

OneAID FLASH Update on Friday's Chain of Events

March 30, 2025

OneAIDCommunity.org

A Note from OneAID Community Organizers

Our hearts are with the people across southeast Asia affected by [Friday's catastrophic earthquake](#). As of this morning, the [media is reporting](#) over 1,600 people have died and over 3,400 are injured. The military government in Myanmar, also known as Burma, is rarely one to ask for outside help and has issued an international appeal for assistance.

Historically, the United States has been a global leader in responding to such disasters through USAID, providing urban search and rescue, food, clean water, and shelter assistance within hours of a crisis, in partnership with humanitarian actors on the ground. For crises of significant scale and scope, USAID would deploy [Disaster Assistance Response Teams](#) (DARTs) to lead and coordinate [U.S. response operations overseas](#), which is what [USAID did](#) when an earthquake of similar magnitude struck Türkiye just over two years ago.

Although USAID's agreements with the [urban search and rescue teams](#) from Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department and the Los Angeles County Fire Department remain intact, the Trump administration [cut the contracts](#) for the special transport needed to move the search teams, rescue dogs, and heavy equipment required for response. Moreover, the recent massive staffing cuts across USAID have eliminated the teams of humanitarian experts that normally would be coordinating with partners to support rescue and response operations. America's once-robust and respected international disaster response capacity, built upon decades of experience and lessons learned, has been dismantled by the Trump administration's efforts to recklessly shutter USAID, all without a plan in place to respond to humanitarian and other crises.

Meanwhile, [humanitarian actors](#) and other governments, including the European Union, India and China have already mobilized aid in response to Friday's earthquake. While [China](#) is acting with speed and coordination, [the Trump administration is not](#).

Instead, on Friday, the Trump administration decided to issue final notices of termination to the few remaining staff left at USAID, even those staff they previously told were essential. The U.S. government no longer has the tools or personnel to respond when our global neighbors request assistance, and because of the way USAID was dismantled, it will take years to rebuild the capacity that has been critical support for countries to respond to humanitarian crises. At the same time, trust in the U.S. as a reliable partner is now completely in question.

USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and Office of Food for Peace (FFP) were merged together to become the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) under the first Trump Administration in 2020. At the time, Trump administration leadership at USAID, including Project 2025 contributor Max Primorac, [applauded USAID's humanitarian experts](#), expressing they "could not be more proud to lead" the bureau and emphasized "we are stronger together,

and remain dedicated to do what we do best: bringing help and hope to those who need it most.”

Since it was established in 1961, USAID kept us safer here at home while demonstrating American generosity and saving millions of lives around the world, all with less than 1% of the federal budget. Demonstrated by their actions, the Trump administration’s destruction of USAID has never been about efficiency, nor has it been a serious reform effort. **The U.S. is now left without the systems, experienced personnel, and partners necessary to responsibly and strategically implement foreign assistance—making the U.S. weaker, less safe, and less prosperous.**

To the people across southeast Asia and around the world who may not receive the help they need, to USAID’s partners and U.S. allies who have been abandoned, and to all of the international aid professionals who have or soon will lose their livelihoods as a result of the Trump administration’s actions, we are so deeply sorry. You deserve better.

Flash Update

On Friday, March 28, the Trump Administration set in motion a final chaotic push to close USAID. Here is the chain of events as they unfolded:

- **12:00 pm ET:** A congressional notification (CN) was sent to the Hill by the State Department notifying Congress of its plans to dissolve USAID into the Department of State. Typically, this would set in motion a process of consultations with relevant committees to determine the actions to be taken to modify or close a congressionally mandated agency, with Congress ultimately needing to approve the moves. Instead, the administration again usurped Congressional authority, and minutes later began to dissolve USAID.
 - ◆ House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Ranking Member Rep. Gerald E. Connolly and Senate Foreign Relations Committee member Sen. Tim Kaine [emphasized](#) this point stating that, “eliminating USAID is illegal and completely outside the bounds of Trump’s authority.”
- **12:12 pm ET:** Former DOGE staffer, Jeremy Lewin, now Deputy Administrator for Programs and Policy at USAID, sent an email addressed to all USAID personnel signed in his capacity as “PTDO Deputy Administrator & Chief Operating Officer.” PTDO means “Performing The Duties Of,” which is arguably a workaround to enable Lewin to serve in a Senate confirmed role he has neither been nominated nor confirmed to serve in, and to thus enact major changes to USAID. **The email, titled “USAID’s Final Mission,” effectively shut down USAID and provided a reduction in force (RIF) notice to nearly all remaining staff.**
- **12:16 pm ET:** Moments after USAID staff are told they will be terminated, essential staff still working in USAID’s last remaining office space received alerts via an agency Emergency Notification System alert telling them to go home. This order applied to the few remaining disaster response experts at USAID responsible for assessing how to

respond to the earthquake in Myanmar, with a destroyed incident command system and limited resources. The alert had the same title as Lewin's email - *USAID's Final Mission* - and was signed by "Front Office":

- ◆ *Given today's announcement, we'd like you to take the rest of the day to step away and recharge. For staff working at 555, please plan to leave the office as soon as practical, but no later than 1. Situational telework is authorized for the rest of your workday. Plan on returning to your duty stations Monday morning.*

→ **1:03 pm ET:** Presumably upon realizing USAID staff were performing urgent and critical functions in response to the earthquake in Myanmar, the USAID Front Office sent another update:

- ◆ *The Administrator's office is offering the option to all USAID employees to take administrative leave for the rest of the workday. If you have urgent or critical needs, please continue to work as necessary.*

→ **Afternoon:** USAID staff began receiving reduction in force (RIF) notices almost immediately after the Lewin email and throughout the remainder of the afternoon. Some of the notices included a statement noting that this latest notice supersedes RIF notices sent over a month prior. Like the previous RIF notices, these also included erroneous personal information, including service computation dates that had some staff beginning work with USAID when they would have been in middle school.

- ◆ This all points to systemic errors in DOGE's handling and management of employee personal data.
- ◆ USAID staff also received an "authorization for release of information" for signature that would effectively waive their rights to protect their personal data or to seek legal remedies for damages:
 - The first clause in the authorization enables USAID to release the signatory's employment information—including position, wages, performance, attendance, eligibility for rehire, and other data—to other federal agencies and private sector employers that request the information.
 - The second clause absolves individuals and organizations from responsibility for any actual or alleged damages that the signatory may suffer despite good faith compliance with the signed authorization.
- ◆ The administration may be attempting to secure the release of personal employment information from the now-RIF'd or terminated USAID employees to share with the Department of State and possibly private sector actors in an effort to fire—and subsequently seek to rehire—some USAID staff.

→ **Evening:** After the Trump administration took steps to further dissolve USAID, an appeals court paused a District Court injunction barring DOGE from dismantling USAID

- ◆ A March 18 court order in the *Does 1-26 v. Musk* case required the Trump administration to restore email access for USAID employees and [confirm compliance to the court within seven days](#). Employees reported beginning to regain access on March 27.

- ◆ The court also [ordered](#) DOGE and Musk “not to take any other actions relating to USAID without the express authorization of a USAID official with legal authority to take or approve the action.” Judge Chuang wrote that the limitation was warranted as it appeared DOGE and Musk appeared “to have been primarily responsible for the rush to shut down USAID.” The order stated that the parties cannot terminate employees, place them on leave, close USAID buildings, or terminate service contracts.
 - ◆ After the Trump administration tried to install DOGE Team Lead Jeremy Lewin as USAID’s Deputy Administrator for Policy and Programming, the court issued a [subsequent order](#) confirming that Lewin was considered part of the defendant group and therefore also bound by the order against DOGE.
 - ◆ On Friday, March 28, however, the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals stayed the injunction [blocking DOGE](#) from further cuts at USAID until the Government’s appeal to the Circuit Court is decided. For now, that means that the injunction against DOGE, Musk, and Jeremy Lewin is effectively paused. While we do not yet know how the Circuit Court will rule on the appeal, two of the court’s three judges noted that the Government was likely to succeed on the merits of their case—largely because USAID leadership either ratified or approved DOGE’s actions at USAID.
 - ◆ Despite the fact that the Circuit Court has not made a final ruling on the District Court’s injunction that barred him from further efforts to dismantle AID, Jeremy Lewin sent an email terminating staff and effectively shutting down USAID.
- **9:15 pm:** With the gloves now seemingly off with the court ruling, the Trump Administration began [terminating staff of the U.S. Institute of Peace \(USIP\)](#). From 9:15 pm onward throughout the night, nearly all of USIP’s staff received termination letters to their personal emails. They were fired immediately with health insurance coverage stopped effective Monday.
- ◆ This is yet another illegal move, usurping Congressional authority. USIP is a Congressionally mandated and funded, non-partisan institute, which only Congress can close down.