

What happened to AID property when program killed? By Anna Gawel, Devex Newswire,
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Waste not, want not

The Trump administration's determination to root out waste, fraud, and abuse in [USAID spawned quite a bit of waste](#) — from food aid expiring in Dubai, HIV medication [idling on shelves](#) in South Sudan, and [contraceptives incinerated](#) in Europe, my colleague Elissa Miolene writes.

Now, [we have the first detailed accounting of that fallout](#). USAID's independent watchdog just released an audit examining canceled aid programs in **a mission that lost every one of its 66 awards: El Salvador**.

It paints a mixed picture. The Office of Inspector General found that when those awards were canceled, **over \$1 million of U.S. government property was handed over** to local institutions or retained by implementing partners. That included cars, construction materials, and medical supplies.

In the end, 30 of the 40 items had been donated to local nonprofits, universities, and Salvadoran government institutions. The remaining 10 were retained by implementing partners.

“The fact that there weren't cases of serious waste in the El Salvador context is actually quite a feat,” says a former USAID staffer in that mission, although they **described the process as a “mess.”**

“The chaos was the constantly shifting guidance from and silence on questions to [Washington] DC, along with having to close out this number of projects simultaneously,” says the former staffer. “Certain actions could only be certified by warranted contracting officers, who took on the risk on behalf of the government, leading to lots of fear of doing anything illegal.”

But perhaps **what was worse for USAID staff was the termination of the programs themselves**, which ranged from gender-based violence prevention to economic development initiatives.

The wounds are still raw.

“People who spent 20 to 30 years of their lives trying to care for this agency and this work were the ones that had to bring it all down,” the former staffer says. “It was completely cataclysmic.”