

Trump administration eyes USAID money to advance America First goals. By Noah Robertson, *The Washington Post*, 24 Sep 2025

A State Department plan to reallocate almost \$2 billion in foreign aid marks the latest challenge to the authority of Congress over spending.

The Trump administration, in its latest challenge to Congress's authority over federal spending, intends to shift almost \$2 billion in U.S. foreign aid toward a slate of priorities aimed largely at advancing the president's "America First" agenda.

The plan, which has not been reported previously, was outlined for lawmakers in a document the State Department sent to Capitol Hill on Sept. 12 and later reviewed by *The Washington Post*. It represents a dramatic rebranding of Washington's approach to foreign assistance after [the Trump administration's dismantling](#) of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) this year

Over 10 pages, the document explains how the administration will direct the money — totaling \$1.8 billion, it says — toward vague initiatives abroad such as countering "Marxist, anti-American regimes" in Latin America, and pursuing investments in [Greenland](#) and [Ukraine](#). It also lists projects defunded by the administration, including \$175 million meant for the West Bank and Gaza, and \$150 million for Iraq.

"The national security interests of the United States," the document states, "require that the United States utilize these foreign assistance funds to meet new challenges in ways that make America safer, stronger or more prosperous."

The plan would mark the administration's most elaborate attempt so far to redefine the role of American foreign aid, ending longtime Republican and Democratic orthodoxy that has maintained the United States benefits from supporting other countries through helping to treat and cure diseases, ending famines, and promoting democracy. Instead, the Trump administration has pursued a narrower and more transactional approach, pursuing negotiated deals rather than providing handouts.

Some of the funding highlighted in the plan would go toward projects that appear to have bipartisan support, from promoting U.S. allies and partners in the Pacific, where China's territorial ambitions have troubled Republicans and Democrats alike, to helping maintain peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia in Central Asia.

Still, congressional aides from both parties have raised concerns with the administration's move, with some saying its priorities were unclear and that its plan to reallocate funds lawmakers already designated for other initiatives relies on

dubious legal reasoning. At the same time, the Republican majorities in the House and Senate have done little so far to halt the administration's blitz to restructure the federal government and [seize authority](#) that usually belongs to lawmakers.

In a statement to The Post, Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (New Hampshire), the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's top Democrat, accused the Trump administration of "attempting to raid programs that Congress has authorized and appropriated to strengthen democracy, advance peace and support vulnerable communities and instead funnel that money into an unaccountable slush fund."

Representatives for her Republican counterpart, Sen. James E. Risch (Idaho), the committee's chairman, declined to comment.

But a separate Republican congressional aide pushed back on Shaheen's description, arguing that the State Department had partnered with Congress on the transfer and that the notice was "standard procedure."

"House Republicans are in full support of State's commitment to spending these funds in a more responsible way, specifically for programs that support U.S. national security interests," the aide said in a statement.

The State Department did not respond to a request for comment.

Administration officials have seized control over parts of the federal budget and at times refused to spend money lawmakers passed into law. Its blueprint for these foreign assistance initiatives marks the latest escalation in that effort.

It is not unusual for administrations to ask lawmakers for permission to move money toward the end of the fiscal year, Sept. 30. But two congressional aides, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive matter, described the size of this request as far larger than normal. One called it "unprecedented."

And by submitting the list only weeks before the fiscal year ends, the administration is forcing lawmakers to make a difficult choice. They could accept the plan and risk undermining Congress' say over federal spending, or they could try to fight and risk the money disappearing when the clock runs out.

"I don't think anybody wants to see the money expire, particularly given the immense foreign assistance cuts that have already taken place," the one Democratic aide said.

In August, the Trump administration notified lawmakers that it did not intend to spend almost \$5 billion in other foreign aid money, drawing blowback from Democrats and some Republicans who said such a maneuver trampled on their authority.

“Any effort to rescind appropriated funds without congressional approval is a clear violation of the law,” Susan Collins (R-Maine), who chairs the Senate Appropriations Committee, said at the time.

The administration had been reviewing the \$1.8 billion included in this new plan before giving approval to spend the money, the second congressional aide said. The State Department then rushed to build a program around the funding to prevent it from expiring.

In conversations with the State Department, the congressional aides said they have pressed the administration to provide more detail on the new list of projects, in particular the money slated for supporting “U.S. immigration priorities” in Africa and “economic development and conservation work” in Greenland, the autonomous Danish territory Trump has repeatedly vowed to seize.

State Department officials have promised to provide more clarity later on, the aides said.