

Trump and allies make more moves to wrest control of USAID, *The Washington Post*, by [John Hudson](#), [Ellen Nakashima](#), [Missy Ryan](#) and [Mariana Alfaro](#), February 2, 2025 at 7:37 p.m.

In the latest action, two top security officials at the independent agency were removed after they refused access to restricted spaces to Elon Musk's representatives.

USAID humanitarian aid at a warehouse at the Tienditas International Bridge on the border between Colombia and Venezuela in February 2019. (Fernando Vergara/AP)

The Trump administration and its allies moved to tighten control of the U.S. Agency for International Development over the weekend, signaling an intent to act forcefully to bring the U.S. foreign policy apparatus in line with the president's "America First" approach to engaging with the world.

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Current and former officials said the administration removed two top security officials at USAID on Saturday after they refused to allow representatives of the office led by billionaire Elon Musk access to restricted spaces at the agency.

The placement of the security officials — John Voorhees and his deputy — on administrative leave is alarming several lawmakers concerned about security protocols as the Trump administration and Musk aim to wrest control of the [world's largest provider of food assistance](#). Since President [Donald Trump](#) took office two weeks ago, the agency has been under siege and whipsawed by aid freezes, personnel purges and confusion.

The latest episode adds to the speculation that Trump will attempt to abolish the agency or merge it into the State Department and underscores the role of unelected figures — led by Musk, the richest man in the world — in the administration's push to remake the federal government. It also highlights the new administration's more transactional view of global engagement and its determination to refocus public spending on activities that yield tangible impacts for U.S. citizens.

Amid the turmoil, Matt Hopson, the USAID chief of staff and a political appointee, resigned, according to a current and former USAID official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive situation. Hopson did not respond to requests for comment.

Voorhees was put on leave after he did not allow officials from the "Department of Government Efficiency" to access a [sensitive compartmented information facility — commonly known as a SCIF](#) — an ultra-secure room where officials and government contractors take extraordinary precautions to review highly classified information, according to three current and former USAID officials.

A group of about eight DOGE officials entered the USAID building Saturday and demanded access to every door and floor, despite only a few of them having security clearance, according to a Senate Democratic staff member who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe the incident.

When USAID personnel attempted to block access to some areas, DOGE officials threatened to call federal marshals, the aide said. The DOGE officials were eventually given access to "secure spaces" including the security office.

The Senate staffer also said top officials from USAID's office and the bulk of the staff in USAID's Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs were put on leave later Saturday. Some of them were not notified but had their access to agency terminals suspended.

Katie Miller, a spokeswoman for DOGE, said on X that "no classified material was accessed without proper security clearances."

Over the weekend, Musk repeatedly denigrated without offering evidence that those at USAID were corrupt. Musk on X called the long-standing government agency "evil" and a "viper's nest of radical-left Marxists who hate America."

"USAID is a criminal organization," he added. "Time for it to die."

Established in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy, [USAID oversees a vast portfolio](#) of programs designed to provide humanitarian relief, combat poverty, support global health and more. In 2023, it managed appropriations worth \$40 billion, according to the Congressional Research Service. USAID is present in more than 100 countries from Ukraine to Peru. The agency's staff numbers more than 10,000, the majority of whom are overseas.

By Sunday afternoon, USAID's X account had been taken down, with a message saying the account "doesn't exist." The agency's Instagram account was also taken offline.

USAID's website has been down since Saturday. It was not immediately clear whether it was taken down because of the Trump administration's focus on the agency or was down because of technical problems.

The purge of USAID personnel and freezing of foreign assistance has caused tension between Trump officials and congressional staff members, who have clashed over the value of key projects and the administration's plans to fold USAID within the State Department, said U.S. officials familiar with the matter.

During those discussions, senior State Department official Peter Marocco was unable to provide answers on what aid was paused, including sensitive programs in Ukraine, which is fending off an invasion from Russia, the officials said. State Department spokespeople have also been unable to provide answers about what cases are exempt from Trump's freeze.

The news of the top two security officials being put on leave was [earlier reported](#) by CNN. News of Hopson's resignation was first reported by Reuters.

Top-ranking Democrats on Sunday demanded explanations for the DOGE officials' actions and the sudden departure of the USAID security leaders.

Ten Democratic senators, including Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-New Hampshire), the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, warned Secretary of State Marco Rubio [in a new letter](#) that any steps to dismantle USAID would need congressional approval and asked for an update on the weekend's events.

Shaheen, in a separate message to The Washington Post, said she is "seeking immediate answers about any implications for our national security and are bringing a group of bipartisan Senators together on this as soon as the Senate comes back tomorrow."

“Reports that individuals without appropriate clearance may have accessed classified USAID spaces as well as American citizens’ personal information are incredibly serious and unprecedented,” Shaheen said.

Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Virginia), who sits on the same committee, said there is “no circumstance under which individuals without proper security clearances should be given access to our nation’s most sensitive secrets and systems.”

“This is exactly what China, Russia and Iran want,” Kaine said. “This potentially criminal incident must be investigated thoroughly and immediately. I commend the efforts of USAID staff who have shown time and again that their first and foremost priority is serving their country, not the whims of an unelected and corrupt billionaire.”

But congressional Republicans have expressed interest in shrinking — or losing — USAID as an independent agency. Rep. Brian Mast (R-Florida), chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, told CBS News’s “Face the Nation” Sunday that he “absolutely” would be in support of changing USAID’s status.

Mast, however, did not answer a question on whether congressional approval would be required to close USAID as an independent agency, as would likely be required by law. Instead, he said that the office needs to be restructured and that “purging” officials throughout the State Department and other agencies, as well as the freezing of foreign aid, are all “very important and necessary steps to make sure that we secure America.”

Trump named Musk as the head of DOGE, a new government office that was initially promised to comb through the whole federal bureaucracy searching for deep spending cuts. Since then, Musk has sought to exert sweeping control over the inner workings of the U.S. government, installing longtime surrogates at several agencies, including the Office of Personnel Management, which essentially handles federal human resources, and the General Services Administration, which manages real estate.

DOGE is now housed in a White House office formerly known as the U.S. Digital Service but now called the U.S. DOGE Service and has broad visibility into technology across the government.

The administration’s move to push out the top security officials at USAID comes a day after Musk’s DOGE deputies [gained access](#) to a sensitive Treasury Department system responsible for trillions of dollars in U.S. government payments after the administration [ousted a top career official at the department](#), according to three people who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe government deliberations.

Jeff Stein contributed to this report.