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## **April 8: Dispatch from the Field**

I am sharing 7 quick points this week, at least for now.

1. Saturday's "Hands-Off" protests took place at over 1,200 locations across the country. According to the NY Times: "They came out in defense of national parks and small businesses, public education and health care for veterans, abortion rights and fair elections. They marched against tariffs and oligarchs, dark money and fascism, the deportation of legal immigrants and the Department of Government Efficiency." Organizers estimated that over 600,000 people joined the protests. See a selection of photos from various gatherings in the montage below. The tide is turning as this Administration continues to govern with cruelty, cater to the billionaire class, damage our alliances, and all the while showing indifference to the lives and livelihoods of middle America. The push-back has just begun! I understand that another set of "Hands-Off" protests are planned for Saturday, April 19.

2. Last week, the Santa Fe New Mexican published an OpEd written by our colleague Victor Barbiero entitled, "We Americans are losing our national soul". See attached. In it, he calls out the egregiousness of the Trump Administration of suspending foreign aid and intention to eliminate USAID. He delineates the various reasons to support foreign aid and calls on America "to search the fabric of our collective heart to retrieve the compassion, gentleness, and charity that makes America what, and who we are. We must reset our moral compass. The America I know is a caring, loving nation that seeks to raise the stature and spirit of humanity and to love our neighbors as ourselves. We are not bullies. We are not mean-spirited. We are not self-centered. We are not wicked. We are not vengeful nor wrathful. We are Americans, our unity and strength dwell in our goodness." Well said, Victor!

3. I was wrong about USAID's dismantling reaching rock bottom last week. DOGE's Jeffrey Lewin wasn't finished with his spree of terminating contracts/grants. According to the AP, about 60 letters went out last week to end humanitarian and food assistance programs in Yemen, Somalia, Afghanistan and Zimbabwe, including assistance to populations displaced by war. See the full story [here](#). So there may be more misguided and callous bumps ahead as we continue to push onward and upward.

4. Last week, 3 USAID rescue workers, coming out from administrative leave, arrived in Myanmar five days after the catastrophic earthquake. For a disaster of this scale, USAID would have responded with about 200 rescuers. The three have been sleeping on the streets because of the danger of buildings falling. In the middle of their rescue

work, they received notices of their termination later this summer. Demoralizing, to say the least. Marco Rubio, when asked about the slow US response, said that the US would no longer be the world's top humanitarian donor and that other wealthy nations need to step up. Read the full story in Reuters [here](#).

5. Behind the scenes, various former leaders of USAID are reaching out to Congress in defense of USAID. Among the most effective in speaking to Republicans are former Bush appointees Andrew Natsios and Jim Kunder. In response to the recently-submitted Congressional Notification (CN) for folding USAID into State, Jim has enumerated 10 reasons that the proposal makes no sense (see attached). He concludes: "The CN proposal was the result of a rushed, pre-cooked, 'ready/fire!' strategy. Congress needs to put the 'aim' back in 'ready/aim/fire' and to conduct substantive hearings on the future of U.S. foreign aid and its strategic implications. At a bare minimum, a 'ready-aim-fire' sequence would ensure that USAID's career staff are not RIF'd until a formal legislative determination is made by Congress on whether the Agency will continue in existence or not. No set of national security decisions of this magnitude should be made without thorough Congressional leadership and direction." Well worth a read.

6. For those of you in the DC area, AID on the Hill is organizing the hand-delivery of letters to Congressional offices this Thursday. If you'd like to help, join them at 9:30am in the Hart Senate Office Building Atrium. See flier below:

7. Continue to make your voices heard. Keep the pressure on and keep the faith! Too much is at stake, both here in America and globally!

--Scott