

US aid focus on Western Hemisphere. By Anna Gawel, *Devex Newswire*, 29 Jan 2026

The doctrine is in

While it doesn't contain specific dollar amounts, the foreign assistance portion of [the U.S. State Department's latest five-year strategy](#) does contain a multitude of insights into the administration's worldview.

And not to keep trotting out overly used Trumpian mantras, but that thinking is a striking combo of "America First" and the president's newer **"Donroe Doctrine,"** a play on the [Monroe Doctrine](#), coined after Trump's push to **assert U.S. dominance over the Western Hemisphere.**

So it's little surprise that the Western Hemisphere emerges as a key winner, alongside East Asia, which together would **receive a whopping 40% of all U.S. foreign assistance budget** — a 25%–30% increase from [USAID](#)'s spending on the regions in 2024.

Compare that to the year before Trump returned to power, when 47% of foreign aid from USAID and the [State Department](#) was obligated to Africa and the Middle East.

"It's about **what the strategy didn't say about Africa** rather than what it did say," **Elizabeth Hoffman** of the [ONE Campaign](#) tells my colleague Elissa Miolene.

The shift to Latin America has confounded some experts given that the region is made up of many upper-middle-income countries.

"With our grant-based assistance, what are you going to achieve with it in a country like Chile or Panama, or some of these other countries that are much more capable of funding their own development at this point?" asks **Conor Savoy** of the [Center for Global Development](#). "They're basically saying that they're not thinking of foreign assistance as grant-based."

That tracks with the administration's resolve to move away from traditional assistance to "real development and prosperity" driven by trade, private sector growth, and efficient markets, according to the strategy, which **rewards U.S. allies and those deemed to be strategic interests.** For example, partner countries will be chosen based on military and security ties, cooperating on migration policies, and voting with the U.S. in international organizations.

"That's a little disconcerting," Hoffman says. **"The strategic interest around humanitarian assistance is the goodwill it creates** — and the fact that when we do these things in places of the world that may be hostile to the United States, it helps the population perceive us in a different way."

Read: [Trump's 'Donroe Doctrine' redraws US foreign aid map](#)

