



## Musk and Trump aim to shut down USAID, leaving humanitarian work in doubt

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Alex Leff



Protesters gather outside of USAID headquarters in Washington, D.C., on Monday, after Elon Musk said his Department of Government Efficiency will shut down the foreign assistance agency.

*Kayla Bartkowski/Getty Images North America*

The U.S. Agency for International Development, known as USAID, has fallen in the crosshairs of the Trump administration and Elon Musk's government efficiency push, sending chills through the humanitarian world and drawing criticism from Democratic lawmakers and nonpartisan foreign service workers.

Late Sunday, Elon Musk said [the team he calls](#) the Department of Government Efficiency was in the process of "shutting down USAID," with President Trump's support.



## POLITICS

### Elon Musk is barreling into government with DOGE, raising unusual legal questions

By Monday, USAID staff had received emails saying the agency's Washington, D.C. headquarters was closed for the day and that they should work from home.

Later, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said he was now the acting administrator of USAID — which has long been an independent body — and that a "review" is underway aimed at the agency's "[potential reorganization](#)."



## GOATS AND SODA

### Why does Musk want USAID 'to die'? And why did its website disappear?



## GOATS AND SODA

### Nearly 400 USAID contract employees laid off in wake of Trump's 'stop work' order

Speaking to reporters in El Salvador on Monday, Rubio accused USAID of not cooperating with requests for information on how it spends taxpayer dollars. Musk, in a conversation on his social media platform X, described the agency as a "ball of worms" and "no apple."

Founded in 1961, the agency manages billions of dollars in federal humanitarian assistance around the world. But the past two weeks have been full of uncertainty, and dread, for USAID's workers and [humanitarian aid recipients](#) worldwide, after the Trump [administration paused](#) federal foreign spending, leading to hundreds of layoffs and furloughs and suspending aid programs.



Democratic Sen. Andy Kim of New Jersey speaks outside the U.S. Agency for International Development Monday.  
*Ben de la Cruz/NPR*

Some Democratic lawmakers vowed to challenge the Trump administration's efforts to halt most of USAID's work, as demonstrators gathered outside the agency's headquarters.

Democratic Rep. Jamie Raskin of Maryland [told NPR's \*All Things Considered\*](#) he represents thousands of federal workers among his constituents and said he tried to enter USAID offices Monday but was blocked. He said the administration is violating federal workers' rights and "trampling the Constitution."

"This is a killer in terms of their cutoff of HIV and AIDS preemption," Raskin said. "It's a killer in terms of the anti-malarial education."

Democratic Sen. Andy Kim of New Jersey said, "This is an entity that was created through federal statute, codified through federal statute, and something that cannot be changed, cannot be removed except through actions of Congress."





USAID humanitarian aid destined for Venezuela is displayed for the media at a warehouse next to the Tienditas International Bridge, on the outskirts of Cúcuta, Colombia, Feb. 19, 2019.

Fernando Vergara/AP

In the Oval Office, President Trump was asked about whether dissolving USAID requires an act of Congress. "I don't think so," he said, "not if it's an act of fraud." The administration did not provide evidence of alleged fraud.

Atul Gawande, the former assistant administrator for global health at USAID, [said the move](#) by Musk's government efficiency unit, also known by its initials DOGE, is an "unlawful takedown of an independent agency."

The [Associated Press reported](#) that Musk's DOGE team gained access to sensitive information at USAID after agency security officials attempted to prevent them

because they lacked a high enough security clearance. The two security officials were placed on leave.

The American Foreign Service Association, which calls itself a nonpartisan labor union and professional association, also spoke out against the administration's "decision to dismantle" USAID, [saying in a statement](#) it will "undermine U.S. national security" and could subvert congressional authority, while raising "serious concerns about the future of U.S. development policy and America's global standing."

While Rubio said he is officially the acting administrator of USAID, he said he has "delegated authority to perform the duties" to Peter Marocco, a returning political appointee from the first Trump term.

Rubio said there are things that USAID does "that we should continue to do and we will continue to do. But everything they do has to be in alignment with the national interest and the foreign policy of the United States."

*NPR's Fatma Tanis, Hansi Lo Wang, Michele Kelemen and Shannon Bond contributed reporting.*

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