

White House claims about USAID ripped apart by fact-checker: 'Only one claim was accurate', by [Travis Gettys](#), *RawStory*, February 7, 2025



Donald Trump's administration used nearly a dozen false or misleading claims to justify the dismantling of the nation's primary vehicle for delivering foreign aid, according to a new fact check.

The White House this week issued a statement titled, “At USAID, Waste and Abuse Runs Deep,” that alleged the U.S. Agency for International Development “funnels massive sums” of taxpayer funds to pay for “ridiculous — and, in many cases, malicious — pet projects of entrenched bureaucrats,” but the Washington Post's Glenn Kessler said 11 of the 12 listed examples plucked from right-wing websites lacked context, at best, or were outright false. “We examined these line items, as they have spread across social media,” Kessler said. “By eliminating USAID’s website, the administration made harder to ascertain the details of some of these programs. But we determined that, as framed by the White House, only one claim — out of 12 — was accurate. After we highlighted key errors in the statement to the White House, we received a statement from spokeswoman Anna Kelly: “This waste of taxpayer dollars underscores why the president paused foreign aid on day one to ensure it aligns with American interests.” Americans consistently and wildly overestimate how much the U.S. spends on foreign aid, which in reality is less than 1 percent of the federal budget, but a majority believe it's closer to 10 percent, and the White House and Elon Musk seemingly exploited that misconception to attack USAID.

“In fiscal year 2023, USAID was appropriated about \$25 billion by Congress, according to foreignassistance.gov,” Kessler said. “The website in recent days has been changed to combine USAID spending with foreign aid distributed by the State Department, so the combined

total is nearly \$39 billion. The White House identified only about \$12 million in grants — one of which was \$6 million — though one allegation vaguely claimed 'hundreds of millions of dollars.' Upon inspection, that turned out to be from 2005 to 2008."

The only White House claim with any basis in reality was one Kessler rated as "mostly accurate," which states that USAID provided \$1.5 million to "advance diversity equity and inclusion in Serbia's workplaces and business communities," which the fact checker said was funding for a called Grupa Izadji that's focused on creating opportunities for young LGBTQ people as part of the aid organization's goal of improving civil society in Serbia. However, claims that USAID spent \$70,000 for production of a "DEI musical" in Ireland, \$2.5 million for electric vehicles in Vietnam, \$47,000 for a "transgender opera" in Colombia, \$32,000 for a "transgender comic book" in Peru and \$6 million to fund tourism in Egypt were all rated as simply wrong.

Those claims either conflated USAID spending with State Department grants or misstated the purpose of the funding, and none of them made clear the strategic reasoning the organization was operating in the countries where those funds were spent.

The White House also claimed that USAID spent \$2 million for sex changes and 'LGBT activism' in Guatemala, hundreds of thousands of dollars for a nonprofit linked to designated terrorist organizations and hundreds of thousands of meals that went to al-Qaeda-affiliated fighters in Syria, and paid to print "personalized" contraceptives birth control devices in developing countries – all of which Kessler said was misleading.

"As the article cited by the White House makes clear, investigators, including the USAID inspector general, discovered that the head of a nongovernmental organization diverted \$9 million intended for Syrian civilians to combatant groups," Kessler said of the al-Qaeda claim. "He was charged in a 12-count indicted unsealed in November."

Another White House claim alleging that USAID gave "millions" to a lab in Wuhan, China, where some believe Covid-19 originated, was rated as lacking some context. "Before the pandemic, up until 2019, USAID provided \$1.1 million to EcoHealth Alliance, an environmental health nonprofit organization, via a subagreement on virus research," Kessler said. "USAID initially awarded a grant to the University of California at Davis to improve monitoring of zoonotic viruses with pandemic potential in African and Asian countries. UC-Davis then hired EcoHealth, which in turn contracted with Wuhan University and the Wuhan Institute of Virology, to collect biological samples from roughly 1,500 individuals in the Yunnan province with exposure to bats, other wildlife and domestic animals, according to the Government Accountability Office. The origin of the covid virus has still not been determined. In 2022, USAID awarded EcoHealth \$4.7 million for a conservation project to improve farming practices in southwest Liberia — completely unrelated to virus research."

The White House also claimed USAID spent "hundreds of millions of dollars to fund 'irrigation canals, farming equipment, and even fertilizer used to support the unprecedented poppy cultivation and heroin production in Afghanistan," but Kessler said that was false.

"USAID never intended to support opium poppy cultivation or the Taliban, and in fact the U.S. sought to stem it," Kessler wrote. "The White House cites a right-wing news site's account of a

2018 report by the Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) — who President Donald Trump recently fired — that found that USAID efforts to fund alternative development projects during the George W. Bush administration (2005 to 2008) had failed. The Taliban before 2001 had successfully banned poppy cultivation, but the U.S. invasion led to a power vacuum that was exploited by poppy growers. USAID was the lead U.S. agency for implementing alternative development projects, modeled after a more successful effort in Colombia, but the report documented how conflicts among agencies and with allies hampered the effort. It's a stretch to now, years later, accuse USAID of helping the Taliban."