

USAID staff start receiving termination letters, By [Sara Jerving](#) // 24 February 2025

Employees also received more info on the State Department's coordination team that is tasked with the global recall of the agency's employees.

[U.S. Agency for International Development](#) staff members started receiving notifications Sunday that they would lose their jobs due to a widespread effort to reduce the agency's workforce.

These personalized emails — of which Devex obtained copies — were sent by Peter Marocco, acting deputy administrator of the agency. They are the latest step in the rapid-fire [dismantling](#) of the agency over the past month.

“This [reduction in force] is necessary to restructure USAID’s operations to better reflect Agency priorities and the foreign policy priorities of the United States,” he wrote.

This comes on the same day USAID wrote on its website that this reduction in force will affect approximately 1,600 of USAID’s personnel stationed in the United States.

However, Devex also obtained a copy of a notice of termination of employment sent to someone stationed abroad.

Devex obtained one letter that said employment would be terminated by April 24 and another which said May 26 — for a person stationed abroad.

In his letters to those impacted, Marocco said they were “being released” from their “competitive level” because that “competitive area is being eliminated.” But he added that in the event this person is qualified for another position during the notice period before their jobs are terminated, they would be informed.

“Should the circumstances of the [reduction in force] otherwise change, this notice may be withdrawn,” he wrote.

Employees were told they are entitled to benefits of which they will receive details within 14 days, and this potentially includes an annuity — where an insurance provider makes payments to an individual — or a separation payment.

The USAID employees were also notified of several avenues where they could appeal this decision, such as through the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, Foreign Service Grievance System, Equal Employment Opportunity, and Office of Special Counsel.

These letters came swiftly after a federal judge [lifted a temporary restraining order](#) Friday that had blocked the Trump administration from placing USAID staff members on administrative leave. The Trump administration updated the USAID website over the

weekend — which has oscillated in recent weeks from being completely blank to having messages from the administration.

It said that as of midnight U.S. Eastern Standard Time Sunday, all USAID direct hire personnel were to be placed on administrative leave globally, “with the exception of designated personnel responsible for mission-critical functions, core leadership and/or specially designated programs.” It said these people would be informed if they were deemed essential personnel on Sunday.

These reductions in workforce letters take the administration’s actions a step further beyond placing staff on administrative leave to actually terminating the employment of some of the workforce.

Additionally, the judge’s lifting of the temporary restraining order has allowed the Trump administration to move forward with its global recall of USAID staff stationed abroad.

A USAID staff member abroad told Devex that there is still a lot of confusion and lack of clarity from the Trump administration on how this recall will move forward.

The agency wrote on its website over the weekend that it intends to move forward with a “voluntary Agency-funded return travel program and other benefits.” It wrote that it’s “committed to keeping its overseas personnel safe” and that “until they return home, personnel will retain access to Agency systems and to diplomatic and other resources.”

It previously told staff that if they are on administrative leave they can stay in their post beyond 30 days, but if they choose to not return to the U.S. during that timeframe, the government might not pay for their travel back to the U.S.

[In court filings](#), Marocco said those placed on administrative leave who remain at post will retain access to communication systems, and if an employee is approved to stay overseas, they are eligible for allowances. However, if an employee is directed to depart their post and doesn’t, including those who choose to stay beyond the 30-day period to leave the country and who don’t receive a waiver, they would no longer be “officially stationed overseas.” They will no longer qualify for allowances and will be expected to pay for their own housing and personal expenses and manage their visas. They would also lose access to security measures.

The American Foreign Service Association [sued the Trump administration](#), saying this recall and its “chaotic implementation” pose a security risk to service members abroad.

The court filings included testimonies of a denial of a medical evacuation for a risky pregnancy, unpaid bills for security measures for buildings the U.S. government uses abroad, and failure to provide standard logistical and financial support to American staffers

as they evacuated the Democratic Republic of Congo, as the security situation in the country deteriorated, among other examples.

However, Marocco asserted in court filings days before that the chief of mission in the host country and the secretary of state have responsibilities to ensure the safety of agency employees and their families abroad. There are a variety of strategies they use to do this, he wrote, such as access to two-way radios; phone trees; a SAFE Alert system to provide electronic messaging to staff; and “go-bags” that have personal tracking locators; satellite phones; first-aid kits; and basic survival equipment. There is also a SCRY Panic app — a panic button that activates geospatial tracking and initiates a diplomatic security response.

In these filings, he also said the [State Department](#) operationalized a Coordination Support Team to support USAID staff returning to the U.S.

On Sunday, USAID employees received more details about this team. A memo from the USAID Office of the Administrator — of which Devex obtained a copy — said the team is “working diligently to reduce uncertainty” for employees and to find solutions to logistical issues facing employees and USAID programming. It’s made of working groups with USAID and State Department employees, co-led by Joel Borkert, USAID acting chief of staff, and Marcus Thornton, a member of the Secretary of State’s policy planning staff.

The memo said the team’s mission is threefold: To “ensure the orderly, safe, and voluntary return” of USAID personnel and their families to the U.S; to ensure the continuity of lifesaving humanitarian aid “in accordance with the President’s Executive Order, the Secretary’s priorities, and applicable law; and “respond to evolving logistical issues to minimize disruptions.”

There are five regional teams, which coincide with USAID and the State Department’s regional offices. The memo said the regional teams will work with the coordination groups to ensure staff safety and provide guidance around program waivers and payment issues.

USAID payment system Phoenix has largely been unable to process payments, leaving operational expenses, reimbursements, and approved programmatic payment costs unpaid. This has meant that in many cases even lifesaving programming approved by Trump administration waivers haven’t moved forward.

The memo said the coordination team has seven working groups:

- 1) Programs: Dealing with lifesaving programs and waiver implementation.
- 2) Human capital: Focusing on workforce management — addressing personnel concerns and monitoring and planning “for the evolving environment.”

3) Security: Of overseas staff, information, and facilities “in generating security assessments and recommended courses of action.”

4) Logistics: For travel support, including airline tickets back to the U.S., pet travel, and shipping personal possessions back.

5) Finance: For “ensuring payments are made promptly” in areas such as waiver approvals and urgent payments.

6) Communications: Including with Congress and “ensuring that the Agency's communications are aligned with the Administration’s development priorities” and developing legislative strategies and liaising with the press.

7) Technology: In areas including logistics, finance, human capital, logistics, security, and communications.

“As we navigate this review [of foreign aid programming], it is important to keep our shared mission in focus: ensuring that U.S. taxpayer dollars contribute to meaningful work that makes America stronger, safer, and more prosperous,” the memo said.

Devex was informed of one case where USAID’s finance team called a staff member's child's school abroad to inquire about refunding the tuition they paid — for a child with special needs.

“It’s inhumane and humiliating,” one USAID employee stationed abroad told Devex, and added that arranging schooling for a child with special needs can take months to organize, even in the U.S. “It is 100% apparent they continue to be driven by a need to inflict as much harm as possible on every USAID family overseas.”

This person said the coordination team may be able to manage uncomplicated issues, but none of the teams outlined in the memo have a clear mandate for families with complicated situations that are returning to the U.S. This “tells me those with complications, including health issues — inclusive of pregnancy, completion of school terms, etc., have not been adequately considered in their current planning,” this person said.

The outlined structure also has no role for the U.S. government medical teams for its employees stationed abroad. “If they are prioritizing our security, they must start consulting with [these teams] for those of us that have outstanding medical issues related to immediate travel,” this person said.

This person added that to their knowledge, no waivers have been approved for logistics around families returning to the U.S. other than the [U.S. Center for Disease Control and](#)

[Prevention](#) approving a temporary waiver for pet certificates — a process to ensure pets have the needed vaccinations to return to the U.S.

“No one on the Department of State side can answer any questions regarding those with waiver needs,” this person said.