

Why did USAID officials travel just before closing? By [Elissa Miolene](#), Devex, 11 August 2025

U.S. government officials routinely visit programs and staff at missions abroad to see how things are going. Visiting those missions when their lead agency is defunct — and most of its programs and staff are out the door — **seems like a moot point.**

At least that's how some viewed the world tour that top [USAID](#) officials [recently took as they visited missions](#) from the Philippines to El Salvador just days [after the agency formally ceased to exist on July 1](#).

Theoretically, if the trip had been done in advance, the purpose could've been to figure out the best way to wind things down. But some officials my colleague Elissa Miolene spoke to said that didn't appear to be the case.

"It's like a victory lap, and to be able to go to Congress and say, 'Hey, we oversaw an orderly transition from USAID to the State Department,'" said a senior official at one of those missions. **"But there's nothing orderly about this."**

"A trip like this could have been a lot more useful if it was done three or four months earlier, so there was time ... to do something with our feedback," said another senior official at a different mission. "They're starting to ask questions, but they're starting too late. And now, we're all on our way out."

The [State Department](#) was **mum on the purpose of the trip**, which took Ken Jackson, USAID's deputy administrator for management and resources, Marcus Thornton, USAID's deputy chief of staff, and at least two other newly appointed USAID officials to Belgium, El Salvador, Egypt, Guatemala, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, the Philippines, and Senegal.

Why those countries? Also unclear.

In line with the mass reduction-in-force of USAID staff, most mission directors are leaving their posts, while thousands of terminated programs are being transferred to a "legacy organization" for closure, according to an internal document obtained by Devex in June.

This legacy organization will essentially be a hollowed-out version of USAID, functioning out of Washington, D.C., with limited staffing to "close out and retire all remaining USAID assets and liabilities" — a process expected to take two years and cost the U.S.

government an estimated \$6.4 billion.

Exclusive: [USAID officials tour missions worldwide as agency shutter](#)