

Judge pauses Trump plan to put USAID staff on leave

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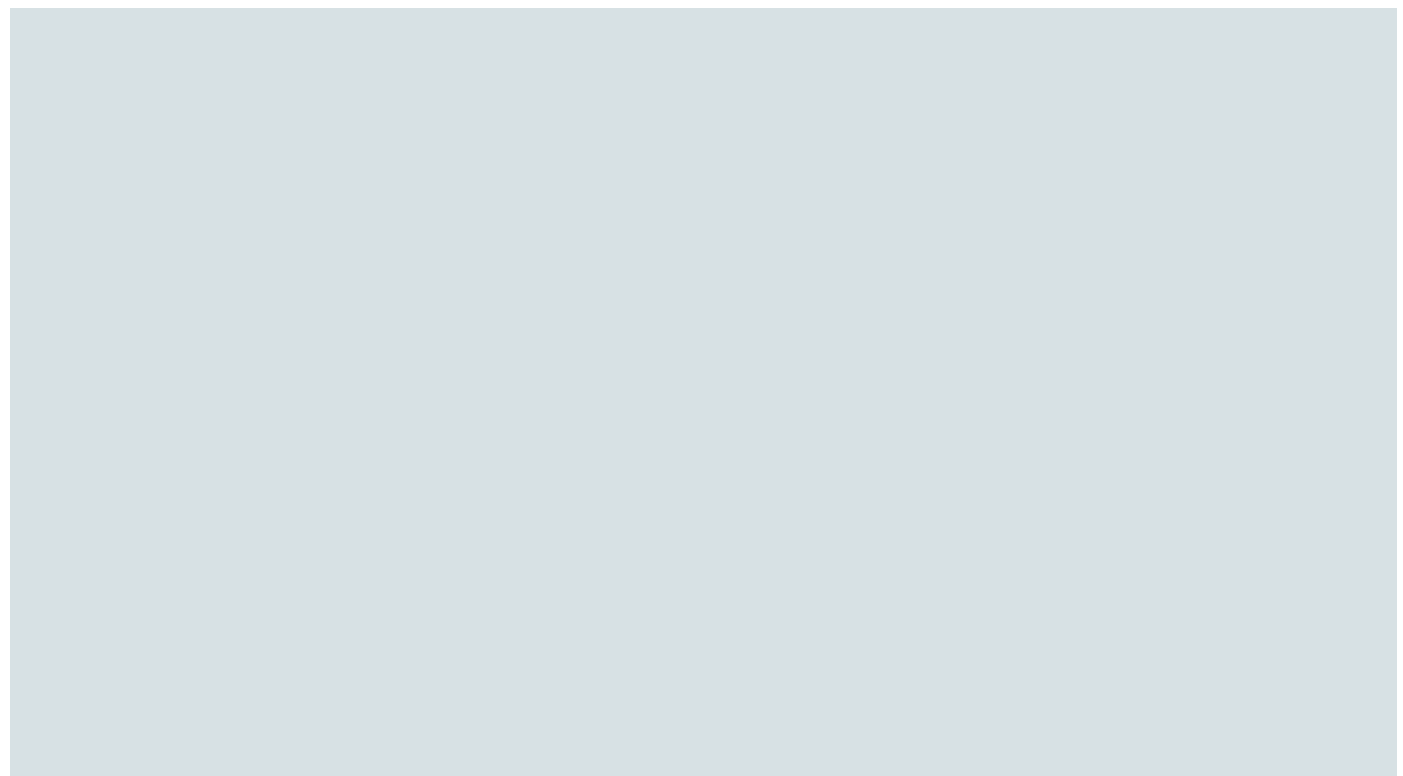


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KEY POINTS

- A federal judge on Friday paused the Trump administration from carrying out its plan to place thousands of workers at the U.S. Agency for International Development on administrative leave.
- The American Foreign Service Association and the American Federation of Government Employees, had asked the judge to order the Trump administration to halt its efforts to "shut down" USAID.



A worker removes the U.S. Agency for International Development sign on their headquarters on Feb. 7, 2025 in Washington, DC.

Kayla Bartkowski | Getty Images

A federal judge on Friday said he would temporarily pause the Trump administration's plan to place thousands of workers at the U.S. Agency for International Development on administrative leave.

About 2,200 USAID employees were set to be placed on leave Friday night at 11:59 p.m. ET, as part of President [Donald Trump](#)'s efforts to shut down the independent government agency.

Five hundred USAID workers are already on administrative leave, a lawyer for the U.S. Department of Justice said in court.

Judge Carl Nichols, a Trump appointee, delivered the ruling after hearing arguments from the Trump administration and two groups representing federal workers in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C.

The workers' groups, the American Foreign Service Association and the American Federation of Government Employees, had asked Nichols to order the Trump administration "to immediately cease actions to shut down USAID's operations."

They had argued a court filing earlier Friday that USAID "is suffering an onslaught of unconstitutional and illegal attacks, leaving its workers, contractors, grantees, and beneficiaries deserted in the wreckage and a global humanitarian crisis in the wake."

The Trump administration has "deliberately dismantled USAID's infrastructure" and is "poised for a near-final killing blow," they wrote.

Nichols said Friday afternoon that he would be entering a "very limited" temporary restraining order before midnight directed at the 2,200 at-risk USAID workers.

The judge said he has yet to decide if his ruling will rescind the Trump administration's take-leave order for the 500 employees who have already received it.

During the hearing, Nichols questioned DOJ attorney Brett Shumate about why the Trump administration needed to place 2,200 USAID workers on leave so quickly.

"What is the urgency of this?" the judge asked.

"The President has decided there is corruption and fraud at USAID," Shumate replied.

USAID was established in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy following the passage of the Foreign Assistance Act. It administers foreign aid and conducts a variety of other field missions around the world.

Foreign aid in recent years has comprised about 1% of the federal budget and less than 0.33% of GDP, according to a [Brookings Institution](#) report from September.

But USAID has nevertheless become a major target of Trump and [Elon Musk](#), who have accused the agency of being an unaccountable magnet for fraud and corruption.

"THE CORRUPTION IS AT LEVELS RARELY SEEN BEFORE. CLOSE IT DOWN!" [Trump wrote](#) on Truth Social on Friday morning.

Musk, who is leading a sweeping effort to slash the size of government through the White House's so-called Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, has taken credit for dismantling USAID.

"We spent the weekend feeding USAID into the wood chipper," Musk wrote on his social media platform X.



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