

Trump to eliminate 2,000 USAID jobs, place most of workforce on leave. By [John Hudson](#) and [Mariana Alfaro](#), *The Washington Post*, 23 Feb 2025

The announcement comes two days after a federal judge ruled that the Trump administration may move forward with an effort to slash project funding and staff. In notices sent Sunday, the Trump administration said it will eliminate 2,000 jobs at the U.S. Agency for International Development and place all but a small number of remaining employees on leave.

As of 11:59 p.m. Eastern Sunday, all USAID direct-hire personnel, “with the exception of designated personnel responsible for mission-critical functions, core leadership and/or specially designated programs,” will be placed on administrative leave globally, read the notices.

The announcement — sent in emails reviewed by The Washington Post — comes [two days](#) after U.S. District Judge Carl J. Nichols ruled that the Trump administration may move forward with an effort to slash project funding and the USAID workforce by placing employees on leave in the United States and worldwide.

Nichols, a Trump appointee, rejected USAID workers’ request to extend a temporary restraining order against the administration’s effort on grounds that the workers — represented by the American Foreign Service Association and the American Federation of Government Employees — were engaged in a typical dispute with their employer over working conditions. As a result, they must submit their complaints to a federal civil service board, he ruled.

Although thousands of USAID officials anticipated this outcome, some believed they would be spared because they manage key programs deemed exempt from President Donald Trump’s global aid freeze. One official who manages food programs in three countries was placed on leave even though he was the only remaining USAID official managing the exempt programs.

“I’m shocked,” the official told The Post. “My programs will have to stop.” The Trump administration’s announcement marks the beginning of a “Reduction-in-Force” process that Trump’s budget-slashing adviser Elon Musk is carrying out across the federal government.

USAID, which the billionaire hailed as being fed “into the wood chipper,” is his first target. Critics have charged that he’s pursuing the destruction of a congressionally mandated agency by fiat.

“They’re collapsing the agency with no congressional mandate. This is illegal and unconstitutional, period,” said another USAID official, who like others spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of retribution.

Per the emails, affected individuals were expected to begin receiving specific notifications on Sunday about their benefits and rights, while officials who will not be placed on leave and are expected to continue working will also receive information from the agency by Sunday evening.

“Most personnel will continue to have access to USAID systems and should continue to monitor email for further guidance,” the emails read. “Employees on administrative leave, however, are not authorized to conduct Agency business or to download or access official USAID files without the express permission of Agency leadership.”

The administration will set up voluntary and government-funded return travel programs for USAID personnel stationed overseas, said the emails, noting that those workers will be able to access USAID systems and other diplomatic resources until they return to the United States.

Nichols’s ruling Friday marked a victory for Trump, Musk and the U.S. DOGE Service, or Department of Government Efficiency, as they faced their first major legal challenge in response to their haphazard efforts to dramatically reduce the federal workforce and the United States’ foreign spending. The USAID workers’ lawsuit was one of several [legal challenges mounted by Trump opponents](#) seeking to slow or halt the administration’s barrage of actions. It came after the administration sent all USAID employees on Feb. 4 an email saying that all “direct hire personnel will be placed on administrative leave globally” with the exception of a few mission-critical people.

While employees in the lawsuit spoke about the personal harms inflicted by the sudden chaos as well as the impact USAID has around the world, Nichols disagreed, concluding that the United States had “identified plausible harms that could ensue if its actions with respect to USAID are *not* permitted to resume.”