork of services have resumed. Many of the programs whose PEPFAR funds come from USAID have not received confirmation they could reopen, while the services that have, only received a two-month lifeline. ([Devex](#))
- In Kenya, approximately 1.3 million people receive HIV/AIDS treatment, with 1,602 orphans and vulnerable children dependent on PEPFAR support. Amfar, the Foundation for AIDS Research, warns that the Trump Administration’s freeze on foreign aid could sever their access to critical medical care.
- In Ethiopia, the Ministry of Health ministry may be forced to fire more than 5,000 employees who were hired with U.S. help. A five-year project to train doctors, nurses, midwives and surgeons has been halted, as has the work of a polio vaccination program, which means doses risk expiring before they can be put into children’s arms.

USAID-funded programs to deliver medications for HIV, tuberculosis and malaria to rural clinics are also on pause. ([The Guardian](#))

- In Ethiopia, the Tesfa Social and Development Association (TSDA) received a stop-work order. The 17 staff of its U.S.-funded project in the Amhara region helped 40,000 people with HIV, providing them with food, clothes and school equipment for their children. The TSDA has also paused plans to find foster homes for children orphaned by HIV and help HIV patients set up small businesses. ([The Guardian](#))
- Afghanistan has one of the highest death rates in the world for pregnant women, with a mother dying of preventable complications every two hours, according to the UN Population Fund (UNFPA). UNFPA estimates that in three years, the absence of U.S. support in Afghanistan will result in 1,200 additional maternal deaths and 109,000 additional unintended pregnancies. ([ABC News Australia](#))

National Security

- In 2019, Congress passed, and the first Trump administration signed into law, the [bipartisan Global Fragility Act \(GFA\)](#) and its associated [U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability \(SPCPS\)](#). Through the GFA, the United States has developed a more effective whole-of-government approach to addressing conflict and instability, applying the hard lessons learned from past conflicts by increasing the effectiveness of our interventions through an integrated, evidence-based approach that focuses on engagement with local partners and leveraging resources from other stakeholders. The first biennial report of the pioneering effort was published in the [2025 biennial report](#). As a result of the current Trump Administration's foreign aid freeze, **USAID's work in support of GFA and advancing national security objectives is paused:**
 - In Coastal West Africa, work is paused to prevent the spread of violent extremist and foreign malign influence threats from the Sahel in Coastal West Africa, threatening a US-German managed innovative regional multi donor effort.
 - In Haiti, work is paused responding to increased volatility amidst complex political and security crises, ensuring any security approach is matched with a community development model that stems further migration pressures into the United State.
 - In Libya, work is paused engaging in new ways with southern communities to stem extremism and curb illegal trade routes across the Sahel by fostering security and economic integration, supporting dispute resolution, and mobilizing international donor support for reconstruction and stabilization priorities.
 - In Mozambique, work is paused that aims to enhance social cohesion and community resilience among displaced and resident populations and to provide support to improved governance in conflict-affected areas crucial to transforming the country's long-term economic and foreign investment landscape.
 - In Papua New Guinea, work is paused that aims to curb China's reach across the Indo-Pacific by strengthening community capacity, bolstering youth civic awareness, addressing pervasive violence, and supporting women's political and economic participation.
- With U.S. foreign assistance frozen, climate and national security experts are worried about how **terrorist activity — both locally and internationally — could surge as**

extremist groups could exploit the climate crisis to recruit struggling pastoral and farming communities. ([Devex](#))

- **In places where violent extremist organizations operate, USAID’s investments in irrigation, food security, water storage, energy, or road infrastructure seek to prevent the spread of terrorist activity.**
 - In Somalia, a water infrastructure project that receives funding from USAID and is expected to bring food security to more than 1.65 million people, is paused as a result of the Trump Administration’s foreign aid freeze. The project is located in an area where al-Shabab, an al-Qaeda-linked militant group, operates. Al-Shabab, like other militant groups, has been successful in recruiting from farming and pastoralist communities that have been struck by drought or floods. ([Devex](#)) *[NOTE: the Devex article states that Somalia is a Global Fragility Act country, while it is not, this is still an important example of where USAID has done programming that can counter these impacts, but is now paused.]*
 - **Jihadist and militant groups have a long history of exploiting farmers and pastoralists in drought-stricken regions.** While there is no official documentation from these groups about the origins of their recruits, [studies have shown that terrorist activity thrives in areas hit hard by climate change.](#) ([Devex](#))
 - Experts say that **terrorist groups particularly thrive when they sense an absence of power**, whether that is from an outside aid provider such as the U.S. or the regional government. ([Devex](#))

Humanitarian Assistance

- In Ethiopia, as a result of the Trump Administration’s foreign aid freeze, the U.S.-based Centre for Victims of Torture has had to stop counselling and physiotherapy sessions for women raped in the devastating conflict that gripped northern Ethiopia between 2020 and 2022. It also halted work on a program that trained healthcare workers to recognize rape cases so survivors could receive proper treatment. ([The Guardian](#))

Media Review

- The Washington Post (Opinion): [The blinding contempt of the DOGE bros](#)
- CNN: [On GPS: In defense of USAID](#) - Video
- NYTimes: [As the U.S. Exits Foreign Aid, Who Will Fill the Gap?](#)
- Politico: [Judge lets Trump administration proceed with mass recall of USAID workers overseas](#)
- Devex: [Court says thousands of USAID staff can be put on leave, recalled](#)
- Washington Post: [A judge ordered foreign aid to resume. Aid groups say it’s not happening](#)
- USA Today: [Wasteful spending or crucial for US security? Differing views on USAID](#)
- CNN: [Disconnected helplines, undiagnosed HIV cases and unfinished classrooms: Ukraine counts the costs of USAID suspension](#)
- Pittsburgh Post-Gazette: [Christian aid groups weigh life-threatening choices about who to help after USAID funding pause](#)
- Law Dork: [The importance of being litigious](#)