

USAID official blows whistle on foreign aid chaos under Trump. By Helen Murphy,
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Whistleblower calls out dysfunction

For six months, Andrea Capellán asked for answers. Instead, the [USAID](#) director said she and other contracting officers **got a “minefield of questionable and potentially illegal orders”** after the Trump administration froze foreign aid in January.

[In a blistering six-page memo](#) filed July 28 and verified by my colleague Elissa Miolene, Capellán accuses agency leadership of mass contract terminations without authority, ignoring court orders, and abandoning staff.

“In the end, stripped of our positions and denied lawful guidance, institutional accountability, and ethical leadership, all I could do was bear witness, document the truth, and refuse to lend my name to actions that violated the law and the public trust,” she wrote.

Her memo includes more than 40 emails and official notices. Among the claims: **USAID gave no plan for repaying partners** after court rulings, and the General Counsel **offered only outdated advice** from 2011.

“The closeouts and terminations will take years to finalize,” she warned, with no road map for the “hundreds of millions of dollars of associated costs.”

She also questioned claims that U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio reviewed each cancellation: She did not believe there was “any evidence of individual determinations or analysis.”

That blows a hole in the administration’s legal defense, says Lauren Bateman of Public Citizen Litigation Group: “This internal agency document **corroborates that there was no such individualized review.**”

Others say Capellán’s memo captured what staff endured. “This memo outlines the bravery of rank and file career USAID staff in exposing the sham ‘foreign assistance review,’” says one former officer. Another was more blunt: “This was an environment where if you went against anything, you were fired.”

Still, not everyone agrees with where she pointed the finger. “This is a great memo, but she sent it to the wrong people,” says a senior contracting officer. It should have been sent to Trump and Rubio, the officer says.

Exclusive: [USAID director alleges ‘malfeasance’ since Trump aid freeze](#)