

# FY26 STATE DEPARTMENT POSTURE: MANAGEMENT AND RESOURCES

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## HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

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## **FY26 STATE DEPARTMENT POSTURE: MANAGEMENT AND RESOURCES**

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**Tuesday, July 15, 2025**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2 p.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Brian Mast (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Chairman MAST. The Committee on Foreign Affairs will come to order. If you would all rise, and join me in the pledge of allegiance?

ALL. I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Chairman MAST. The purpose of this hearing today is to examine the progress made regarding the reorganization of the Department of State, the role that the Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources is playing in ensuring effective management of resources and operations within the Department, and the role of this position relative to the Under Secretary for Foreign Assistance and the Under Secretary for Management. I am now going to recognize myself for an opening statement.

### **OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN BRIAN MAST**

I think it has been very clear that Secretary Rubio is leading a sweeping overhaul to give us a State Department that is efficient and accountable, which is something that it has not been. A State Department where every single dollar that goes through that agency, it puts the United States of America first above all else.

Foreign aid is not benevolence and it is not charity; it is a soft power that gives America a chance to get what it is that we need because of some mutual benefit that exists out there between two nations. It is not an opportunity to push radical liberal ideas on countries that would otherwise want to be our allies. As chairman of this Committee I have called out this madness for a number of years.

Foreign aid programs with zero benefit to America, or even to the countries that they are supposedly helping. America in many cases would have been better off burning that money than spending it in the ways that it had previously. In the year 2000 the State Department's budget was \$9.5 billion dollars. Under Joe Biden, it was over 55 billion.

And I don't think that we can say our foreign policy was \$45 billion more effective in those years. This past Friday, 1,300 State Department personnel were laid off. But guess what? Between 2007 and 2024, 23,000 new State Department employees had been added, more than the number of agents that Border Patrol is mandated to have by Congress.

That to me is an astounding number. America did not get the return that it needed on that investment. I could give you a number of examples that we looked at in the Oversight Subcommittee, and on this Committee over the years, but I am going to give you just one right now. The disastrous withdraw from Afghanistan left 13 U.S. servicemembers dead at Abbey Gate.

It left people literally hanging off the wings of military aircraft. Left an overrun embassy and billions of dollars, left behind along with millions of dollars of condoms left to the Taliban, those were real things. Many colleagues in here tried to defend that record. The same people who said Afghanistan was a glowing success, said that withdraw was perfect and flawless, and nothing could have been done better.

The same people that said that are now begging us not to fix the broken machine that let that happen. That is not diplomacy, that is delusion. They will call President Trump's effort to eliminate 1,300 duplicative State Department roles self-sabotage and a gift to our adversaries.

What they call self-sabotage, we call accountability for the real sabotage of those who led the Afghanistan withdraw, and the funding of transgender job fairs, and LGBTQ musicals, and DEI operas, and drag show tutorials. Our State Department should not be more concerned with promoting DEI and giving handouts to foreign NGO's than defending the interests of the American people.

That is changing, under Secretary Rubio that is changing. This isn't disarmament, it is a strategic realignment. America needs a focused and mission driven State Department where every dollar, and every diplomat puts the United States of America first. A State Department that can answer, not only answer but actually takes the time to ask the question of what does America actually need from a country, or a region?

What do we need from them? What does that country or region actually want from the United States of America? And does what we provide get us what we need, or does it not? Because if the State Department can't answer those questions, then it is not meeting the moment. We need a State Department that isn't afraid of removing career bureaucrats who think they are above oversight.

Many of these so-called experts oversaw two decades of failure from botched regime change to a rising China and wasteful foreign aid. That is not expertise, that is inertia. Congress should not be using taxpayer money to fund permanent jobs programs for globalist insiders in my opinion. We should be funding a State Department that serves Americans.

That means being able to explain why one dollar should go from a person's pocket to somebody who is in another country. Somebody who is not even an American, why should that take place? They better be able to explain that. If that rattles the career bureaucrats

at Foggy Bottom, then good, they need to remember who it is exactly that they work for.

Secretary Rubio is not hollowing out the State Department, he is rebuilding it to win, this is about fixing a broken system. Real reform makes the State Department stronger, not weaker. Today's witness, Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas, is helping lead that charge. With a background in disciplined resource management, and a no nonsense approach to results, he is the right man to guide the next generation of State Department leadership.

Mr. Rigas, thank you for being here. The American people are counting on you to make sure that our diplomats serve one interest, and one interest only, the United States of America.

And that, I am now going to recognize Ranking Member Meeks from New York for his opening statement.

#### **OPENING STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER GREGORY MEEKS**

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Deputy Secretary Rigas, I appreciate you are here to explain the Secretary's reorganization plans. This is a dark time for American diplomacy, President Trump continues to isolate the United States, alienate our allies, and create space for adversaries like Russia and China to fill the void. We face serious global challenges from Russia's war in Ukraine, and instability in the Middle East to great power competition with China.

America's diplomats and development experts are our first line of defense. If we are serious about leading globally, we need a capable, strategic, and fully staffed diplomatic core. Instead, Mr. Secretary, you and Secretary Rubio are gutting the very institution we rely on to confront these threats. Just days ago you fired more than 1,300 State Department employees.

Secretary Rubio claimed it was to put America first. But the people you dismissed, career public servants, many with decades of experience, working hard just as our folks in the military, believing in America, one soft power, one hard defense, but all patriots of the United States who have all put America first each and every day.

They have served in war zones like Afghanistan and Iraq, responded to genocide in Burma, and helping bring Americans home during the COVID crisis. Let us be clear, you have created the largest brain drain in the State Department's modern history, occurring as China and others expand their global footprint, while we shrink ours. And you are doing it without a plan, proper consultation, or transparency.

When this Committee asked for a rationale behind the State's 15 percent staffing cut, no one, no one could answer. Like so many of our oversight questions to your Department, we are still waiting. Your budget officials fell back on talking points about how the State Department's budget has doubled since 2000, ignoring inflation, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the Department's expanded mission, including implementing programs like PEPFAR, which has saved over 25 million lives, and helped slow the spread of HIV and AIDS worldwide, even here at home.

Meanwhile, the Defense Department's budget has almost tripled in that same 25-year timeframe. Both our soldiers are heroes, and

our members of the State Department are heroes working for America every day. Yes, State's budget has grown to meet new challenges, but staffing hasn't kept pace. And if the Secretary really wants to shorten the clearance process, the Secretary can do that with a memo, not blind firings.

Beyond the numbers, your disregard for congressional oversight is unacceptable. Since January we have sent dozens of letters asking about plans to reorganize the State Department, and unlawfully collapse USAID into State, rolled back mandated programs, diversity efforts, and closed offices supporting of Afghan allies. Guess what we have received? Almost nothing.

The law requires consultation for a reason, and if the Secretary can't even stay to answer questions at the one hearing this Committee held with a State official, it is no surprise his staff follows suit. If you don't have answers to basic oversight questions, it would be wise to slow down and consider the consequences. The Secretary claimed this reorganization was a product of consultation with the workforce, that is false.

Your colleague Andrew Veprek admitted it was designed by fewer than ten people. The Secretary also claimed his firing wouldn't affect overseas posts, also false. We have heard from diplomats who have already sent their families and belongings abroad, only to receive termination notices. Others assigned to serve at critical posts like Baghdad were fired weeks before starting language training, or deploying.

You even fired officers traveling with the Secretary, people preparing his talking points for the very East Asia meetings he was tweeting about, that is not reform, that is chaos. You fired veterans serving at State without cause, without process, without dignity. One of those veterans said it best, and I quote "These processes were not well thought out or executed. The personal aspect of this process was as botched as it could have been, and it was completely avoidable," unquote.

And you aren't just firing experts, you are gutting the programs they ran, programs that advanced America's interests, and protected American lives. What exactly is America First really all about? And let us not forget the \$2.9 billion of so-called America First Opportunities Fund, a slush fund Secretary Rubio has proposed to spend on President Trump's whims with zero congressional oversight.

House Republicans love to demand transparency, will they demand it now or rush to rubber stamp his latest power grab? So, Secretary Rigas, are you putting American diplomacy on a dangerous path? Step back from the brink, restore the dignity of American diplomats, and work with Congress on a smarter, strategic way forward. One that strengthens, not sabotages our global leadership.

And with that, I yield back.

Chairman MAST. Thank you, Ranking Member Meeks.

I now recognize you, Deputy Secretary, for your opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF HON. MICHAEL RIGAS, DEPUTY SECRETARY  
OF STATE FOR MANAGEMENT AND RESOURCES, U.S. DE-  
PARTMENT OF STATE**

Mr. RIGAS. Thank you. Good afternoon Chairman Mast, Ranking Member Meeks, and esteemed members of the committee. Thank you for inviting me here today to speak about the President's Fiscal Year 2026 budget request for the Department of State totaling \$28.5 billion. This figure is a decrease of \$25.9 billion, or 48 percent below the Fiscal Year 202025 appropriations.

As the Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources, it is my responsibility to ensure we are good stewards of the taxpayer dollars you provide the Department, and that they are spent in accordance with the goals of the President and the Secretary. Our budget reflects Secretary Rubio's department-wide reorganization, and the important work we are doing to make the State Department a more efficient and effective organization, better able to advance the core interests of the American people, and accountable to the American taxpayers.

As Secretary Rubio has stated, we must reform and streamline the State Department so that it becomes an effective instrument of American foreign policy. When the Secretary announced the Department's reorganization plan on April 22d, the Department had over 1,500 office units in the United States alone. This is for an organization that implements foreign policy.

Any foreign policy decision, statement, or action at the State Department must pass through more than a dozen or more separate offices for review and clearance before it even reaches a senior State Department official to approve a course of action. This time consuming and bureaucratic process is no way to run a department in the modern age, where we must move at the speed of relevance.

The reorganization will merge, eliminate, consolidate, or streamline nearly 45 percent of the Department's domestic offices. Moving forward, every bureau and office will have a clear mission, and purpose. We want to empower our Ambassadors and diplomats in the field, and our regional bureaus in Washington to push forward the President's America First foreign policy agenda, and deliver results for the American people.

For too long single issue offices have mushroomed in number and influence, often distorting our foreign policy objectives to serve their specific interests, slowing down the Department's ability to function. This reorganization includes a new approach to foreign assistance. As of July 1st USAID no longer implements foreign assistance. Secretary Rubio has ushered in a new era where the State Department takes the lead and utilizes foreign assistance as a core tool of strategic investment and engagement for the United States.

The State Department will now directly administer foreign assistance and other functions in programs that align with the administration's policy priorities, as those are being transitioned to the State Department as well. This integration will better align our foreign aid with our foreign policy objectives, and will ensure that every taxpayer dollar spent is justified by its benefit to American national interests.

Too often we have funneled billions of dollars in assistance projects that host governments did not even want, and that led to

no tangible benefit to the American people. Too often we have tried to impose divisive ideologies on other countries, which have pushed away potential allies and partners into the hands of China, Russia, and others. Too often we have failed to leverage our generosity and good relations to bring home real achievements for the American people.

The same American people who have bankrolled these programs for decades, which have not provided tangible benefits to their own communities. As the Secretary noted, the countries that benefit most from our generosity often fail to reciprocate that support. For example, Sub-Saharan African nations voted with the United States only 29 percent of the time in essential U.N. resolutions in 2023, despite receiving billions in assistance paid for by the American people.

Going forward, the United States will remain the largest foreign aid donor in the world by a wide margin. China and Russia do not deliver the kind of lifesaving assistance that the American people have provided for decades, and there is no sign this will change, but our focus will be on trade, not aid, and we will always advance the interests of the United States.

We will put the United States and the American people first in all aspects of our foreign policy, and we will continue to build and cultivate positive, constructive relationships with the governments and people of the world. Congress and American taxpayers expect us to deliver results for the American people, and I look forward to working with Secretary Rubio and this Committee to deliver those results.

As I have said before, I know that every dollar we spend, and every program we fund comes from the labor of a taxpaying American family. Our goal is to have a State Department that is accountable to the American people, and effective in unleashing the potential of the world's most talented diplomatic workforce. Thank you for having me here today, and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Rigas follows:]

**Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources Michael Rigas**  
**Opening Statement on**  
**FY26 State Department Posture: Management and Resources**  
**House Foreign Affairs Committee**  
**July 15, 2025**

Good morning, distinguished members of Congress

Thank you for inviting me here today to talk about the President's Fiscal Year 2026 Budget request for the Department of State, totaling \$28.5 billion. This figure is a decrease of \$25.9 billion, or 48 percent below FY 2025 appropriations.

As the Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources, it is my duty to ensure we are thoughtful and exact with the resources you provide the Department and that they are in line with the goals of the President and the Secretary.

Our budget request reflects Secretary Rubio's department-wide reorganization and the important work we are doing to make the State Department a more efficient and effective organization better able to advance the core interests of the American people. One accountable to the American taxpayers.

For the State Department to become an effective instrument of American Foreign policy, we must reform and streamline our institution. When the Secretary announced the State Department's reorganization plan on April 22, the Department had over 1,500 office units in the United States alone – this is for an organization that implements *foreign* policy.

Any foreign policy decision, statement, or action by State must pass through a dozen or more separate offices for review and clearance before it even reaches a senior State Department official to approve a course of action. This is no way to run a Department in the modern age – we must move at

the speed of relevance. The reorganization will merge, eliminate, consolidate, or streamline nearly 45 percent of the Department's domestic offices.

Henceforth, every bureau and office will have a clear mission and purpose. We want to empower our ambassadors and diplomats in the field, and our regional bureaus in Washington to push forward the America first foreign policy and deliver results for the citizens of this nation. For too long, single-issue offices have mushroomed in number and influence, often distorting our foreign policy objectives to serve their parochial interests and slowing down our ability to function.

This reorganization includes a new approach to foreign assistance.

As of July 1, USAID no longer exists. Secretary Rubio has announced a new era - one that utilizes foreign assistance as a core tool of strategic investment and engagement for the United States.

The State Department will administer foreign assistance, and certain functions and programs that align with Administration priorities are being transitioned to State. This integration will better align our foreign aid with our foreign policy objectives and will ensure that every taxpayer dollar spent is justified by its benefit to American national interests.

Moving forward, we will look to partner with innovative companies and structure these programs like investments. Other countries and companies must be involved.

Too often, we have funneled billions of dollars into assistance projects that host governments did not even want and that led to no tangible benefits to the American people. Too often, we have tried to impose divisive ideologies on other countries, which push away potential allies and partners into the hands of China, Russia, and others. Too often, we have failed to leverage our generosity and good relations to bring home real achievements for the

American people – the same American people who have bankrolled programs for decades which will never benefit themselves or their own communities.

As the Secretary recently noted, the countries that benefit most from our generosity often fail to reciprocate that support. For example, sub-Saharan African nations voted with the United States only 29 percent of the time on essential UN resolutions in 2023, despite receiving billions in assistance paid for by the American people.

Going forward, the United States will remain the largest foreign aid donor in the world by a wide margin. China and Russia do not deliver the kind of life-saving assistance that the American people have provided through USAID and State for decades, and there is no sign this will change. But our focus will be on trade not aid, and we will always advance the interests of the United States.

While the United States will put America first in all aspects of our foreign policy, we will continue to build and cultivate positive, constructive relationships with the governments and peoples of the world. Congress and American taxpayers expect us to deliver results for the American people, and I look forward to being judged by our results.

The reorganization implementation plan is a detailed strategy incorporating feedback from Congress, our workforce, and from Department leadership.

As I have said before, I know that every dollar we spend, and every program we fund, comes from the labor of a taxpaying American family. Our goal is to create a State Department that is accountable to the American people and effective in unleashing the potential of the world's most talented diplomatic workforce.

I look forward to your questions.

Thank you

Chairman MAST. Thank you for your opening statement, Secretary.

I am going to begin by recognizing myself for 5 minutes of questioning, and then we will alternate between each side as we go down the line. I want to start with this, it is my understanding that there was a goal of 15 percent reduction in force, and that we are either close to meeting that, or have met that goal already. So, just beginning with that, what are the workforce modernization priorities that you want to focus on now at this point if we are getting close to that metric?

Mr. RIGAS. Sure, thank you for that question, Chairman Mast. The priorities of the reorganization were to consolidate offices that had similar, duplicative, or overlapping functions, eliminate offices and bureaus whose functions were no longer relevant, or were not aligned with the administration's policy priorities, and to focus the work of the Department on making sure that everything we did was for the benefit of making America stronger, safer, and more prosperous.

And the 15 percent number that you referenced came from our initial assessment after consulting with the under secretaries at the Department, which at the time were all, I think with the exception of one, they are all still career officers of the Department who are serving as senior bureau officials, where we asked them what do you need to operate, what does a successful Department organization look like to you?

And they came back and provided us what they proposed for org charts for the Department that they thought ought to be functioning going forward.

Chairman MAST. Very good, I appreciate that. And I think it is important that you work on focus. You mentioned in your comments just right now, Sub-Saharan Africa, and I think I can put a fine point on something you were saying. You were saying a lot of these Sub-Saharan African countries were not supporting the United States of America despite the support they were getting from us.

A fine point I would put on that, these were some of the biggest recipients of PEPFAR, and they were giving the United States of America the least amount of support. And if our diplomats aren't paying attention to that, then again, they are not meeting the moment. They are just being delusional about what is supposed to be a soft power and not really being effective as a soft power.

I want to switch gears to something else, and I want to talk about both your role, and the other deputy role. We have two deputy secretaries at the Department of State, it is a unique structure, and it brings me to a question about chain of command. And I have kind of thought about it in my mind, when one of my kids asks me something, and they don't like the answer, and then they go to my wife and ask her the same thing hoping for a different answer, and I worry sometimes that can take place within the Department.

So, in us looking for effective ways to consolidate financial management, I am of the mind that we should consider a chief financial officer for the State Department, and I would like to know your opinions about that, giving them full statutory authority, and everything that they would need in that role, one deputy, one chief

financial officer. I would love to know your opinions about that as a structure.

Mr. RIGAS. Thank you for that question, Mr. Chairman. The State Department is one of the CFO Act agencies, so it does have a statutory, Presidentially appointed, senate confirmed chief financial officer position. That position hasn't been filled in a number of years, the duties have been performed by an acting CFO, who has generally been the deputy, and the head of the CGFS Bureau.

I think it would be prudent to consider nominating someone for that role. I think having—the DMR role serves as providing sort of a strategic oversight for the Department in terms of how we ought to be engaging our resources, and how we ought to be managing the Department, and the CFO is—and the deputies are more of sort of an action officer to execute and carry out those functions.

So, I do think there is a role for the DMR, CFO relationship where one is setting the strategy, and the other one is executing on it.

Chairman MAST. Thank you, I appreciate that opinion. I think I have time for one more question, and you having time to answer it. I want to switch gears one more time to again, a totally different subject than one we were just covering in the previous two. President Trump implemented on April 9th an executive order reforming defense weapon sales, and I would just love for you to talk a little bit about the progress that is being made on reforming defense weapon sales.

Obviously it is an important issue for this Committee, for both the ranking member and myself, it is something that we deal with probably on a daily basis, so I would love to hear what is going on with that.

Mr. RIGAS. Thank you for that question, Mr. Chairman. That is a role I have recently been designated as the point person to take care of that function at the Department, and work closely with my counterpart at the Department of Defense. I understand that process just takes too long, both the foreign direct military sales, and the commercial sales, and that is something I am definitely going to be looking into, and working with my counterparts at Defense to find opportunities to streamline that process and make it more effective.

I think the President's push to have our NATO friends and allies contribute 5 percent of their GDP to NATO defense spending is going to be a big impetus to streamlining this process as well.

Chairman MAST. Thank you, my time is expired.

I am now going to recognize Ranking Member Meeks for his 5 minutes of questioning.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you. Mr. Secretary, let me just ask you a quick question, what do you think of the people that work for the State Department, the women and men, are they good Americans?

Mr. RIGAS. Absolutely, sir, this is the third Presidential administration I have served in, and each time I have had the privilege of working with some of the most talented and dedicated patriots who want to serve this country. It is never easy to down size an organization, or eliminate offices or bureaus, but we had to put the mission first.

Mr. MEEKS. And they make sacrifices for this country, right?

Mr. RIGAS. Sure, I think everyone——

Mr. MEEKS. They don't carry weapons, but like the men and women of our military, they love this country. They come from the Democrats, the Republicans, they come from all parts, and they basically took this job, making great sacrifices, even with their families, is that not correct?

Mr. RIGAS. Yes, it is, sir.

Mr. MEEKS. And so these are individuals who, and I know when Secretary Rubio was Senator Rubio we had conversations, and he would always talk about them in a manner of them doing their job, and dedicated to do their jobs, not that they were not meeting the moment, they were meeting the moment, they were doing what was there, would you agree with that?

Mr. RIGAS. Certainly.

Mr. MEEKS. Okay. So, now let me ask this, because when Secretary Rubio was here, he said—well, he was in Malaysia I believe, that he was proud of the Department's reorganization. On how it was conducted, he said quote "I would argue probably in the most deliberative way of anyone that has done one." Now, to me that is a bold statement, and so I would hope that you would have something.

So, let me just ask you, yes or no, did you develop a detailed national security strategy to define what objective the reorganization should achieve?

Mr. RIGAS. Thank you, sir. My understanding is the national security strategy is developed by the National Security Council.

Mr. MEEKS. But you didn't do anything at the State, because State Department does a number of things that puts our national defense—they help us with that strategy. So, at the State Department was there anything, any strategy that defined what the objectives of the reorganization should achieve, so that we know we are moving forward? Was there, did you do that?

Mr. RIGAS. Yes, I mean the Secretary articulated that on his first day on the job.

Mr. MEEKS. If you did, then it should be something in writing, can you get us something to this Committee to provide, to show us what the national security strategy was?

Mr. RIGAS. Sure, I think the Secretary provided extreme clarity on that when——

Mr. MEEKS. So, I want to see the document that you utilized. So, if you have one, please submit that to the Committee. The Committee has oversight responsibility, I would love to see what the strategic strategy was, and how you did these firings. Did you conduct a written analysis looking at the costs and the benefits of your proposed changes?

Mr. RIGAS. Sir, I can tell you the thoughtful analysis that was——

Mr. MEEKS. It is yes or no, was there an analysis done?

Mr. RIGAS. Certainly, I mean the individuals who provided——

Mr. MEEKS. So, do you have the analysis, sir?

Mr. RIGAS. Who provided us their input, it was based on their years of experience.

Mr. MEEKS. Do you have an analysis so that we can know what was that analysis looking at the costs and the benefits of the pro-

posed changes? If anyone is doing any work, and you are doing something that is really comprehensive, there is an analysis done, you are going to do this, this is the cost, this is why we are doing it. Do you have that in writing, sir?

Mr. RIGAS. I don't know if we have it in writing, but I certainly know that analysis was done on the——

Mr. MEEKS. If you have it, it should be in writing, and I would love to see a copy of it, so that we can have it. If not, then I don't know. Let me say this, did you conduct a staff survey of the Civil Service, Foreign Service, and local nationals who work with us overseas in our embassies

Mr. RIGAS. We did have a portal where we received 650 comments from employees at the Department of State, and every single one of those comments were reviewed and considered, and, in fact, some of those comments resulted in changes to the reorganization——

Mr. MEEKS. Were those comments in writing?

Mr. RIGAS. Yes.

Mr. MEEKS. Okay, could you supply that to the Committee also, please?

Mr. RIGAS. I don't see why not, sure.

Mr. MEEKS. Now, in my opening statement I said that one of your colleagues boasted in a briefing, this is what I was—to the Committee, that the reorganization was developed actually not by talking to everybody, but by fewer than ten people, that is what he said to us. Fewer than ten people, not going around and talking to everyone in that regard, is that correct? Was his statement correct?

Mr. RIGAS. Well, I think there are what, six under secretaries, so if you count the six people who are the most senior, and most responsible for the various organizational families at the Department, that would be a minimum, and if you add four more people to that, I am not sure how many—all of the bureaus, you task the six under secretaries——

Mr. MEEKS. I am out of time, I just want to submit this for the record, Mr. Chairman. I have a State Department document of frequently asked questions from May that I would like to enter into the record. It says quote "The present assignment of Foreign Service employees is not a factor for RIFs."

Chairman MAST. So ordered.

[The information referred to can be found in the appendix:]

Mr. MEEKS. With that I yield back.

Chairman MAST. The chair now recognizes the representative from New Jersey, Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for convening this hearing, and Deputy Secretary Rigas, thank you for your testimony, and your leadership. A couple of questions, Secretary Rubio gave a very interesting turn of phrase when he said global spanning NGO's are part of the industrial complex at taxpayers' expense.

I think that no matter what the organization is, you have got to make sure that the groups that we fund, that taxpayers subsidize are doing the job, and they are doing it efficiently, effectively, and inside the parameters of what the mandates are. So, I thought his

comment, which I read on the State Department's website, was excellent. Let me ask you a question.

You talked about in your testimony about the 1,500 office units in the U.S. for an organization that implements foreign policy. I am not sure totally what that means, but I know when I wrote a law back in the year 2004 on micro credit lending, we were trying to help the poorest of the poor, those making less than a dollar a day, and we had a great bill, totally bipartisan with my colleagues.

And all of a sudden K Street weighed in, and they wanted their cut, and I was outraged by it when we got it over to the Senate, we lost. They had to get their piece of it at the expense, in my humble opinion, of the poorest of the poor. And I am not sure if that is what you are talking about, but are these people, maybe they mean well, but some of the NGO leaders get unbelievably large salaries, three and four times what any Member of Congress might make.

And I wonder about that kind of subsidization for them, so maybe you want to speak to that. And as part of modernizing the Department, what steps are being taken to monitor U.S. foreign assistance to avoid waste, fraud, and abuse? If you could speak to that as well. And one last thing, for 4 years I tried desperately to get information out of the U.S. Department of State, and especially USAID about moneys that were flowing not only to PEPFAR, but elsewhere.

What are we doing, who are we subsidizing, how much are they getting, and especially what are their sub-grantees getting? It was like pulling teeth, I would get these spreadsheets that weren't worth the paper they were printed on. Then I would ask as part of those data requests, what are they doing with it? Okay, you just gave 3 million to a sub-grantee, what are they doing with it?

Crickets, could not get it. So, I thank you that you are trying, and I thank Secretary Rubio for really getting to some transparency. I couldn't get it, I met with Samantha Power, went over and met with her in her office, and a very nice person, but I wouldn't get the information. How do you do oversight? And our subcommittee was tasked with that oversight, and we couldn't get it.

I have paper trails of all this stuff that doesn't mean anything, frankly, because I don't know what that means. It is like saying here is the scores of yesterday's game, eight to four, three to two. Who are they? We had no idea, and what they were actually buying with U.S. taxpayer funds. So, the transparency issue is to me, so extremely important. I know you are focused on that.

And finally, just let me ask you if I could, the deputy secretary of management resources advises the Secretary on the Department's participation in the National Economic Council, and inter-agency economic policy matters. Is that not the role for the Under Secretary for Economic Affairs or the Department's Chief Economist?

Mr. RIGAS. So, thank you for that question, Congressman. With respect to foreign aid, yes, we have gone through, and I have got a whole list in front of me, and this has been articulated, I think previously, with respect to how money from USAID was being spent on all kinds of things that were completely unjustifiable.

What we have proposed in the Fiscal Year 202026 budget is the America First Opportunity Fund.

I know that got some criticism from the ranking member on that, but I think what that proposes to do is to ensure democratic accountability on how those funds are being spent. You see the President every day in front of the cameras taking questions from the media in the oval office, in cabinet meetings, when he is about to get on his plan, when he gets off his plane.

He is completely accessible, the Secretary is as well, and if anyone wants to ask a question about how foreign assistance money is being spent, or how dollars from that fund are being spent to advance America's interests, they have an opportunity every single day to do that. By contrast, how these funds were spent at USAID, nobody knows who to ask why those moneys were spent, or who made the decision to spend money on a million dollars for voter ID in Haiti.

There is page after page I have of examples like that. With respect to your question on the role of the deputy secretary for management and resources, this position provides a source for strategic oversight of the management and resources of how the Department conducts its affairs with oversight primarily of the M Bureau and of the F Bureau, but really Department wide.

These other bureaus and officers are the action officers for those, taking care that that strategy is effectively delivered down the chain of command, and what they do every day.

Chairman MAST. The chair now recognizes Representative Sherman.

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you. Mr. Chair, I would like to deal with a couple of your comments. You point out that 13 brave American soldiers died in Afghanistan under the Biden administration, I will point out 65 died under the first Trump administration. And Trump could have signed the unconditional surrender that he signed in 2020 in 2017. Instead, he kept us there, accomplished nothing for our country.

Provided billions of dollars in weapons to Afghanistan with no plan to recapture them, and, most importantly, freed 5,000 bloodthirsty terrorists, and then blames Biden when he leaves him with an Afghanistan that has thousands of American soldiers, and 5,000 recently released bloodthirsty terrorists, that the bloodthirsty terrorists try to kill the Americans.

But what also concerns me, I represent the Pacific Palisades, Trump came to our district and said my constituents should sleep outdoors with no aid until our Governor changes his policy. And I thought that was the most outrageous thing I had heard until I hear that people of Africa should die of AIDS until their government changes how they vote in the United Nations.

We just had a big brouhaha on the floor where they couldn't pass a rule, huge deal here in Congress, and it was about the Epstein files. Mr. Secretary, would it harm American foreign policy if we released the Epstein files? Assuming of course we redact the names of the victims.

Mr. RIGAS. Sir, I have no idea.

Mr. SHERMAN. So, you have no reason to think that it would harm our foreign policy. Kari Lake was here talking about our

broadcasting, and I pointed out that some 354 million people listen every week, or did until you shut it down. And she said, and I will quote, "Those are government numbers, and I don't trust those numbers." Can we trust the listenership numbers issued by the State Department?

Mr. RIGAS. I am not sure what numbers you are referring to, sir.

Mr. SHERMAN. Those are the numbers of people listening every week to Voice of America and its sisters.

Mr. RIGAS. Well, sir——

Mr. SHERMAN. Issued by the State Department.

Mr. RIGAS. Yes, I am not familiar with that statement, or——

Mr. SHERMAN. Well, I will point out that not only were those numbers released under the Biden administration, but very similar numbers were released under the Trump administration. So, Kari Lake was sitting there saying we couldn't trust Trump administration government numbers. Can we trust Trump administration government numbers?

Mr. RIGAS. Sir, I would have to look at the numbers——

Mr. SHERMAN. You are the management guy.

Mr. RIGAS. Right, I would have to look at what numbers you are referring to, I haven't had an opportunity to——

Mr. SHERMAN. Officially released government—Okay. Secretary Rubio sat right there and told us no one had died as a result of the cuts to our foreign aid. Does the State Department stand by that conclusion? No one has died?

Mr. RIGAS. I would stand by Secretary Rubio's statement, sir, yes.

Mr. SHERMAN. Okay, well we have behind me, the first to die, the first child to die, because you cutoff his AIDS medicine. But we are going to have 3.3 million people die as a result, and not only do we have that, we have the effect that cutting off aid does to migration, but also to diseases that affect us here in the United States. Because most of those 3.3 million people are going to die because of tuberculosis, malaria, and AIDS.

And every time someone in another country contracts one of those diseases, it is a chance for that disease to replicate, mutate, and migrate back here. So, we are going to have a lot of deaths in America, not only the 3.3 million deaths there. Now, you recently—I think it was today that 500 metric tons of emergency food reached its expiration date and is set to be burned.

Was there a reason why food that was acquired even before the beginning of this administration now has to be burned because you didn't send it to starving people in Sudan and elsewhere?

Mr. RIGAS. Sir, I am not familiar with that particular story, but my understanding is it is the policy of the Government to not distribute expired food, or medicine.

Mr. SHERMAN. Isn't it a huge management catastrophe to have food sit there in the warehouse for five and six months waiting for its expiration date, and never ship it overseas to starving people, isn't that a huge management problem?

Mr. RIGAS. I would have to look at what the issue is obviously, I don't know how long that food was there, or when it was due to expire.

Mr. SHERMAN. Before Trump got there, and now you are going to burn it. It is hard to say that that is good management.

I will yield back.

Chairman MAST. The gentleman yields back.

Will now recognize Representative Barr.

Mr. BARR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Deputy Secretary Rigas, I certainly appreciate your commitment, the Secretary's commitment, and the President's commitment to always advance the interests of the United States as you look to reform the State Department, which is patriotic work, and honors hardworking taxpayers, as you said. You are cognizant that every dollar you spend, every program we fund comes from the labor of taxpaying American families.

I can't tell you how many hard working Kentucky taxpayers ask me why on earth did we fund some of the programs that we saw coming out of the USAID. And it is not just waste, it is that these expenditures in many cases were counter-productive. They were outlays that were directly at odds with American interests. And so, I welcome your testimony that we are finally shining a light on the fact that countries that benefit from our generosity often fail to reciprocate that support.

Citing Sub-Saharan African nations who vote only 29 percent of the time on U.N. resolutions with the United States, despite receiving billions in assistance paid for by the American people. Now, you have heard the criticism of these reforms, so I want to give you an opportunity to respond to the following that we all hear.

Well, if we withdraw from the space, if we leave even in these difficult, lesser developed countries where yes, we do have diplomatic challenges, if we just leave then China will fill the void. That the Belt and Road, or our adversaries will fill the void. Mr. Deputy Secretary, does it advance U.S. interests to continue to throw good money after bad to countries that actually cozy up to our adversaries, and don't do what we want at the United Nations?

Mr. RIGAS. Thank you for that question, Congressman. No, it certainly does not advance America's national interests to do that. I think what we are trying to do is tie any foreign assistance to measurable outcomes that deliver for the American people, that make them safer, stronger, or more prosperous. A lot of the so-called aid that China has delivered to countries has really been predatory lending that has not been—that put countries into debt traps which they now regret.

So, I think the aid that we have—the so called aid that has been delivered previously by the Government of the United States, of USAID, has been things that the governments did not want, did not need, and was often promoting divisive ideologies in those countries.

Mr. BARR. And true or false, after the proposed budget is implemented, and the streamlining and reforms go into effect, the United States will remain the largest single foreign aid donor in the world by a wide margin?

Mr. RIGAS. By a wide margin, that is correct, sir.

Mr. BARR. Let us take one example of USAID funding under the previous administration. Under the Biden administration USAID provided over a half a million dollars to empower Uganda's LGBT

community to push back against their own government's policy. And another 5 and a half million grant to shift public perception and attitudes in Uganda, a very socially conservative place, toward LGBT acceptance, and train LGBT individuals on the skills needed to engage in the economy.

As a result of that policy Uganda agreed to a deal with China to finance a 5 billion dollar oil pipeline. Was that foreign assistance to fight this country, Uganda, was that in the interest of American national security, to push that country toward China?

Mr. RIGAS. No, I think anything that the prior administration did to push countries into China's arms were certainly not in the interest of the United States.

Mr. BARR. No. So, it is not just about honoring our taxpayers, it is about advancing American interests, and there may be differences of opinion here in Congress about a particular country's views on a particular social topic, but I think that the job of the State Department is to advance American interests.

And that is why I am so grateful to you, the Secretary, the President for reimagining our foreign assistance programs, and prioritizing what is in the interests of this country, not other countries. I don't have any more time, but I just want to reiterate, this is the right thing to do, and I think American soft power will not only persist under this administration, but it will actually work under this administration.

I yield back.

Mr. RIGAS. Thank you, Mr. Congressman.

Chairman MAST. The chair now recognizes Representative Keating.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. President Trump, after years of having very, what he termed pleasant and friendly conversation with his friend, a person he admired as a genius, President Putin, suddenly realized he was being played for a fool. And he indeed, his words, realizes that Putin has given him a whole lot of bullshit during that time, and that Russia was continuing to bomb innocent civilians, women and children in the process.

And he changed his policy in that regard, and so I want to ask you this question. Why did you fire the entire team investigating war crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine? Why were those people fired?

Mr. RIGAS. Sir, I believe that office was consolidated, and the work of that office will be conducted by the regional bureau, and by the staff at posts overseas.

Mr. KEATING. And all of this is fine, people were let go from there that were assisting. I worked with the prosecutor from Ukraine as they were training their own people to deal with these. Here is the kind of crimes they have been committing. They have been committing serial rapes of teenagers by Russian soldiers. They were targeting maternity wards of hospitals.

They were targeting emergency responders coming to give medical care to these innocent people that were being attacked. They committed torture of the worst kind against innocent civilians in communities like Bucha. They also took 20,000 children, abducted them from their families, who knows where they are now. These are the kind of crimes that they are committing.

And accountability, I mean this administration I guess is talking a lot about accountability for teenagers undergoing sexual assault, but what about here? What about what happened here? Making cuts in that area right now is critical in terms of helping Putin use terror against civilians to continue this. I just can't see the priorities, however you call cutting, reorganization down, it is the same thing.

You are taking a team that was there working for years helping accountability occur, that is so important after this war is finally over, to have this happen. Now, You have also consolidated, whatever terms you want to use, you have eliminated two offices in the Bureau of Counterterrorism and Violent Extremism. And this is at a time when at home you are saying these are the greatest threats we have.

Whatever small increment of money there is that could have helped that, play it against the billions of dollars that are being used now by our government, last in this great bill that was just passed, I say it sarcastically, and the money that was spent there going around, taking people off the streets with no criminal background, no violence, but you don't have enough money to counter the violent extremism that is coming from other countries?

I mean, no wall can stop some of that effect here as a threat. People work and aspire, people here to get involved, but your cutting in that area is so short sighted, you are really worried about protecting the American people as a whole against violent extremism all the way from ISIS to Al Qaeda. So, those the areas you are cutting, you are cutting in areas dealing with our NATO allies.

Our greatest asset that not only Russia, but we have our greatest asset against China that they don't have, and you are cutting in those areas as well. So, you are looking at all these areas taking great pride in making these incremental cuts, and saying you are just reorganizing, when indeed you are cutting, and your rationale is we are making America safer.

Well, you are not being good stewards, in your words, of Americans in terms of their safety. You are not being good stewards in terms of the threat from violent extremism. You are not being good stewards in terms of the threat to the American people with Russia. And indeed, you are not being good stewards with what is going to happen when China views the actions of the U.S. in this regard, and comes in, not only makes their influence greater, but makes their threat to the American people greater as well.

I yield back.

Chairman MAST. The gentleman yields back. I found the comments amazing, I wouldn't be sarcastic about cutting American's taxes, which is what the Big Beautiful Bill was, while being serious about sending their money abroad, that seems very misguided to me.

I now recognize Representative Kim.

Mr. KEATING. Mr. Chair, since you said that, I wouldn't be so cavalier about putting \$5 trillion of debt to pay for that for our children and grandchildren—

Chairman MAST. This is a Government that spends way too much money, and I thank the Secretary for working to take care of that, especially with dollars being sent abroad to other places,

foreign countries, foreign NGO's, foreign terrorist organizations. But if you want to be sarcastic about cutting the taxes of Americans to do those things, that to me seems cavalier.

Mr. KEATING. I will just let it rise other than to say the——

Chairman MAST. I would let that go.

Mr. KEATING. Things I addressed in my remarks were about threats to Americans. I will let it go.

Chairman MAST. Probably wise to let that go.

Representative Kim is recognized.

Ms. KIM. Thank you, Chairman. I want to thank the Secretary for joining us today. On May 29th, 2025 this year, the Committee received notification of the Department's intent to reorganize its domestic operations and functions. As part of this reorganization, the Department is eliminating the Bureau of Energy Resources, or ENR, so I want to talk to you a little bit about that.

And also in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in May, Secretary Rubio stated energy is going to be at the forefront of foreign policy for the next 100 years, we just don't produce enough global energy to meet the AI demand. I wholeheartedly agree with that.

So, if energy policy will be at the forefront of our foreign policy for the next 100 years, as Secretary Rubio projects, and we know energy diplomacy is essential to meet our future AI demands, can you talk to us why there is a need to eliminate the Bureau of Energy Resources?

Mr. RIGAS. Yes, thank you for that question, Congresswoman. So, that bureau has been consolidated into the Under Secretary for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment. So, those functions continue to remain, our commitment to energy development and energy dominance are one of the central themes of the President's administration. There is just simply a consolidation of that bureau into the larger economic bureau.

Ms. KIM. It wasn't a criticism or anything, as you know, I chaired the Subcommittee on the E Family, so we welcome the opportunity to work on that issue. And I just had my subcommittee hearing on breaking the choke point of China's dominance on critical minerals, rare earth elements. I mean, these are so important issues, so I look forward to that opportunity, and hopefully I can work with you and your office in meeting those demands.

But in 1980, moving on, the Foreign Commercial Service was pulled out of the Department of Commerce to—that was transferred to Commerce to elevate the importance of commercial diplomacy. But looking at the last few decades, the opposite has occurred in my view. The move divorced commercial diplomacy from our foreign policy.

And limited the ability, or our ability to help American businesses access the foreign markets, and protect them from predatory practices. Our focus should be helping our American businesses, especially abroad, especially in the region, in the Indo-Pacific, especially with the diplomatic tools in the toolkit, in the box that is available.

So, as we are working to reauthorize the State Department, we are considering a proposal to bring the FCS back into the Department. So, would you support such a move?

Mr. RIGAS. I would be happy to work with the Committee on that proposal. I think our engagement with countries, I think the President has really led the way on that with his trip to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE where he showed the importance of economic diplomacy. Obviously there are other equities, other departments that may have a say in that, but I would be happy to weigh in about the importance of that work.

Ms. KIM. I hope you can weigh in strongly as you do, and consider our proposal. You will allow my team to work with yours, and then make that transfer back to State, I hope it is as seamless as possible. So, I hope you can commit to working with my team on that.

Mr. RIGAS. Yes.

Ms. KIM. Okay, and in April there were reports that the Department was considering closing its consulate office in Busan, South Korea, as you know, is a very critical ally of the United States, and they share our concerns about North Korean aggression, expanding the Chinese influence, and especially in the economic and military areas, and Russian influence in the Indo-Pacific, especially the north areas.

So, what is the status of that proposed closure of the U.S. consulate office in Busan, or is there such a proposal, to actually eliminate that consulate office from Busan, South Korea?

Mr. RIGAS. Thank you for that question. So, I don't believe there is any proposal to close any facilities overseas. I do know that there was an analysis that was done earlier this year, which reviewed every post overseas, its costs, its benefits, what services it was providing, any revenue it was generating, consular services in particular generates a fair amount of revenue for the Department.

Ms. KIM. Is there any other areas in the U.S. consulates in East Asia and the Pacific Region that is under consideration?

Mr. RIGAS. So, I don't think it is fair to frame it as any post being under consideration for closure. I think an analysis was done on—or sort of a data call was done, and asked people to assess different posts overseas. But as of now there are no plans to close any facilities.

Ms. KIM. It looks like my time is up, thank you so much.

I yield back.

Chairman MAST. The chair now recognizes Representative Bear.

Mr. BERA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to ask unanimous consent to enter into the record the Atlantic article from yesterday that Mr. Sherman was referring to.

Chairman MAST. So ordered.

[The information referred to can be found in the appendix]

Mr. BERA. In that article, and we will make sure you get a copy, Secretary Rigas, it talks about 500 tons of emergency aid, high-energy biscuits that are going to get incinerated. Now, I come from the private sector, we spent \$800,000 on shipping that aid over, and it was stored in warehouses in the Middle East. We are going to spend another \$130,000 to incinerate those biscuits that have been sitting there.

That to me does not seem like a good financial investment, since those were already sunk costs, we should have gotten that food to save lives of kids. We have not met before, I don't know you, so I

will take you as an honest public servant. I appreciate that you described the folks that worked for the State Department, for USAID as talented and patriotic Americans, they are talented and patriotic Americans.

I have traveled across this world, gone into refugee camps, gone into conflict zones in Africa, and Asia, and elsewhere, and you see these men and women, these diplomats, these civil servants out there doing their work every day, and I think it is reprehensible how they have been treated. Again, I am not arguing if you want to do a reorganization, if you want to go through section by section, program by program.

But how these folks have been treated, in terms of being laid off 1 day, saying hey, come back the next day, being laid off the next day, you are going to lose a ton of talent, these folks that are at the peak of their career. And when we try to rebuild these organizations, even as they are streamlined, these folks are not coming back because of how poorly they have been treated, and that is extremely unfortunate.

And to folks that are watching out there, I am sorry that you were treated that way. You guys are, as the Secretary said, talented and patriotic Americans. I appreciate that this country has changed now. I am a doctor by training, part of what led me into public service was growing up in the 1970's and 1980's, and seeing what we did when we saw commercials of babies in Africa starving to death, swollen bellies, flies on their eyes.

We didn't just sit around, we are a faith based country, I appreciate that the chairman has us recite the pledge of allegiance, one nation under God. This is not what a faith based country does. I talk to faith based aid organizations all the time, we are a benevolent country of abundance. Our values are saying those folks that are dying out there, even if their governments don't agree with us, even if their governments don't vote for us, we don't want to see kids die.

Is that who we are? Are we going to change who we are as a country? That isn't what I believe, the America that I believe in. I think this is a great nation, the United States of America, I think we are a nation that has been blessed. And I think we have a responsibility to lead the rest of the world based on our values.

I understand, I have heard my colleagues on the other side, and in your opening testimony you said well, this is no longer about being out there benevolent and saving lives, this is about trade, not aid. I hope that is not who we have become as a country, I hope we are not now saying Okay, well we will go out and save those kids' lives, but you know what, here is what you have got to do in return for that.

Again, that is not the America that I believe in, we designed a system that both supported American farmers, supported our economy, saved lives, put food out there, put medicines out there. Mr. Sherman is correct, millions of people are going to die around the world because we are not there, because of the vacuum. Secretary, do you know what percentage of the United States budget goes to foreign aid? Is it more or less than 5 percent?

Mr. RIGAS. It is certainly less than 5 percent, sir.

Mr. BERA. Is it less than 2 percent?

Mr. RIGAS. Yes, I believe it is less than 1 percent of the total foreign budget. I think—

Mr. BERA. It is less than 1 percent of our budget. So, if we spend less than 1 percent of our budget but we actually do good work around the world, we save lives, I have been to refugee camps where I see that American flag, and it says from the people of the United States. I have gone into villages post the Ebola crisis where they greet us, and they are cheering us, and they are saying thank you to the people of the United States, you saved our lives.

That is what we do, that is what this is about, that is who we are blessed to be as the United States of America. I don't want to be China, I don't want to be Russia, the way they operate is purely transactional, and they don't do it for the betterment of the world. The world that we have created post-World War II, the United States of America, we damn well better be proud of it, and I am extremely disappointed at what is happening under this administration.

It is going to leave us weaker, and less benevolent, and more transactional.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman MAST. Thank you, Mr. Bera. I think you speak true to your heart, we have traveled together, we have been together, I think it is always an important thing as we look at the budget, and I think we can all acknowledge it is less than 1 percent, but it is still a borrowed 1 percent that we are dealing with. It is a 1-percent that we have to go out there and ask somebody else for money for.

And just reflecting personally, most of us don't go out there and ask our local banks for a loan so that we can give that loan away. And it is something that we have to wrestle with as Americans as we deal with our budget, and I appreciate your thoughts on the issue.

Mr. RIGAS. I will just make one comment, I completely agree with your comments, Congressman. The lifesaving humanitarian assistance has been exempted from the Secretary's foreign assistance review, so that aid would continue to flow. I think we are looking at all these other examples that are not this lifesaving kind of humanitarian assistance.

And even to the extent that we are providing that aid, there has to be some kind of graduation strategy so that 1 year, 3 years, 5 years down the road these countries are able to assume that obligation themselves for their populations.

Mr. BERA. Don't incinerate food aid that is out there, the aid that is in warehouses, et cetera, deliver that aid to folks before it spoils. Yes, it is going to cost a little bit to sign those contracts and so forth, but let us not—those are sunk costs, get that food to folks, and let us save those lives.

Chairman MAST. The chair now recognizes Representative Kean.

Mr. KEAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to Deputy Secretary Rigas for being here today. As we evaluate the work that is being done at the U.S. State Department, it is vital that America's global health programs continue to prioritize American innovation. I look forward to hearing how the State Department is con-

tinuing to implement U.S. global health priorities that protect all Americans.

The State Department has an integral role to play in implementing global health programs like PEPFAR. Can you provide an update on the status of PEPFAR transition planning to partner country ownership?

Mr. RIGAS. Sure, thank you for that question, Congressman. About 85 percent of the funds for PEPFAR for direct care is what we requested in the budget. The 15 percent that was not requested are for countries that we assess have the ability to execute those programs on their own. There is an overall 54 percent cut for administrative non-direct care funds for PEPFAR.

But again, as I mentioned, the 15 percent reduction represents our philosophy that as countries are able to administer these programs themselves, they should be taking on that responsibility.

Mr. KEAN. When will effective transition planning for partner country ownership for PEPFAR begin to move forward? And if conducted on a country by country basis, what countries do you plan to assess first?

Mr. RIGAS. Thank you for that question, Congressman. I think that is I would have to refer that question to the bureau administering the program to get their assessment on which countries are sort of further up the chain when it comes to their ability to administer the program. But we would certainly start there with those who are most able to carry out delivery of the aid.

Mr. KEAN. And America's innovative companies have long been a cornerstone of America's global health efforts, could you share how programs like PEPFAR and Gavi can utilize American products to ensure effective solutions to global health problems?

Mr. RIGAS. Sure, I mean we are leading the world when it comes to innovation in pharmaceuticals and lifesaving treatments, not just for Americans, for people all over the world. When it comes to PEPFAR, I think that has been a great example of how aid has been delivered. But the second letter in PEPFAR, the E stands for emergency, and this was an emergency program implemented over 20 years ago.

And I think we need to ask ourselves how long can a program be an emergency, and when can we sort of move to a graduation strategy where countries can begin to take this responsibility on themselves, and move into a more normal kind of environment?

Mr. KEAN. Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman MAST. The gentleman yields back.

The chair now recognizes Representative Olszewski.

Mr. OLSZEWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I want to thank you, Deputy Secretary Rigas, for your time, and for your service. I did hear in your confirmation hearing that your father spent over 25 years as a public school teacher.

Mr. RIGAS. That is right.

Mr. OLSZEWSKI. Please thank him for his service as a former public school teacher myself.

Mr. RIGAS. Thank you, I will.

Mr. OLSZEWSKI. Colleagues, as we know, the administration claimed to shut down USAID, and while we can sit here and debate whether or not the process was legal, we can debate whether it was

warranted, what we don't want to do is debate facts. So, a few weeks ago Secretary Rubio wrote a eulogy of sorts for USAID, unfortunately it was a lie filled mess.

So, I wanted to ask you, Mr. Rigas, as the chief operating officer of the State Department, I want to get your feedback on a few of the statements in that document. The first claim from Secretary Rubio was that quote "USAID had a near infinite taxpayer budget." Is that a statement that you agree with, and support?

Mr. RIGAS. I think when you look at the spending that was taken, that the USAID department undertook, it is hard to justify how a lot of those dollars were spent unless people felt that there were no more important uses for those dollars than some of the frankly very wasteful spending that was done.

Mr. OLSZEWSKI. Okay, and I think as a member of this Committee, I would more than welcome the opportunity to talk about how we could best spend those resources, but for me it is just interesting that he would say that considering back in 2017 he said quote foreign aid as a part of the overall budget—I know this just came up with the ranking member—is less than 1 percent of the total amount.

I think you guys just talked about that, and agreed, and anyone who tells you that we can slash foreign aid and it will bring us to balance is lying to you. So, it might be a small number, we might disagree on how it is spent, but it certainly doesn't sound like near infinite to me.

The second claim that Secretary Rubio made was that quote "USAID marketed its programs as charity rather than instruments of American foreign policy intended to advance our national interests." Is that something you would support in terms of a statement about USAID?

Mr. RIGAS. I think if you look at sort of the mindset—how else could you describe the mindset that would inform some of the spending that was done, that was not lifesaving humanitarian aid, but was kind of all of this social engineering spending that was not advancing American interests, and even the host countries themselves were not asking for it.

Someone described it to me as sort of a reverse robbery, where we hold a gun to their head and tell them to take our money. That is not a way to sort of conduct foreign assistance, I don't think.

Mr. OLSZEWSKI. Okay, I appreciate that. Again, contradicting himself, Secretary Rubio's past remarks was that foreign aid is not charity, and it is quote "critical to our national security." Not a one off statement. He has also said that we give foreign aid because it is a quote "cost effective way to further our national interests." And I just want to share in light of the deep cuts that are being proposed, I don't think there is a way to continue advancing those national interests again, even if we disagree about any specific program.

Another claim from Secretary Rubio was that quote "USAID had little to show since the end of the cold war." Is that a statement that you would agree with in terms of his assertions?

Mr. RIGAS. I think I would. I mean, I would like to know what American national interests that made America safer, stronger, or

more prosperous could be tied to spending that was done by USAID.

Mr. OLSZEWSKI. Okay, well again, I appreciate your response, but that claim is news to me. And Mr. Chairman, I would like to introduce for the record an article, and a study from Lancet that shows from 2011, which was after the cold war, until 2021, USAID supported efforts to have helped prevent more than 91 million deaths, including 30 million deaths among children.

In 2000, more than one in four people lived in extreme poverty. Today, that number is fewer than one in ten, and again, that is thanks in large part to USAID led economic development programs. So, I would argue that is not little to show, that is actually quite a bit. Thank you, sir.

Chairman MAST. So ordered.

[The information referred to can be found in the appendix]

Mr. RIGAS. The Secretary did exempt the humanitarian and life-saving assistance from his foreign aid review, so that kind of assistance I think would continue, but I think we would want to see some kind of graduation strategy.

Mr. OLSZEWSKI. Again, I think it just would be hard to graduate when we are absolutely gutting all of that, including those economic development programs, which has as I understand it, very little congressional oversight, it is one big lump sum with little oversight. So, as I have said countless times on this Committee, I am all for reform, I am willing to work with anyone to make sure our taxpayer dollars are used effectively.

But as we think about the future of foreign assistance, we want to make sure that we are telling the truth about what is happening to the American people, and being real about what the numbers represent, and what that might limit us in being able to do. So again, I thank you for your time today.

And Mr. Chairman, my time is up, so I will yield back to you, thank you.

Chairman MAST. Thank you.

The chair now recognizes Representative Self.

Mr. SELF. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Secretary, for being here with us today. The State Department has over 1,500 domestic offices in the United States, all for a department that has Benjamin Franklin on the wall up there, was meant for foreign policy. Can you elaborate on your plans to merge, eliminate, consolidate these offices?

Mr. RIGAS. So, thank you for that question, Congressman. So, the reorganization which we just sort of began to execute on Friday, will eliminate 100 offices, merge another hundred or so offices, so that the key functions that we want to continue will continue under a combined office. We do have a number, in Federal buildings all over the country you have got folks who are processing, or taking applications for passports, and what not.

But it does seem that we do have probably more offices than we need for a foreign policy department in the United States.

Mr. SELF. And could you comment, and I will leave it an open question, on your plans to downsize your workforce? How is that going to be accomplished? To what end?

Mr. RIGAS. Yes, so what we just did, we did the most complicated reduction in force that the Federal Government has ever seen, and we did that in consultation with the Office of Personnel Management. I believe we had over 173 competitive areas. And what a competitive area is, is an office that performs a function, and what we were able to do is when you are combining two offices, it is personnel agnostic.

So, individuals who lost their jobs were not—there was no individual who was targeted, we asked the under secretaries to say what are the functions that you need to carry out the mission here? And what positions do you need to do that? And once those positions are identified, you then take all the employees who are in that competitive area, and you basically compete them against one another based on their seniority, their tenure, their skills.

And those with the highest ranking scores are the ones who are retained, and those with the lowest ranking scores are the ones that do not make—once you have reached the complement or whatever, there is 50 people that you need in an office, or 20, the top 20 remain, and the remainder do not.

So, even though there were certainly people who were qualified, and great patriots who separated from service, what you can take comfort in knowing is that the people who remained actually were selected using merit systems principles to actually have ranked as higher quality in terms of tenure, in terms of experience, in terms of skills to be able to carry out the mission.

Mr. SELF. So, I think I just heard the description of a meritocracy?

Mr. RIGAS. Yes.

Mr. SELF. Along those lines though, budget and planning actually coordinates with the Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources in developing policy plans, programs to achieve our goals. But we have heard that decisionmaking is slowed down due to budget functions being spread across the M Family, which includes budget planning, and the Office of Foreign Assistance. Can you describe how you are going to streamline those offices together to meet your goals?

Mr. RIGAS. Yes. So, that is an excellent point, and that is actually one of the key objectives of the reorganization, is taking all of these management support offices, which were spread out among the under secretary, that is an even further down among all of the bureaus and offices within each other under secretary family, and moving them up into one sort of EX bureau within each of the under secretariats, and then moving most of those management functions over to, shockingly, the management bureau of the Department.

So, they are the one place where most of these functions will be executed. So, you won't have redundant offices throughout the Department executing on the same mission.

Mr. SELF. Very good. And in the last minute that I have, can you talk about examples of feedback you got from the workforce during your draw down planning?

Mr. RIGAS. Yes, thank you. We got over 650 comments from the workforce, and these were really very thoughtful comments, which showed the experience that the workforce had, both among the For-

eign Service and the Civil Service, and the care that they took, and the thought that they put into how things ought to work based on their experience.

Describing pain points that they had in their work, how it was difficult to execute on the mission, where they thought we could improve, and all of those comments were reviewed, considered, and a number of them were implemented, or used to revise what the initial reorganization plan was.

Mr. SELF. Very good, thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman MAST. The chair now recognizes Representative Dean.

Ms. DEAN. I thank the chairman, I thank the ranking member, and I thank you, Mr. Secretary, for being here. Since his return to office in January President Trump has chosen to bully our foreign partner rather than to negotiate. This administration has claimed their policies will bring safety, security, and prosperity to America, but all I have seen thus far is weakened relationships with our allies, and emboldened adversaries.

Friday's termination of 1,300 State Department employees, I would risk to say heroes, patriots, decades of experience and specialized technical expertise, will only make us worse off. Combined, they have hundreds of years of experience, expertise, sacrifice, and work, and they got a note on Friday, you are done. Secretary Rubio has repeatedly said addressing the threat to China is our national security interest.

Yet the same day he was in Southeast Asia lauding the cooperation that will come from future engagements, the entire team that prepared him for his trip were fired. Offices that were responsible for ensuring arms control and non-proliferation of weapons by our adversaries, gutted. As we struggle with drug smuggling at our borders, and deaths in our communities, the Department fired those who were working to interdict drugs at foreign borders before they would get to our own.

Those who were fired were essential to our national security, they were selfless public servants who swore an oath to uphold the Constitution. I so regret the action that your Department took. They negotiated key agreements for our global stability, they ensured threats do not reach our borders, they sacrificed their own safety and time with their families, all in service to us, the United States of America.

I believe the administration has actively betrayed them, and we in turn have lost experts who were quietly and faithfully keeping us safe. Secretary Rigas, how is any of this improving the safety and security for America?

Mr. RIGAS. Thank you for the question, Congressman. With respect to the office that prepared the Secretary for his trip overseas, so none of the country offices were affected, none of the foreign—

Ms. DEAN. People who prepped him were terminated. Thank you. That doesn't make us safer. Thank you.

Mr. RIGAS. Yes, there was—

Ms. DEAN. That is such a non-sequitur, that does not make us safer, you fired 1,300 people, the very team who prepped him as he was in Asia. I want to followup on what the ranking member said in his line of questions, and I look forward to you sharing the

six hundred respondents. Where did that survey go, to whom did it go, and to whom did it go back? Six-hundred respondents, who sent it out, and who got it?

Mr. RIGAS. It was a department-wide email distribution asking all employees, Foreign Service, Civil Service for their——

Ms. DEAN. So, how many people received that email, everybody?

Mr. RIGAS. Yes, that is my understanding.

Ms. DEAN. Every single person, it is your understanding, I have spoken to people, they didn't receive it. It is your understanding it went to everybody, who sent it out, did you send it?

Mr. RIGAS. I did not send it, it was sent out by staff.

Ms. DEAN. Sent out by staff?

Mr. RIGAS. It was a global distribution list, so I would be curious as to someone saying they didn't get that email.

Ms. DEAN. Okay. We look forward to seeing exactly the distribution list and who wrote back, because I have a wonder, I bet they didn't write and say I think you need to can 1,300 people on Friday. Let us talk, and shift to Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, the newly formed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation. Do you agree that the American people deserve to know where their taxpayer dollars are being spent, and for what policy objectives they are being used?

Mr. RIGAS. Certainly.

Ms. DEAN. Do you know that all foreign assistance programs are required to conduct risk assessments for funding they will administer?

Mr. RIGAS. That sounds right to me.

Ms. DEAN. It is true. Never the less, it has been reported that the State Department waived nine mandatory counterterrorism and anti-fraud safeguards to rush the 30 million dollar award in simply 5 days for this startup, Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, sound like the right way to go about that?

Mr. RIGAS. I am not familiar with this particular situation, but I would be happy to look into it.

Ms. DEAN. You are familiar with the famine, the deprivation in Gaza, the fact that other programs are there, like Ms. Cindy McCain World Food Program that have been working faithfully there for a very long time, not to mention UNRWA. Five days, 30 million dollar grant, and they waved through nine mandatory counterterrorism reviews. Do you think that is efficient and effective?

Mr. RIGAS. I would have to look at that particular situation, my only——

Ms. DEAN. I would think you would want to, it is within your purview, it is \$30 million.

Mr. RIGAS. Yes, I would have to——

Ms. DEAN. Let me move on.

Mr. RIGAS. Sure.

Ms. DEAN. This organization has been rejected by humanitarian and human rights organizations, it is proving to be a death trap for Gazans. Do you know that, and I want to ask as I end here, I recognize my time is up, Mr. Chairman, nearly 900 Gazans have been shot and killed desperately seeking food in some of these aid areas, thousands——

Mr. HUIZENGA [presiding]. The chair will remind members that you are more than welcome to put a question in writing through the chair, and that it will be submitted.

Ms. DEAN. And I will seek more questions. I seek unanimous consent to enter onto the record, may I tell you what I have?

Mr. HUIZENGA. Yes.

Ms. DEAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. HUIZENGA. An article?

Ms. DEAN. Two articles. Gaza, 875 People Confirmed Dead Trying to Source Food in Recent Weeks.

Mr. HUIZENGA. So ordered.

[The information referred to can be found in the appendix]

Ms. DEAN. And then a Reuters article, Former DOGE Employees Rushed Grant to Trump Backed Gaza Aid Group over Staff Objections.

Mr. HUIZENGA. So ordered.

[The information referred to can be found in the appendix]

Ms. DEAN. Thank you.

Mr. HUIZENGA. With that, the gentlelady's time is expired.

With that, the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Mackenzie is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. MACKENZIE. Mr. Deputy Secretary, thank you for being here today, and I would like to start by thanking you for all the tremendous work that you are doing at the Department. I will just speak for myself and our office, the constituent services that have been provided are exceptional. We have contacted your office and the Department a number of times to help with particular passport and immigration related issues, and just can't thank you enough for again, the incredible work.

Regardless of any changes or anything you have made, the impact that I can say for my constituents and our office is exceptional. So, really, tremendous job that you and the Department are doing there. We have heard great things about the online renewal process for passports. The one area, and it is not necessarily a new issue, it is some that seems has been going on for years, is a small category relating to P-2 visas for internationally recognized entertainers.

We have a number of cultural events in our local community, things from Music Fest to the Ukrainian Homestead Festival, where these international entertainers want to come into our community for just short periods of time, do their work, provide great entertainment, cultural experiences for those in our community, but unfortunately they have been many times getting hung up, and then ultimately missing the one event that they are looking to be able to possibly attend, or perform at.

So, just want to talk to you about what you might be able to do to help us speed up, and improve that process for P-2 visas.

Mr. RIGAS. Thank you for that question, Congressman, I would be happy to look into any specific issue you have with that visa, or any particular case. But if there are issues with that visa, I am happy to take that on board.

Ms. MACKENZIE. I appreciate that, and again, this is the type of action that we have seen out of the trump administration the entire time that you have been there, is your willingness to tackle

these issues, and the staffing, and funding that you are looking for I think is the right sized approach for putting American priorities first around the world, but also making sure that our constituents back home are getting the services they need.

So, I want to thank you again for all the work that you and the Trump administration are doing, and look forward to continuing to work with you. We will followup with you after the hearing. Thank you again.

Mr. RIGAS. Thank you, Congressman.

Ms. MACKENZIE. I yield back.

Mr. HUIZENGA. The gentleman yields back.

With that, the gentleman from Illinois, Mr. Jackson is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JACKSON OF ILLINOIS. Thank you so much, Chairman, thank you so much for your time, and coming out today. To start this series of questions I would like to ask you, could you please furnish for us the definition of woke, what does woke mean?

Mr. RIGAS. Well, sir, I think in popular parlance a lot of people have a lot of different definitions for that word.

Mr. JACKSON OF ILLINOIS. Your definition please?

Mr. RIGAS. I don't know that I have a definition.

Mr. JACKSON OF ILLINOIS. Okay. Do you find something particularly offensive about diversity, equity, and inclusion, do you think it should be illegal?

Mr. RIGAS. I think how it has been applied, sir, seems to have been in violation of American civil rights law, and—

Mr. JACKSON OF ILLINOIS. Okay, well that is incorrect, but let me get on to my other questioning. This administration has made no secret of its hostility toward diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, shutting them down not just at the State Department, but across the Federal Government. That is your prerogative, as you know, even if many of us believe as a co-equal branch of government, we believe that it undermines our national security, and weakens our diplomatic core.

But let us talk about the implications of your obsession with diversity, equity, and inclusion over diplomacy. As you well know, Foreign and Civil Service officers rotate assignments. A career official could have landed in a job focused on increasing recruitment that was required by law, and retention of a diverse workforce through a standard assignment in a general cycle, which is hardly a political assignment.

In fact, working to ensure that the Department's workforce reflects the America it represents sounds very patriotic to me. It is an asset that the United States has. I want to ask you, before this massive firing took place, what safeguards were in place to protect career officers from being targeted for removal simply because they served in a portfolio this administration now deems politically undesirable?

Mr. RIGAS. So, the functions of the offices and bureaus that were eliminated, some offices were eliminated, some offices were combined that were duplicative, and—

Mr. JACKSON OF ILLINOIS. But what was the criteria?

Mr. RIGAS. Had overlapping functions. If they were not sort of a core foreign policy mission of the United States, that is, I think one

of the No. 1 criteria. Or if it was an office that no longer was relevant in——

Mr. JACKSON OF ILLINOIS. All right, well let me go forward, if you don't mind, in the interest of time that we have, because I was getting a bit of word salad, and couldn't figure out what you were saying. I know you to be an upstanding and law abiding citizen, Section 5403 of the 2022 NDAA strengthens recruitment of under-represented groups, mandating outreach to universities, employee affinity groups, and expanding paid student internships among other actions.

But now under Secretary Rubio's leadership, which is substantially different than Senator Rubio's leadership, employee affinity groups are not allowed to meet, outreach efforts are paused, and critical recruitment programs like the Payne Fellowship have now been terminated. When you talk about replacing diversity, equity, inclusion, has anyone been removed from the Franklin Fellowship program in the State Department?

Mr. RIGAS. I am not familiar with the membership of the different programs at the Department, and who is in them, and who is not.

Mr. JACKSON OF ILLINOIS. Okay, well they have not, I hope you will look into that next time. Can you tell us more about the Franklin Fellowship program, or why that program is being protected and preserved, isn't that a specialty interest group?

Mr. RIGAS. Sir, I could get back to you with information on that, my understanding is these affinity groups are sort of employee generated, and not——

Mr. JACKSON OF ILLINOIS. I am being very specific about Franklin, the one group that has expanded during this time period.

Mr. RIGAS. My understanding is that is an affinity group that is founded by employees, and whose membership is managed by those employees themselves, it is not an official State Department organization. It is my understanding, I might be wrong, but I don't think it is——

Mr. JACKSON OF ILLINOIS. Yes, your understanding is incorrect at this point, I hope you would refresh yourself on that. Section 504 of that bill requires the Secretary of State to reward and advance officials that promote diversity and inclusion. But under Secretary Rubio the Secretary has abolished the performance evaluation criteria, do you agree with that?

Mr. RIGAS. That was feedback we also got from a number of career Foreign Service Officers, that they felt that their language skills, their Foreign Service skills were not being adequately considered for promotion, and that——

Mr. JACKSON OF ILLINOIS. So, I would ask you, why are you not carrying out the law? It is real simple, I have got a very basic line, to follow the law, this is the law. Will you respect the law?

Mr. RIGAS. Well, absolutely, sir. If you want to let me know which particular law you think is not being faithfully executed, I would be happy to look into that.

Mr. JACKSON OF ILLINOIS. 5404.

Mr. RIGAS. I would be happy to look into that, sir.

Mr. JACKSON OF ILLINOIS. Thank you, sir.

I yield back at this time, thank you for coming out.

Mr. HUIZENGA. The gentleman yields back.

With that, the gentleman from Indiana, Mr. Shreve is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHREVE. Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, Deputy Secretary Rigas. A couple points of feedback, your department did an extraordinary job for my office on behalf of a constituent in Columbus, Indiana, over the weekend in getting a visa. Had a constituent whose wife had a heart attack, young wife over in Kenya, and he hustled to get over there, and in the middle of the weekend the Department turned around a visa, she was in flight to Orly, or to De Gaulle, to get on to Kenya.

So, I think constituents very much appreciate that continued level of service on behalf of the Department. I think your stated focus on trade over aid sells with the constituents that I represent in the 6th District of Indiana, and so I appreciate that. You noted in your opening comments that you had completed the folding of USAID into State just 15 days ago.

But of course you have got decades of legislative directives and instructions, authorized assistance programs, that you have got to work with as part of the foreign assistance program, public laws. This must, I would think, materially impede your desired use of U.S. foreign assistance. If you agree with that, if you had your way, how would you reorient, restructure U.S. foreign assistance if you were untethered?

Mr. RIGAS. So, I think what the Secretary has articulated, and the President himself, is that foreign assistance should be tied to an American foreign policy objective, or Presidential foreign policy priority. And that we should be able to—there should be some kind of return on investment, whether it is going to make America safer, or if it is going to make America stronger, or it is going to make America more prosperous.

I just spoke at the foreign assistance class at the Foreign Service Institute about 2 weeks ago, which was actually based on some of the feedback we got from Congress when we were briefing on the reorganization, they thought we ought to do more training on that, so I went out and spoke to the first class. And I got a question about should we be—could we provide foreign assistance for job development, or job training.

And my response would be the way you could justify something like that is if we want to make a trade deal with a country, and they are concerned that this trade deal is going to negatively impact the population of that country, you say hey, if we can spend a million dollars on job training, where it is going to generate 10 million, or \$100 million in net economic benefit to the United States, then to me that is a good return on investment.

You say that is we spend a million, but we got 100 million back for American businesses, where we created jobs here in the United States. So, that is the kind of investment opportunity we want to make. We want to help countries help us, or if it comes to remigration, helping countries that want to be a safe third country for folks, or want to take back folks who have come illegally to the United States, but don't have the capacity, we can help them potentially do that as well.

So, they are relieving a potential economic burden that might be coming from folks who are on U.S. assistance, and helping them return back safely to a safe country.

Mr. SHREVE. I appreciate that, I appreciate your service, and that of so many people that you work with. I know that those cuts had to be painful, but you are not spending your own money, and so I appreciate the work that you have undertaken, and are playing through. With that, I yield back.

Mr. RIGAS. Thank you.

Chairman MAST [presiding]. The representative yields back.

With that, Representative McBride is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. MCBRIDE. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, thank you, Mr. Deputy Secretary for joining us today, for your testimony, and for your patience as we go through the list. As we have talked about throughout the course of this hearing, over 1,300 State Department employees were removed from their jobs last week. I am curious if you are aware that these layoffs reduced the staff at the office to monitor and combat trafficking in persons by 71 percent?

Mr. RIGAS. Yes.

Ms. MCBRIDE. Okay, have we seen a 71 percent reduction in human trafficking globally?

Mr. RIGAS. My understanding is the responsibility of most of the folks who were reduced were actually writing reports. They were not actually engaging in the field as Foreign Service Officers.

Ms. MCBRIDE. Is there not a role for individuals, employees of the State Department to be able to monitor, and understand the full scope of the human trafficking crisis?

Mr. RIGAS. Certainly, yes, that function continues to remain, and we do have people continuing to write reports, but there was just an excessive number of folks who were writing reports.

Ms. MCBRIDE. So, 71 percent of this office was useless?

Mr. RIGAS. I would say there was a number of redundant functions. I would be happy to give you a list of the positions that were eliminated.

Ms. MCBRIDE. I would appreciate that, I would appreciate a list. Because I do think it is—it boggles the mind, and defies belief that 71 percent of this Department was so dispensable amidst a global crisis of human trafficking. I am not surprised that the MAGA base is now questioning this administration's commitment to human trafficking globally and domestically.

But I want to move on to talk about waste and corruption. While claiming to root out waste, fraud, and abuse, DOGE itself has estimated that shuttering USAID will cost taxpayers more than \$6 billion, and millions of dollars' worth of humanitarian aid which the U.S. has already paid for and it is wasting away in warehouses across the world.

This administration has destroyed the world's premiere international development agency because the DOGE bros didn't understand how to read a spreadsheet. This administration has also paused enforcement of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act while foreign interests spend millions at the President's resorts. I simply fail to see how these actions make Americans safer, stronger, or more prosperous.

And I want to focus in on this topic of waste, fraud, and abuse. Mr. Deputy Secretary, are you aware of the America First Opportunity Fund that has been talked about?

Mr. RIGAS. Yes.

Ms. MCBRIDE. Okay, what is this account actually going to fund?

Mr. RIGAS. So, this will be the premiere foreign assistance fund for the Department, which will be at the direction of the Secretary. And it will provide for foreign assistance that will make America safer, and stronger, and more prosperous, and will provide for democratic accountability in how those funds are being spent.

So we don't have the situation where we had all these examples of foreign assistance spending that kind of shocked the conscience of ordinary Americans about how their taxpayer dollars were being spent overseas for purposes that didn't advance our national interests, or were being spent on things that even the host country did not want.

Ms. MCBRIDE. Can you tell us what controls, if any, will be put in place to ensure that this fund cannot be used for personal or political benefits of anyone in this administration?

Mr. RIGAS. Sure, I think there are numerous controls in place, you have public accountability, No. 1, you have congressional oversight, you have got inspectors general who can review all of these spendings.

Ms. MCBRIDE. Congressional oversight, I don't think we are seeing much actual congressional oversight by the majority right now in this Congress of this administration, so I am skeptical that this slush fund will have any kind of appropriate oversight, and I am deeply worried about the effect of us sending \$2.9 billion to the administration for a slush fund that has pretty limited oversight, and limited controls, or guardrails.

Mr. RIGAS. I would also add you have public oversight as well. I mean, as you know, the President is before the cameras almost every single day, at cabinet meetings, at the White House, getting on the plane, getting off the plane he is taking questions. Any enterprising reporter can ask him about how this money is being spent.

Ms. MCBRIDE. You are right, he does talk a lot on TV right now, I did see him recently try to defend not releasing the Epstein files. But with that I will yield back.

Mr. RIGAS. The representative yields back.

With that, the representative from Indiana, Mr. Baird is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. BAIRD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and appreciate you being here, Mr. Secretary. And I guess my question focuses on the fact that your duties as the deputy secretary of management and resources, you oversee modernization and operational efficiency. In that vein I want to make sure that the—and we talk about soft diplomacy, and I am interested in agriculture.

So, the commodities that end up going to some of these countries, I want to be sure that they actually reach those people that it was intended for. American farmers, and ranchers, and we as a country as well are a giving people, but we also want to make sure that it gets to those that we intend it go to. So, in that vein, I guess since your confirmation back in May, could you highlight—I want

to give you the opportunity to highlight some of the inefficient areas that you have found.

And what processes you are using, or decisions you are using to improve those efficiencies, and make sure that we are being effective for the kinds of programs that we are operating here.

Mr. RIGAS. Sure, thank you for that question, Congressman. So, we have conducted an extensive review of the organization at the Department led by the under secretaries at the Department, who at this point were all career Foreign Service Officers, career civil servants who have been at the Department for years, and have tremendous experience and knowledge about how things work.

And how they don't work, and have experienced the Department on a bipartisan basis, through Republican administrations and Democrat administrations, and told us what they thought worked, where there were duplications, where there were offices that were not really performing well, how we could do a better job advancing America's foreign policy interests, and the President's foreign policy priorities.

We looked at all of the management functions in the Department, and consolidated those mostly into the management bureau. But many of the bureaus and offices had their own management functions that did human resources functions, and accounting functions, and those were all consolidated into a single executive management office within the bureaus to allow for economies of scale, and to allow for efficiencies.

So, we have done a lot of work to create these efficiencies across the Department, and looking at how we do foreign assistance, there was a huge foreign assistance review that was done at the Department before I arrived that looked at how we were spending money. And that has been the result, what has resulted from that is the Fiscal Year 202026 budget request, where we have the America First Opportunity Fund, to create better accountability for how those moneys are spent.

And to ensure that they are spent to advance the Secretary's priorities, and to ensure the President's foreign policy is faithfully implemented.

Ms. BAIRD. So, continuing in that vein, I had a chance to go to Africa a couple times, and one of the concerns that I saw there was nefarious groups, or gangs, or thugs in some ways, because those commodities end up being fungible, just like money, if you have got it, you have got control. Can you give me, or us some insight into how you think we are improving monitoring where those commodities are going?

Mr. RIGAS. So, I think for lifesaving humanitarian aid and foreign assistance, those programs were exempted from the foreign assistance review. But this is the kind of thing that as we take a closer look at how we do foreign assistance, making sure that we have partners on the ground who are able to ensure that our foreign assistance is able to be delivered securely, and that it is safeguarded from these kind of malevolent actions, and that other aid that is delivered is tied directly to a foreign policy priority that the President has.

But if you have got sort of particular scenarios, or examples in individual countries that you want us to look at, happy to look at

that, and make sure that to the extent those kinds of activities were happening, or our aid was subject to inappropriate use, that we could take corrective action on that.

Ms. BAIRD. And I thank you for mentioning again, you mentioned it earlier, but the fact that those humanitarian efforts are exempted from what we are talking about. So, with that, I have got about 17 seconds left, and that is enough to just say thank you for what you do.

Mr. RIGAS. Thank you, sir.

Mr. HUIZENGA. The gentleman yields back.

With that, Representative Titus from Nevada is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you very much. I would like to pick back up with something Ms. Kim was saying earlier about the closing of consulates. Earlier this year the Department, your Department sent a preliminary notification to Congress that it was going to move to close dozens of consulates and embassies, and they are around the world, they range from Luxembourg, to the Maldives, from Durban, South Africa, to Busan, South Korea, I mean they are everywhere.

And one that I was especially concerned about was in Europe, and that is Thessaloniki, the plans to close the consulate there in Thessaloniki, Greece. And I think this is at a time of real rising geopolitical instability, especially in that part of the world where Greece plays such a key role. The consulate there, especially, it is ensuring the potential of the base at Alexandroupoli and the port at Thessaloniki. It plays a role in the implementation of IMEC. It is helping people come to the Olympics.

I just wonder, without the consulate, aren't the beneficiaries of our not being there going to be China and Russia? And given your experience and connections there, do you really think that is a good idea?

Mr. RIGAS. So, I don't think there has been any move to close the consulate in Thessaloniki. I do know a review was done of all of our overseas posts to assess their costs to the American taxpayer, to assess their benefits to the American taxpayer, to assess any revenue, as consulates can generate revenue through fees and visa applications. But my understanding is I don't think any decisions have been made regarding closure.

But people may be drawing conclusions from that analysis if they are looking at a consulate that maybe is very high cost, or is in a remote area, or is not providing substantial benefit. But I would be happy to look at any particular concerns you have about individual consulates.

Ms. TITUS. Well, I appreciate that, because when the Secretary came to the Committee, I asked him about how we are going to process visas for people to come for upcoming Olympics and the World Cup if you are cutting these different consulates, because that is where a lot of people go. And he said, and I quote him, "There is no proposal at this time to close embassies or consulates. There has been media reporting because people like to leak lies, but there has been no such proposal, and I think I would know."

Well, we are not hearing anymore specifics of what is happening with the study, is it going forward, are you going to consult with

Congress, because that is the law before you close any of these overseas posts?

Mr. RIGAS. Certainly, I mean we have consulted on the reorganization that we have just begun to undertake, and my understanding is we provide briefings, I think eight briefings per day to the Congress on various activities that are happening at the Department, so I don't think this would be any different.

Ms. TITUS. All right, well if you can help me get that information, I would appreciate it. Because I think China is expanding its diplomatic footprint, while we are decreasing ours, and that seems to be not in our strategic interest. Another thing I would like to ask you about is what Ranking Member Meeks was talking about with the present assignment of Foreign Service employees not being a factor for RIFs.

I think that was kind of the conclusion that he drew based on a circulated Department memo back from May. But we know that is not true because just last month without talking to Congress you all changed the Foreign Affairs Manual, and that is the document that sets out the procedure for RIFs, and that makes it easier to fire Foreign Service Officers.

And when Committee staff repeatedly reached out to try to get details on the RIFs, they were told that the Department wouldn't provide such details in order to protect, I am quoting, "the dignity of the workforce." So, I wonder if you will just explain to us what about the dignity of the workforce was protected when you just sent 1,300 employees home, and said "thanks, but no thanks"?

Mr. RIGAS. Certainly, thank you. I mean, look, no one wants to be on the receiving end of a reduction in force notice. This happens all the time in the private sector. It happens—I think President Clinton, he reduced the Federal workforce by, I think, 370,000 employees. The Federal workforce was reduced by 220,000 under President Obama.

But we wanted to make sure that any employee was not finding out through media reports that they were going to be losing their job. We had a sacred responsibility to tell them individually, directly from the Department about their particular job situation, and that we didn't want them to get that notification from anyone else.

Ms. TITUS. But some of the reasons for why they were RIFed were just coincidence of being in the country, not anything that they had done, or the job wasn't needed, that seems to be pretty undignified, but thank you. And I guess my time is up.

Mr. HUIZENGA. The gentlelady's time has expired.

And I am going to recognize myself for 5 minutes. Mr. Rigas, there has been a lot of speculation, and motivation projected onto you personally, the State Department, certainly the administration. Explain to us, what is the purpose of this fiscal and personnel realignment in your words?

Mr. RIGAS. Thank you for that question, Congressman. It is to align the mission of the Department with the core function, with what its original core function is, which is conducting the foreign policy and diplomacy of the U.S. Government.

Mr. HUIZENGA. And are you saying that maybe we had gotten out of focus on some of that?

Mr. RIGAS. I think so, I think some of that started in the post-cold war environment where we didn't have that Soviet threat anymore, and so a lack of focus led to sort of an expansion of offices and issue specific areas that it was sort of a Department looking for a mission, looking for a function. I think we are now, I think it is pretty clear we are back in an era of great power competition.

And I think that has focused the mind, and focused our intentions back to engaging in real diplomacy.

Mr. HUIZENGA. Many of us up here questioned the role of USAID in pushing not aid, but philosophy, and actions onto a lot of countries. And I am assuming that this kind of reform is intended to enhance transparency, enhance efficiency, anything else it is trying to do?

Mr. RIGAS. Yes, in centering the mission, empowering our diplomats, most of the work that has been consolidated, the offices that have been eliminated, have been to take those functions. The functions themselves haven't been eliminated, or at least the functions that we want to keep have not been eliminated, they have been moved——

Mr. HUIZENGA. As you were pointing out with the office with trafficking.

Mr. RIGAS. Yes, they have been moved to the regional bureaus, right? And to the posts overseas. So, our Ambassadors who are in those countries where say human trafficking is occurring, or the regional bureaus where it is a big problem, they are now the ones who are empowered, who know these countries best in order to best position the best possible position to take action.

Mr. HUIZENGA. Is that why we put Ambassadors in place?

Mr. RIGAS. That is why we put Ambassadors in place. They have the title plenipotentiary because they are the chief ranking official in that country representing the President of the United States.

Mr. HUIZENGA. Well, welcome to Washington, which always believes if ten is good, a hundred must be better, and frankly a thousand must be essential. So, I think we are seeing this disruption of this notion of just adding to budgets, and adding to FTEs, somehow that means a better product, or certainly that the interests of the United States are being brought about in a better manner around the world, and I mean that has clearly not been the case, correct?

Mr. RIGAS. That is correct, yes. And you see even some of the most successful and iconic American companies out there, Facebook, Microsoft, Google, they have laid off people, they do it all the time. And it is not because they don't have the money to pay for it, it is because those offices, or those functions aren't doing what they need to be doing, and they need to focus on their core mission.

Mr. HUIZENGA. Not to mention \$36 trillion in debt. So, I am going to move onm though. I am going to take on a personal issue, this has been a particular interest to me, that following the Biden administration's disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan, the treatment of our Afghan allies. Again, these are Afghans who have risked their lives and their family's lives to serve alongside the U.S. Armed Force for years, thus saving countless American lives along the way.

I know the chairman has had personal experience on this. I have said this on many occasions, that we must uphold that sacred commitment that we have made to them, and I believe these brave Afghans who have undergone rigorous vetting processes that have been required, and properly so, are welcome into my neighborhood, and my State any time. Can you give me a quick update on the status of the U.S. Department of State's Office of Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts, CARE?

Mr. RIGAS. So, yes. So, we are continuing to process those requests for folks who want to get SIV visas, I believe we have \$500 million from the prior year that we deemed sufficient to continue operating that effort going forward into Fiscal Year 2026. We have admitted, I think 1,200 folks under that program since the beginning of the administration.

And the functions of the CARE Office have moved to the regional South Central Asia desk. Again, this is part of how we are empowering the regional bureaus, and the Ambassadors to take care of the diplomatic work in their countries, and in their regions, the people who are best positioned to know those areas best. So, that work is continuing.

Mr. HUIZENGA. My time has expired.

With that, Representative Jacobs from California is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACOBS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Deputy Secretary Rigas, thanks for being here. I want to start with the Global Fragility Act, as you know, a bipartisan landmark law that passed in 2019. This law was designed to implement many of the lessons from years of costly and unsuccessful U.S. stabilization efforts in Iraq, and Afghanistan, and Somalia. And it was designed to make foreign assistance more strategic and effective.

Something I know the Secretary has said he cares about, Congress remains very committed to this law. I just recently introduced a GFA Reauthorization Bill with Chair Emeritus McCaul, and the House National Security Appropriations Bill just appropriated money for GFA implementation. Secretary Rubio also recently promised Senator Coons in an appropriations hearing that GFA would still be implemented at the Department.

However, the RIFs announced last week closed the office, the Conflict and Stabilization Bureau, and fired the staff that have implemented GFA since its passage. So, Deputy Secretary Rigas, how does the Department intend to implement the Global Fragility Act if you just fired all of the relevant staff with the institutional knowledge and expertise to do this effectively?

Mr. RIGAS. So, thank you for that question, Congresswoman. The functions of that office are going to be carried out at the regional bureau level. And this is something the Secretary has talked about is empowering both our Ambassadors and the regional bureaus who are charged with doing the diplomacy, rather than sort of specific functional offices.

So, we are focusing the functional offices, and empowering the regional offices to be able to carry out those diplomatic functions.

Ms. JACOBS. Sure. There are about 20 people who were previously dedicated to GFA implementation, who were carrying out

important coordinating, monitoring, evaluation, and learning, and planning functions. Exactly how will that be replaced?

Mr. RIGAS. So, those functions are going to be done at the regional bureau. So, each of the regional bureaus will take responsibility for those functions to ensure—and they are taking responsibility for foreign assistance in their regions, and the Ambassadors are going to have responsibility for that—

Ms. JACOBS. I understand. But why didn't you move over anyone with any actual experience with GFA to the regional bureaus if that was your intent instead of firing them?

Mr. RIGAS. So, the folks, I mean the folks who are in those offices are also working contemporaneously with people in the regional bureaus. So, I don't think it is correct to say people in the regional bureaus or at posts don't understand how to carry out foreign assistance in accordance with the Global Fragility Act. So, I am very confident they are going to be able to do that going forward.

Ms. JACOBS. Deputy Secretary Rigas, you and I both know that Foreign Service Officers and civil servants in the regional bureaus are already stretched thin, and the idea that we are now putting on top of that significant programmatic, and coordinating, and monitoring, and evaluation on top of their existing work load without any of the expertise or institutional knowledge from that process over the last 5 years, and remember, this bill passed when President Trump was President the first time.

This is not some lefty priority, this is a bipartisan priority of Congress. Can you provide to our Committee a clear plan for how the Department will implement GFA, including by ensuring adequate staffing with the appropriate conflict expertise and implementation experience?

Mr. RIGAS. Sure. So, we have hired or are in the process of hiring about 400 folks who had worked at USAID at the regional bureaus, and at posts overseas, in addition to hiring about another 400 folks who are going to be locally employed staff who help to administer these programs.

So, to the extent that we—and this is something we are going to be under constant evaluation and review to ensure that our Ambassadors and regional bureaus have the staff and expertise they need to be able to execute and implement on that.

Ms. JACOBS. So, are you going to hire back any people from CSO, or people who worked specifically on the GFA?

Mr. RIGAS. So, to the extent that there are jobs that—so there are very prescriptive rules around how RIFs, reductions in force, have to be done in the Federal Government, and how people can be hired back. So, we have to make sure we are abiding how those rules are promulgated. But if there is a need that our Ambassadors or regional bureaus are demonstrating that they want, or need a particular expertise, we would be happy to consider that.

Ms. JACOBS. Okay, well I will look forward to that written response from you on what the actual plan is. I will also say in the CN that we have received, the reorganization CN, it said the Office of Foreign Assistance Policy was going to take on certain statutory policy. What you are telling me is that it will actually be the regional bureaus who are doing the GFA implementation.

So, if we could also get clarification on who actually will be responsible for the statutory, bipartisan, congressionally mandated GFA implementation, please include that in your written response on the plan to implement it. Thank you.

I yield back.

Chairman MAST. The chair now recognizes Representative Lawler.

Mr. LAWLER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Deputy Secretary, Secretary Rubio, OMB Director Vought, and administration officials have repeatedly asserted to Congress that funding is not being cut or frozen for the procurement and delivery of American-made, ready-to-use therapeutic foods.

However, as of today, as I understand it, no RUTF orders have been processed this year. And the two nonprofit manufacturers who make these products, which are sourced from 27 states across the U.S., are in danger of going out of business.

Can you provide me with an update on the status of moving these orders forward?

Mr. RIGAS. Thank you for that question, Congressman. I regret I am not familiar with this particular issue, but I would be happy to take it on board, look into it, and get you a response.

Mr. LAWLER. Okay, if you can do so expeditiously, that would be helpful.

Mr. RIGAS. I will do sir, thank you.

Mr. LAWLER. What is the status of the State Department's Office of the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation efforts?

Mr. RIGAS. So that office, we are still processing SIV visas that, for under chief of mission authority. That work, like the work of a lot that is being done at the State Department now under our reorganization is being moved to the regional bureaus. So it is being moved from that, the CARE functions are being moved to the regional South Central Asia Desk.

My understanding is we have admitted about 1200 people under this program since the beginning of the administration. And that work, you know, the processing of those visas, continues.

Mr. LAWLER. So you expect that that program under the auspices of the regional desk will continue moving forward.

Mr. RIGAS. Yes, it is continuing under the South Central Asia Desk, so yes.

Mr. LAWLER. Okay. Do you see any-has there been any discussion of changes to the actual approval of visas for Afghanistan interpreters and others that helped us during the Afghanistan war moving forward, or do you see the program largely continuing as is?

Mr. RIGAS. My understanding is that about 400,000 people have been admitted with SIVs from Afghanistan. And that sort of the so-called easy cases have kind of made their way through. And there are sort of a number of hard cases at the end, are people who, you know, did not or could not passing vetting to be admitted into the United States.

And so I think it is down to harder cases now, so I don't know that we are going to see the kinds of numbers we have seen previously admitted. But the review work continues.

Mr. LAWLER. One of the things that was obviously a big concern with USAID was some of the funding that went to different projects or entities that, you know, on the face we would not support. For instance, an antisemitic rapper who got \$3 million to promote anti-Israeli rap songs in Gaza and the West Bank.

As well as obviously funding that previously went to UNRWA on the work that they did to undermine and foment hate and anti-semitism and teach Palestinian students to hate Jews, and frankly want to kill Jews, which is part of why we saw October 7 happen.

What is it that the State Department is doing now to make sure that that type of funding does not occur ever again? And two, obviously with the change in how we are getting humanitarian assistance into Gaza, how do you see that functioning?

Mr. RIGAS. So No. 1, I think the elimination of USAID as a foreign aid institution I think was step one to that. No. 2 was the creation of the America First Opportunity Fund, which is what the administration has proposed in its Fiscal Year 2026 budget to ensure democratic accountability in how foreign assistance funds are being distributed.

You look at this long list of USAID funds that I think kind of shocked the public conscience about how public taxpayer dollars were being spent. And you can't really answer the question who authorized that or who approved it, or there was no one that you could really hold it. I mean, you could technically hold the USAID Administrator accountable for that, but they are going to say I never saw or never approved it.

With the America First Opportunity Fund, this is done at the discretion of the Secretary under the President's authority as the, you know, the chief foreign policy officer of the United States. And he is someone who is before the press every single day. He can be asked questions by the public.

I mentioned earlier there is, you know, congressional oversight as well. The Inspector General can also review how moneys are being spent. So I think there is going to be questions about accountability. I think there are multiple layers of accountability for how that money is spent.

And the ultimate accountability is to the American voter, right. They can say I don't like how this money was spent or I do.

Mr. LAWLER. Thanks. I yield back.

Chairman MAST. The chair now recognizes Representative Jayapal.

Ms. JAYAPAL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Deputy Secretary Rigas for being here. Before coming for Congress, I worked for a Seattle-based nonprofit that was one of the largest implementing global health issues around the world. And in our State, Washington State, global health is a leading industry. It creates tens of thousands of jobs right there at home. It generates billions of dollars for our economy.

And the destruction of USAID and the massive cuts that we have seen to research and science and global health, I believe, are really weakening our soft power abilities through global development. And I think they are leaving Americans vulnerable to the spread of disease that does not know any boundaries.

Thousands of people in my district have for State or for programs that receive that funding. And they have devoted their lives to putting America first. But you fired them, you fired them.

Not based on merit, not based on skills, not based on work history. Not by looking at if there was anywhere else in the State Department that these career civil servants could be. You just fired them because you had a 15 percent staff firing target.

One of them speaks multiple languages, had an onward assignment to promote U.S. businesses and strengthen our critical mineral supply chain. Another one was sent back after spending her entire life devoted to humanitarian assistance work in Afghanistan, Sudan, the Middle East, some of the toughest regions in the world, where we desperately will need translators, people with bilingual experience.

Another one served in war zones in the Middle East and was fired 1 week away from qualifying for her pension after nearly 20 years of service.

It is stunning to me to see how these career civil servants have been treated by your administration. And on top of that, the administration's budget request slashes global health spending by almost two-thirds. And a recent study estimates that in 10 years, these cuts could cause 14 million preventable deaths. Fourteen million.

I have worked all over the world, lived all over the world, and seen the power that the United States builds by the work that we do in other countries. I want to remind any public that may be watching that we spend less than a fraction of a percent of our budget on foreign assistance.

In fact, sometimes I go out and people say you spend too much money. And I say great, you tell me what you think we spend. Usually they say around 20 percent. I say you tell me what you think we should spend, and I will do that, I will do that number.

And you are laughing because you know that what people say back to me is spend 10 percent, if you just spent 10 percent, I would do that. I am like, great, I will take it. Because the work we do through these programs is so important and the skills and the talent of our public servants is so incredible.

The average taxpayer, Mr. Rigas, spends 18 cents per day to fund USAID. That is funding that has saved over 90 million lives and prevented outbreaks that would have threatened American lives. And so I guess I just want to know, do you understand how your cuts are going to make Americans less safe?

Mr. RIGAS. So as I noted earlier, the Secretary has exempted lifesaving humanitarian assistance from the foreign aid review. So that kind of aid will continue.

But as I also mentioned, we need to have a graduation strategy for countries for whom we are providing this kind of assistance, whether it is 1 year, 3 years, 5 years. Like when are they going to have the capacity to be able to administer these programs themselves? We have seen that with our Fiscal Year 2026 budget request for PEPFAR, which is—

Ms. JAYAPAL. Let me stop you there just for a second to say that lifesaving aid alone, first of all, it is not flowing the way that we thought it was going to flow when the Secretary said that. Second,

you know it is not enough. If you listen to the experts, lifesaving is very different than disease prevention.

I have worked on disease prevention for a long time. When a disease breaks out, what you need to know is that there is a response immediately. And the work of USAID took disease prevention response times on outbreaks from 2 weeks to 2 days. That 2 weeks is a critical moment for us to be able to stop those diseases from spreading.

And we are in situation now where we can't even analyze samples that come to us from other countries because they are being put through all kinds of other cuts at the CDC, at other agencies. And so it is simply just not the case that lifesaving is enough.

I have 19 seconds so I want to turn to the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation. How many sites does GHF operate, do you know?

Mr. RIGAS. I do not know.

Ms. JAYAPAL. That is under your jurisdiction, your resources. It is four. How many square miles is Gaza, do you know?

Mr. RIGAS. I do not.

Ms. JAYAPAL. Guess what, it is over 140 square miles, six times the size of Manhattan. Do you know how often those sites are open?

Mr. RIGAS. I do not.

Ms. JAYAPAL. They are barely open, Mr. Rigas. This is not the way to get aid to people in Gaza. And if you are going to be here over personnel and operations, I would ask that you know the details of what you are actually overseeing and ask the experts to come in and help you. Because whatever people say about UNRWA, we were delivering aid—

Chairman MAST. The gentlelady's time has expired.

Ms. JAYAPAL. -to the people that needed it. Thank you.

Chairman MAST. Representative Issa is now recognized.

Mr. ISSA. Deputy Secretary, you have been beat up over the 6-months or so that the new administration has been in trying to change what is effectively a lifetime of problems in how we implement the taxpayer dollars around the world. So I am going to switch a little bit. It is not going to be gentler or kinder, but it will be different.

I want to talk about the things that have been wrong for a long time that I see currently what has gone on so far not implementing these changes. And I will give you the heads up, it is basically OBO operations, visa processing, and your IT, both CIO and CTO.

So I will take them in reverse order. With the consolidation of so many disparate organizations, many of which had multiple CIOs/CTOs, multiple different server systems, and quite frankly didn't even talk within their organization, do you have or can you work with this committee to present us with a plan to get to a single, consolidated, and of course modern and secure, presumably cloud system so that we can have confidence that it is both secure and affordable?

Mr. RIGAS. Yes, I would be happy to do so, Congressman.

Mr. ISSA. Good. It will be a tough job. Second, I would like to talk about OBO. Long before Benghazi, the organization was a mess. Long before Benghazi, it was decades behind in meeting the mod-

ernization just for basic safety and security of embassies, much less desperate remote locations, offices, and so on.

During the George W. Bush administration, there was tremendous progress made by changing from one-up designs to standard design, standard build. Obviously each site looked somewhat different, but standard parts and for the most part cookie cutter programs that allowed us to speed up dramatically. President Obama enjoyed during his 8 years the 4-years of work-of 8 years of work done by General Williams.

Are you prepared to return to a system that is cost-effective, speeds up the process, and improves the security for all the men and women who work abroad?

Mr. RIGAS. Absolutely. And I think the cost of building overseas and the requirements that we put on our contractors, I believe we only have really two contractors that currently provide the services to us overseas, which I think is just not adequate. It is not enough competition. And there is not enough companies that are able to meet the requirements—

Mr. ISSA. I am shocked you say a duopoly is not a good way to do business.

Mr. RIGAS. Shock, yes.

Mr. ISSA. Well, thank you, and we look forward to working with that. Last, the chairman has announced and is in the process, as you know, of a full reauthorization of your agency. That is an amazing task and one that hasn't been done in decades. In that task, I want to call back to the era of the visa decision that was made during Chairman Henry Hyde's day.

At that time, as the Department of Homeland Security was being stood up, the goal of the George W. Bush administration under Colin Powell, they planned on removing all visa services, the consular services, that actually do the interviews and evaluation and give the visas to foreigners. They were going to move it to Homeland Security. And Homeland Security would then field people as necessary.

Henry Hyde, listening to the State Department, pushed hard and was able to stop that, on the theory that it was, A, a career path, and B, that it would streamline the process to keep it within State.

Mr. Deputy Secretary, that hasn't proven to be true, has it?

Mr. RIGAS. No. I don't know, but I take your word for it.

Mr. ISSA. And in that sense, if you talk to anyone in your consular section, they are going to tell you that they are the beginning of the process. But at the end of the day, Homeland Security and other agencies not facing the public make all the decisions, and they can only say we don't have approval, we don't have delay.

And those delays go on for months without answer. I am sure you have heard that.

Mr. RIGAS. Yes.

Mr. ISSA. In the reauthorization, would you work with the committee on the possibility that we do in fact implement some version of that original plan, one in which the forward-facing, the responsibility to Homeland Security to make those decisions in a single step, not in series of steps that are so opaque, would you agree to work with us at least on the concept and the possibility that that

would be good for both the foreigners who wait in line, and quite frankly for a massive amount of people who begin in that position?

And that position is, at least my observation, is truly not part of the career path of foreign officers.

Mr. RIGAS. Yes, I would be happy to work with you, sir.

Mr. ISSA. Thank you. With that, I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MAST. The chair now recognizes Representative Stanton.

Mr. STANTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

This is an important hearing. Mr. Deputy Secretary, as you well know, we are in the middle of a intense competition with China, and we will need the strongest military on the planet. But we will need more than the strongest military on the planet, because the true battle is for economic superiority, and of course is battle of communism versus our form of government, democracy.

China has spent a vast amount on international development projects over the last decade, almost 700 billion over USA's 80 billion. So I appreciate and support the request for a budget increase for the Development Finance Corporation to counter China's belt and road initiative.

Let's be clear: China will outspend us. This means we need to be smarter about our spending. The Government Accountability Office suggested that our dollars go further if we have larger in-country presence.

But Donald Trump, President Trump, just arbitrarily cut 1300 department employees. That includes employees who were directly working on the U.S. response to China, who are experts in global tech competition, and who spoke fluent Mandarin.

We know that multilateral efforts like export controls are more effective at protecting American supply chains when we work together with our allies than doing so alone. But President Trump has burned many relationships by imposing tariffs on our strongest allies and given China the ability to position itself as the defender of free trade.

And then of course there are reckless cuts. This budget request moves USAID under the State Department, and only 14 percent of the projects remain, and only 6 percent of USAID staff. China will see this vacuum and has already stepped in to fill it.

This budget request zeros out funding for the United Nations, meanwhile China has been increasing its funding and putting its people in key leadership roles, shifting global power dynamics away from United States leadership.

This budget request cuts funding for the international narcotics and law enforcement, funding that is directly used to curtail Chinese illegal transshipment and counter Chinese aggression in the South China Sea. China will undoubtedly take advantage of weaker law enforcement to expand its presence.

Mr. Deputy Secretary, are you aware of how large China's oversea diplomatic footprint is around the globe? And then does it worry you that it is overtaking the United States' diplomatic footprint?

Mr. RIGAS. Thank you for that question, Congressman. My understanding is while we are somewhat equally matched in terms of how many posts we have overseas, the United States does have

substantially more personnel serving overseas, both at the State Department and at the interagency at our posts overseas.

Mr. STANTON. I really appreciate that, and I want to keep it that way and even continue to enhance it. I am a big believer that our diplomatic efforts are going to help us continue to lead the world.

Deputy Secretary, according to the LOA Institute, China has the most expansive diplomatic network in the world, with more outposts in Africa, East Asia and Central Asia, and the Pacific Islands. Can you give us specific examples of how you plan to keep engaging in those regions after the reductions in force?

Mr. RIGAS. Sure. So first of all, the reductions in force only affected our domestic operations. They did not affect our Foreign Service Officers overseas.

I think the President has really shown the way with his, you know, first trip abroad, where he went to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and UAE about economic engagement, both U.S. investing there and bringing back an enormous amount of investments to the U.S. economy.

And I think that is the kind of diplomatic and economic engagement we want to see that ties together the interests of the United States with countries overseas so that we are economic partners. We are helping them grow and they are helping us as well.

Mr. STANTON. I think the restructure of the department and the reduction in force is going to be of enormous importance to both Democrats and Republicans here. So will you commit to keeping this committee informed about plans to restructure or reduce personnel who are posted abroad, and do so before you start implementing those changes?

Mr. RIGAS. Yes.

Mr. STANTON. I really appreciate that. Here is what is at stake: China is taking advantage of this moment to strengthen their standing on the world stage. Meanwhile, the administration is gutting the State Department budget to its lowest level since before World War II.

In my opinion, that does not make the United States stronger. When America retreats, China advances. When we fire our experts, they hire more. When we walk away from the table, they sit down and set the terms.

And I believe we keep handing Beijing the keys to global leadership, the next generations will ask why we let America's influence crumble, not because we couldn't afford it, but because we didn't fight for it.

With that, I yield back.

Chairman MAST. The chair now recognizes Representative Perry.

Mr. PERRY. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Deputy Secretary, welcome here. I am going to start with a 2024 GAO report that flagged \$3.2 million in duplicative contracts for overseas cultural programs. And I am just wondering if you can identify for us any specific duplicative contracts that have been terminated and kind of what metrics you use.

I think the work you do is probably very difficult to measure success, but you know, contracts are contracts. Money is being spent. The American people demand something for it, as they should.

How do you do that? Can you name any duplicative contracts that have been terminated?

Mr. RIGAS. Well, I don't have the specific contract lines in front of me, but there were what the Secretary has articulated in terms of how we want to spend our money both in grants and in contracts is that we can tie that directly to the three goals he has articulated.

And that hopefully every contract and grant that we are delivering on or executing on is making American safer, making America stronger, and making America more prosperous.

And if it is not doing all three, it should certainly be doing at least one. If it is not doing one, then we are not doing that contract and we are not doing that grant.

Mr. PERRY. So I kind of agree with that. Now, the State Department's budget has operated without reauthorization for 23 years, which is astounding. Most Americans don't understand that and there is not a good explanation for 80 percent of the operations are literally unauthorized. A recent report exposed \$1.8 million in grants for overseas gender equity programs, including 500,000 for workshops in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Deputy Secretary, are you familiar with places like Chad, Somalia, Ethiopia? Do you think—like my colleague from Arizona was just talking about China winning the diplomatic race because we are not there, and we can afford to do more.

Seems to me if you can't find enough food to eat, the last thing—or in, you know, the list of the last things you are interested in are gender equity programs, right. We can ill afford it. We are never going to be able to outpace China if it is just spending money. We have to be smart about it, and we can't waste our money on things like that.

Department has got a history of funding programs that stray, and the word "stray" I kind of use loosely, from American interests, like \$700,000 for climate-focused art exhibits in Asia, per a 2023 OIG audit.

You have a list of specific grants like those for gender equity or climate art exhibits that have been axed or realigned with the Fiscal Year 2026 budget with America's strategic priorities? Do you have anything like that?

Mr. RIGAS. I can certainly provide you a list. I mean, I have a series of examples here in front of me that I think have, you know, the Secretary has gone over in prior hearings as well as have been, you know, talked about from the White House podium about, you know, examples of grant spending from USAID that I think most Americans would agree was not a good use of taxpayer dollars.

Mr. PERRY. Yes, I think the list is replete. But every time you hear them. Look, you know, there are folks here that don't like the fact that we are trying to reduce the size of the government and that you have been put in charge of it.

But you know, a 2023 OPM report revealed a 15 percent staffing increase since 2010, yet a 2024 CSIS study found no corresponding uptick in diplomatic outcomes, such as trade agreements or counterterrorism success, which leads American taxpayers who give up their hard-earned money for this to say what the heck are we paying for.

Mr. RIGAS. Yes.

Mr. PERRY. You know, program after program. So I am not going to ask you to go through them, but I think it is important that we remind everybody that there is a limited amount of funds, that we do have to compete globally with a adversary like China, and that we have to spend our money wisely, not on stupid things and not wastefully.

I mean, I will turn to the 2021 SIGAR report that revealed 1.2 billion in unaccounted-for funds during the Afghanistan withdrawal, which is a glaring-which is a glaring failure. And you know, if we talk about grants for cultural festivals in South Asia.

Let me ask you then, so grants for a cultural festival in South Asia, does that-where does that fit into aligning America's priorities with defeating our adversaries in South Asia? How does that-is there something there that we are missing?

Mr. RIGAS. It does not. No, I think that is probably a misguided attempt by folks to think that was an exercise of soft power, but I don't think anyone could draw a line from how funding that enhances America's power or influence in that part of the world.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I yield.

Chairman MAST. The chair now recognizes Representative Costa.

Mr. COSTA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I apologize if some of the questions have been asked to you previously because we have had overlapping committee hearings.

Part of the meat-and-potatoes, I think, of a legislative office is helping our constituent services with issues of passports, visa accounts. In the middle of California and Fresno and those counties, we have a large Latino community that has family members in not only Mexico but Central American countries, a large Punjabi population, large in India. And we deal with this daily.

How many individuals within the Consular Affairs Bureau were terminated?

Mr. RIGAS. My understanding is we did not make any cuts in the Consular Affairs Bureau.

Mr. COSTA. They were not targeted for positions?

Mr. RIGAS. Yes-processing—

Mr. COSTA. I raised that issue with the Secretary as it related to some consular offices that had played a role within the department. I will send you a letter forwarding that.

So then what is your process here? Do you have enough staffing to maintain current processing for passports on timelines?

Mr. RIGAS. There were no reductions to individuals who process passports or visas in Consular Affairs. So to the extent that we are able to implement, you know, technology solutions or other labor-saving—

Mr. COSTA. The technology solutions as you have made a transfer to computerization has had some challenges, has that not been the case?

Mr. RIGAS. Well, I mean, there is a modernization program underway—

Mr. COSTA. Right.

Mr. RIGAS. For passports.

Mr. COSTA. And that makes sense.

Mr. RIGAS. Yes.

Mr. COSTA. But it, like any new program, it hasn't been implemented without challenges, would you say?

Mr. RIGAS. Yes, I think that is fair to say.

Mr. COSTA. The issue on terminations, how many of the State Department employees, including foreign officers, served in rotational assignments, do you know?

Mr. RIGAS. So my understanding is with respect to the Foreign Service is about 14,000 Foreign Service—

Mr. COSTA. And yes or no, were those part of those that were served termination notices?

Mr. RIGAS. There were I think 239 Foreign Service Officers—

Mr. COSTA. Was an assessment conducted on their performances? Because I have had anecdotal stories where they have gotten glowing reports on their past performance and then they were summarily dismissed.

Mr. RIGAS. So the reduction in force rules that exist in the government are very prescriptive. And so if you are eliminating—

Mr. COSTA. What were the metrics?

Mr. RIGAS. So if an office itself was eliminated and someone was in that office, if an entire, you know, we had offices that were eliminated and other offices that were combined or merged with other offices. But if you were in an office that was completely eliminated, everyone in that office, Foreign and Civil Service—

Mr. COSTA. We have got reports, and we will hopefully get clarity on that, those in Consular Services that were, their jobs were eliminated. And I would like to have you respond to that when I will get you the information. How does that sound?

Mr. RIGAS. Sure.

Mr. COSTA. Were they simply fired by serving in the wrong post, or what other considerations we are using to reassigning employees who have some of the toughest posts in some of the areas that are not the plum political assignments that administrations also have the opportunity to provide?

Mr. RIGAS. Sure, thank you. So if a complete—so the reorganization affected domestic offices only. So if someone was serving in a domestic office and that office was completely closed, then the employees who were in that office, in that competitive area, would have been—would have received a reduction in force notice.

Mr. COSTA. Okay, well, we will followup with these other questions. Let me close on Food for Peace. Kansas, the State of Kansas sold half of its annual wheat crop abroad, representing significant income to Kansas farms. I am from California. But 44 percent of our agriculture in California is exported.

The administration I think proposes to eliminate Food for Peace and Fiscal Year 2026 budget. It has terminated many of the contracts, meaning those same farmers have to find alternative markets for crops, and many of them have lost incomes in the process, and that doesn't even count the impacts in the hundreds of millions of dollars of USAID.

How does cutting American farmers' market access in international sales make America more prosperous?

Mr. RIGAS. Well, I would have to look into that particular program you referenced, sir.

Mr. COSTA. I would like you to, please.

Mr. RIGAS. Yes, of course.

Mr. COSTA. And if you do, you might want to meet with some farmers or with recipients of the program to discuss the impacts of eliminating the program, not only Food for Peace, but what has been devastating and USAID, I believe.

Mr. RIGAS. I would be happy to look into that, sir. I know the President is a big fan of our farmers and wants to see them succeed.

Mr. COSTA. He tells that all the time, but this mass deportation is a real problem, let me tell you. And the Secretary of Agriculture talked about people on their work requirements, they are going to take those jobs. Give me a break. And automation? It is not there.

Chairman MAST. The chair now recognizes——

Mr. COSTA. To be discussed, continued. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MAST. Representative Schneider.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And Deputy Secretary, thank you for being here today. I know it has been a long day. And just refresh, what is the mission statement for the Department of State?

Mr. RIGAS. While, I can provide you with a copy of that, sir——

Mr. SCHNEIDER. I will read it to you.

Mr. RIGAS. Okay.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Protect and promote U.S. security, prosperity, and democratic values and shape an international environment in which all Americans can thrive. Do you support that?

Mr. RIGAS. Sounds good to me, yes.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Do you think that works whether it is a Democratic President or a Republican President across decades, across the century marks? That is the role of the State Department, right?

Mr. RIGAS. Yes.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Now, thinking of your role in this administration, how will you measure success against that mission 4 years from now?

Mr. RIGAS. So I think the Secretary has articulated that, that every action we take and every dollar we spend and every program we execute on should make American safer, should make America stronger——

Mr. SCHNEIDER. But how will you measure? Give me—I mean, you are organizing, you are going through all these cuts and slashes and changes. How are you going to measure your success 4 years from now when your term is over?

Mr. RIGAS. Well, so I think, No. 1, you can look at how we have engaged with our NATO allies, No. 1, that is making America stronger. They have all agreed to increase their spending from 2 percent of GDP to 5 percent, something where numerous prior administrations——

Mr. SCHNEIDER. All right, so and I'm just, we are short on time so I am going to reclaim my time. But you said you have worked for three administrations, and you mentioned that we have entered a new era of great power competition. Who are our competitors in that?

Mr. RIGAS. Well, certainly I think China is at the top of that list.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Anyone else?

Mr. RIGAS. Well, we have both friendly competitors and unfriendly competitors.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Okay, but great power competition, it is China, it is Russia. How important are having and working with allies in determining who is going to win that great power competition?

Mr. RIGAS. Well, I think it is important that we have allies rather than clients, right. So what we have with, and I think we have seen that with our NATO allies. They have gone from being kind of dependents. You know, people used to joke that NATO was a military alliance of countries without militaries. And now we have got them to agree to spend 5 percent of their GDP.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. But what distinguishes, I would argue, the United States from China and certainly Russia is our allies, that relationship with NATO, the other alliance we have built. And those alliances, certainly there is a military aspect to it. But the diplomatic aspect.

We had Defense Secretary Mattis testify before Congress. He said, you know, if we are not investing in aid and in diplomacy, development in diplomacy, we are going to have to invest more in guns and bullets. It is really important.

And the U.S., because of our relationship with our allies, the work of all the people who serve us in the State Department, they may not wear the same uniforms as the military, but they go to places far, they go to places of danger, and they represent and promote and protect U.S. interests. And that is particularly important.

Let me ask you, are the challenges confronting the U.S. around the world shrinking or growing?

Mr. RIGAS. I would say certainly our awareness of them is growing. And I think they are probably growing more than they are shrinking.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Okay. Is the role the United States needs to take on the global stage in working with allies and expressing leadership as we did in World War II, as we did after World War II, as we did in winning the cold war, is the importance of U.S. leadership shrinking or growing?

Mr. RIGAS. I think it is growing. I think the President has demonstrated that. I think he has been the biggest actor when it comes to American soft power.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. And one last question, if the U.S. isn't leading, what country is in a position best to fill that void in that great power competition to protect U.S. interests and protect Americans around the world?

Mr. RIGAS. Sure, I think China is certainly making a play for that.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Of our allies, who is going to replace the U.S.? Not, we are competing with China, we don't want them to replace us. The U.S. is indispensable.

So here is the thing, and I know many of my colleagues have spoken passionately and rightly about the damage this budget and reorganization will do to our diplomatic workforce and America's leadership in the world, and I agree with that.

What strikes me, though, and where I am stuck, it is not just a matter of misplaced priorities or ideology. It is that I don't see a theory of success behind what you are doing, what the department

is doing. You said the reorganization is about streamlining and focus.

You are cutting thousands of skilled professionals without first developing a clear plan and having metrics for that plan and how the department will operate differently. It is not streamlining, it is amputating. You propose consolidating foreign assistance, but you haven't shown us how the department is prepared to manage these programs.

What concerns me most is that there is no clear picture of how these actions position America to compete with China and respond to future crises. China is expanding their global diplomatic network. We are closing posts and reducing our people, losing expertise that took years, decades to develop. And we are not investing where we need to be.

You say you manage foreign assistance like an investment program, but we are left wondering who is the portfolio manager. So my last question for you, Mr. Deputy Secretary, you said the goal is a more nimble State Department.

Can you point to one example where another country has shrunk what they are doing, pulled back from their role in the world, where they successfully achieved the goals they set out to protect their interests and advance their policies?

Mr. RIGAS. Thank you for that question. So the reorganization affected only the domestic footprint of the State Department, it did not affect our overseas posts. And in fact, it is designed to empower our Ambassadors.

It is almost like we have forgotten that we have Ambassadors and regional bureaus who are engaging at posts, who are the, you know, the tip of the spear when it comes to how we engage with the rest of the world. This was focused on the bloated bureaucracy that was stateside here.

We have got 1400 offices in the United States alone, 700—I mean 1400 locations, 700 bureaus and offices in the U.S. This is for—

Mr. SCHNEIDER. All I know, and I am over time, thank you, Mr. Chairman, but I have gotten countless calls from constituents and families of constituents who have lost their job at oversea posts. So that statement that you not cutting—

Chairman MAST. You're over the time limit. The chair now recognizes—

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Overseas doesn't—

Chairman MAST [continuing]. Representative Kamalger-Dove.

Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You know, and thank you, Deputy Secretary, for staying. I appreciate that.

I serve as the ranking member for the South and Central Asia Subcommittee, so I want to focus on that bureau today. And I do know that two of my Republican colleagues asked questions about an issue that I am also going to ask you about. So you see that there is bipartisan concern.

Would you agree with this statement, and it is a yes or no: the Statement should uphold our commitment to protect the Afghans who helped U.S. servicemembers stationed in Afghanistan.

Mr. RIGAS. Of course.

Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE. Okay, thank you. Are you aware then, and I think you are, but I am going to ask it anyway, are you aware of the law that a Republican-led Congress passed last year requiring a coordinator for the Afghan relocation efforts at the State Department, or CARE?

Mr. RIGAS. I am aware of the CARE office.

Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE. Okay, so then you are aware of the law, and you are clear on the congressional intent. Yet, your reorganization plan eliminates the CARE office, and the administration has refused to brief us on your plan for Afghan allies, or even give us a straight answer about who the coordinator is.

And earlier you said that you are briefing the Congress eight times a day. I don't know who you are briefing, because as you can tell, there are both Republicans and Democrats that care about this issue. So can you reveal who the coordinator is?

Mr. RIGAS. So the functions for the CARE office have moved to the South Central Asia Bureau at the Department of State.

Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE. Right.

Mr. RIGAS. And to the——

Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE. But that doesn't answer the question——

Mr. RIGAS [continuing]. And to the regional Ambassadors.

Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE. -about who the person is, who the coordinator is. Because there is a difference between a person who is doing the work and a function. I know you are folding everything into everything, it is like origami. But how come we don't know, how come you can't tell us, how come you won't tell us who the coordinator is?

Mr. RIGAS. Well, that would, I mean, the person who is in charge of the South Central Asia Bureau would be the Assistant Secretary for South Central Asia, so that would be the first person, I think——

Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE. Okay, well, I would be interested, I think many of us would be interested in what that person is doing and have them answer some questions that we have, both Republicans and Democrats, about what is going with our Afghan allies.

Because I ask this because on Friday, you fired the entire CARE leadership team. So, anyone who would have had the experience and the expertise to efficiently manage Afghan relocations, which is complicated, you know. And Secretary Rubio came in here, and we know he is doing 14 jobs.

I don't not think you should be giving 14 jobs to the 12 people that are left in the State Department who are handling such a complicated issue. So we have had, you know, we know that the CARE leadership team has been fired. We know that the CARE office has lost over 30 people since the beginning of the administration.

And we know that that does not give you the capacity that you need to sustain the same pace of processing. And then on top of that, the administration is trying to terminate temporary protective status for Afghans living in the United States. So they are going to lose their work authorization, and then they are going to be deported back to Afghanistan, where the Taliban is waiting to get them.

And these are people who actually worked to protect U.S. servicemembers overseas. I bring it up because everyone wants to, you know, last Congress, we had a hearing every week talking about Afghanistan. And now, very hard to get people to come and talk about Afghanistan and what is happening to our allies.

And we are doing a disservice to our U.S. servicemembers, because what other country is going to say I am going to be willing to stick out my people's neck to help you when you are then going to sell my people down the river or back to the exact same people who are waiting to kill them.

The second part of this is do you know what Camp As Sayliyah is?

Mr. RIGAS. I do not know what Camp As Sayliyah is.

Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE. Okay. So the camp is a U.S. facility in Doha where 1500 Afghan refugees are waiting to be resettled. And the administration is considering closing down the camp and then forcibly repatriating these Afghans, who have been in limbo in this facility waiting for years. They are going to repatriate them back to Afghanistan, back into the hands of the Taliban.

So the question I asked you in the beginning, about the U.S. upholding its commitment to protecting these people, who risked their lives to protect us, we have got to do better. And that is on you. That is the responsibility of you, that is the responsibility of the State Department.

And I sent a letter to the chair of this committee asking us to continue to ask questions about this, and I am going to continue to ask questions about this, because it is about our credibility. You are not talking about trade, you are not talking about aid, you are talking about reneging on your credibility to make sure that our servicemembers are protected when they go overseas to fight for us.

And with that, Mr. Chair, I thank you for giving me extra time and I yield back.

Chairman MAST. The chair now recognizes Representative Johnson.

Ms. JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to take just a moment to tack onto what Representative Kamlager-Dove was talking about, because I was just in the Homeland Security hearing before this, talking about Afghanistan and this very issue. About all these Afghan folks who risked their lives in service of our military while in Afghanistan and all their losing of their temporary protected status benefits.

And I would just like to echo her concerns, Mr. Chairman, about how unconscionable it is that we are turning our back on this group of people who risked their lives for our military.

And Mr. Secretary, I would love for you to take these concerns that we are having about the fact that you are closing the CARE office, you are closing the support for this as just a dereliction of the United States' duty. It is a breach of promises. It is a breach of agreements.

And I share her concerns about what does this do for the U.S. in future conflicts. Have a lot of concerns about that.

I wanted to turn just to some just general issues about the terminations of so many people. I am concerned about the fact that were the terminations of all these folks in USAID based on merit? Were

they based on length of service? Were they based on reviews? How were you determining who stays and who goes?

Mr. RIGAS. Well, thank you for the question, Congresswoman. Everything that happened at USAID happened before my tenure, so I can't speak directly to what occurred there. But it seems to me it was an elimination of function.

Ms. JOHNSON. And what about ongoing RIFs within the State Department? Are those being done based on tenure, reviews, performance, length of service? How are those being evaluated?

Mr. RIGAS. Yes, so the regulations surrounding reductions in force are very prescriptive, and they are personnel, they are person-agnostic. They are function-specific.

So you look at a particular office and what functions you want to retain. If you are merging two or three offices, which happened, you know, over 100 times we were merging offices, and you say what functions do we want to retain.

And then based on that, if you have got 20 functions you want to retain or 20 positions you want to retain and you have 100 people in the pool from the three offices that are being combined, there is a very prescribed process that is done by OPM. And the State Department actually hired OPM to conduct this process. And they match people, you know, based on seniority, based on—

Ms. JOHNSON. So length of service, performance, those things.

Mr. RIGAS. Yes, so it is a merit-based process at that point.

Ms. JOHNSON. Yes, I have a constituent in my district, and her annual evaluation form says she is an expert in high demand across the office, with the ability to balance numerous competing demands across portfolio and beyond. She is a rock star, a go-to person for technical knowledge. Not afraid. And she has over 15 years of service and was terminated.

And my opinion, this is a huge disservice to the State Department and to the role. And isn't this the kind of person I would think that you would want to retain in our Foreign Service?

Mr. RIGAS. Well, sure. I mean, so the process I described does not allow for us to reach in grab a particular person that we would like to, you know, save from a RIF. It has to be done according to these prescribed regulations in the government that are merit-based and track, account for all of these other sort of requirements related to the position.

And this is sort of what the law calls for and this is what have been—

Ms. JOHNSON. Yes, but there is provisions in the law, though, for you to make sure that the purge is done based on—not based on optics, not based on ideology, but based on performance and a capacity to do the job. And the reality of it is that very experienced people are being depleted out of our Foreign Service at great peril to the United States of America and to our role in security in the world.

I am very concerned. We spend a lot of time talking about USAID, but I am also very concerned about talking about the population, refugee, and migration program. I had the opportunity to be in some foreign countries where they were talking about how detrimental all the cuts are that the U.S. had in these programs.

And those programs are designed to retain migrants within these home countries, and yet we are cutting all of the employees, the personnel, and the resources to these countries to keep people from illegally entering the United States. That makes absolutely no sense. This seems to be in contradiction to the goals here.

And, but I also want to highlight, you know, this employee that I referenced was doing amazing work in PEPFAR, amazing work in HIV and AIDS to minimize the spread throughout the world and was doing incredible work in honor of programs set by another Republican President, George Bush.

And it is really tragic that this administration has targeting in such a demonic way HIV and AIDS and PEPFAR and its role in saving lives.

And with that, I am out of time and I yield back.

Chairman MAST. The chair recognizes Representative Amo.

Mr. AMO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

On Friday, as you know, President Trump arbitrarily filed 1300 expert State Department staffers as part of his capricious effort to slash 15 percent of the State Department's domestic workforce. Look, our allies around the world are feeling the true impact of these dangerous choices, and our adversaries are grinning from ear to ear.

China is already stepping into fill the void when we cut our foreign, ceding the airwaves to their propaganda and retreating from the global stage. That is what is happening.

And when you claim you want to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse, the foreign aid freeze has led to the resources you oversee literally rotting at ports, medicine expiring, people dying. You know, as you have heard from some of my colleagues earlier today, you know, we learned that nearly 500 metric tons of emergency food assistance, enough to feed over a million children for a week, will expire in 24 hours.

In a few weeks, this rotten aid will be incinerated, costing taxpayers an additional \$130,000. This is a waste of taxpayer dollars. It is a loss of American jobs. And it is hurting American farmers who cannot sell their farm products to aid organizations. This is under your oversight.

In my home State of Rhode Island, 120,000 boxes of the emergency food aid known as ready-to-use therapeutic food, or Plumpy'Nut, made by Edesia Nutrition, were stuck in a warehouse for months, months, before the State Department finally paid to transport them to treat the starving children in Sudan.

Secretary Rubio announced USAID closing on July 1, and the remaining programs have been moved into the State Department. But it has been 2 weeks since then and 55 days since the Secretary sat here, sat where you are now, and I have seen no real action to get this aid moving.

As I told Secretary Rubio, every day around 8,000 children die from global hunger. So why is there no clear plan to continue this foreign assistance? How many children must die? How many jobs, American jobs, are we going to see lost? We needed, needed to get these contracts approved months ago.

And while there are delays in creating new contracts, there are also no answers about what is happening to supplies purchased

with taxpayer dollars. Earlier this month, I sent this letter to the State Department about reports that unused supplies from canceled foreign assistance programs will go to waste.

I asked you all to provide information by today on the process the State Department is using to review the status of supplies for now-terminated foreign assistance programs and what your plan was to ensure that these supplies purchased with taxpayer dollars are not diverted, destroyed, or otherwise go to waste. I haven't heard a response, right.

We cannot continue to wait for answers while the food that could save these starving children rots in warehouses. That is not American leadership.

So Secretary Rigas, what is your plan to ensure that these supplies for now-terminated foreign assistance programs do not go to waste? And what is your plan to take action now so we don't waste in the future?

Because as you have said, you are a shepherd of taxpayer dollars. That is wasting taxpayer dollars. So tell me what the plan is.

Mr. RIGAS. Thank you for the question, Congressman. I would be happy to look into this particular issue about food that has passed its expiration date that is about to be incinerated. I think, you know, it is a policy to not distribute food or medicine that is past its expiration date. So getting an understanding of how that food—

Mr. AMO. Yes, but it didn't have to get to the expiration date.

Mr. RIGAS. Right, yes, so getting an understanding of how that came to be, you know, what the shelf life is of this food. Is it 6 months, is it a year, is it 5 years. Who is tracking it and how it got to this situation I think is important and is—

Mr. AMO. Respectfully, Secretary, and I don't mean to cut you off, but I have heard this from the Secretary. I have asked, inquired, pleading. Because this should be an area of partnership. This is somewhere where we can shine and continue to shine in our leadership.

But I can't take we are looking into it. That is unsatisfactory. So what is the plan?

Mr. RIGAS. We are going to make sure it doesn't happen again it what the plan is.

Mr. AMO. Well, arbitrarily firing 15 percent of the staff is not a plan, because those people, those experts that you get rid of I am sure would have some role in making sure that your plan was viable and that you could let American leadership shine. So that is a failure. Do you agree?

Mr. RIGAS. I do not agree. I think the 15 percent—

Mr. AMO. So it is a success.

Mr. RIGAS. The 15 percent that were let go—

Mr. AMO. Well, I am talking about the waste of American aid.

Mr. RIGAS. Well, you are tying that to a reduction in force—

Mr. AMO. I am indeed.

Mr. RIGAS. -that had nothing to do with that.

Mr. AMO. Well, I believe that you do not have the personnel to get the job done, and I would like to see a plan. So I am going to request in writing your plan.

My time is up.

Chairman MAST. The chair now recognizes Representative Castro.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you.

Deputy Secretary Rigas, last week the department laid off about 15 percent of its workforce. And you said earlier and had made a statement about the fact that the decisions were personnel-agnostic. Is that accurate?

Mr. RIGAS. That is correct.

Mr. CASTRO. And as you know, members of the Foreign Service regularly rotate through different assignments. A number of such officers had started new positions in the last 6 weeks or have offers to start a position that the administration has not chosen to cut. But they received notices that they would be terminated based on their prior roles, those they held on May 29, that they were no longer in.

Some diplomats had even started new jobs in a foreign country, moved their family over there, enrolled their kids in school, and then received a notice that they would be terminated based on the job that they had on May 29, not the job that they currently held.

If these people are terminated, the United States still needs to fill those roles with diplomats, many of whom would need to undergo months of training or language learning before they can join the position. In other words, the country would have to spend millions and millions of dollars when these people were already in those jobs.

Are you aware of this situation, and will you revise the decisions and allow individuals who were terminated based on their job 2 months ago but have joined a new position or have an agreement to join a new position, whether abroad or in the United States, to continue in those roles?

Mr. RIGAS. So in order to conduct the reduction in force and the reorganization that we did, it was necessary to have an effective date. That effective date was as of May 29, which is when the Secretary signed, approved the reorganization plan. Unfortunately, you know, we wanted to move very quickly on that.

Unfortunately, a district court judge in California saw fit to intercede and hold up that reorganization, putting people in a tremendous amount of limbo. So people were taking in this case, it sounds like individuals were moving or taking other actions that were not tied to their current duties that you——

Mr. CASTRO. I mean, they were reassigned consistent with what the State Department does every year.

Mr. RIGAS. Right.

Mr. CASTRO. So they were in new roles. But you are not disagreeing with me that they are in these new roles and they are getting terminated or fired. The new roles are not being cut out.

So you are going to have to go replace those people with new people that you are going to have to spend literally millions and millions of dollars to train, when the purported reason for cutting out these folks is to save money.

So I guess I am trying to work with you.

Mr. RIGAS. Yes.

Mr. CASTRO. Will you reconsider what is relatively a small group in the total, reconsider the fact that these people already trained and were doing the work that you are going to need to now go fill?

Mr. RIGAS. So we have to abide by the reduction in force rules, and they are very prescriptive in terms of once a position is eliminated and the incumbent is eliminated, how they can return to Federal service and who is on those retention registers.

Mr. CASTRO. Well, I mean, guess let me—the long and short of it, will these people have a chance to go back to the jobs they were currently holding when they were terminated? Not the old ones that they held on May 29, if you know?

Mr. RIGAS. Yes, well, we would have to do it in accordance with the law and according—

Mr. CASTRO. But will you give them a chance to go back to work?

Mr. RIGAS. I have to do what the law calls for. And the—

Mr. CASTRO. Well, then I am asking you, what does the law call for? Will you give this specific group of people in this conundrum the chance to go into those roles that they were actually working at when they were terminated?

Mr. RIGAS. If the law allows for that, certainly.

Mr. CASTRO. So we have your commitment that if the law allows for it, that you will allow them back or consider them back for their roles?

Mr. RIGAS. Yes. My understanding is I don't think the law allows for it. I would be happy to check with legal counsel again, but they have been pretty adamant the entire time that—

Mr. CASTRO. Okay, if the law doesn't allow for it, then we just wasted millions of dollars. The decisions that you made wasted millions of dollars.

Mr. RIGAS. I would not agree with that.

Mr. CASTRO. Well, we just went through it, right? They were in a new job, they have received the training for this new job. The number of them would total such that it was millions of dollars spent.

Now, because these positions that they were holding when they were terminated were not cut out, right, so you are going to have to go and now hire people for those roles. So it is going to cost you millions and millions of dollars because of a decision that you made.

Mr. RIGAS. No, I don't agree with it. So we have about 14—

Mr. CASTRO. How do you not agree with it?

Mr. RIGAS. We have about 14,000 Foreign Service Officers. Tenthousand of those Foreign Service Officers are deployed outside the U.S. We have about 4,000 Foreign Service Officers—

Mr. CASTRO. This applies to people in the U.S. and outside the U.S.

Mr. RIGAS. Who are working CONUS in the United States of America. So we need to get more of those 4,000 Foreign Service Officers working in foreign places, which is what their mission is.

Mr. CASTRO. I guess I don't see how that answers my question. You made a decision that affects a small group of people. It is clearly a bad decision because it is going to cost us millions of dollars when you were trying to save a lot of money. But you are saying that you are not going to do everything you can to rectify that?

Mr. RIGAS. Well, what I am saying is we have Foreign Service Officers already on the payroll who are working in the United States of America.

I have gotten letters from two mayors who say please give me back my Foreign Service Officer. And I am wondering what are—why is a Foreign Service Officer working for a mayor in the United States of America?

Like, you don't join the Foreign Service to go work in, you know, Dearborn, Michigan, or in, you know, Orange—. Wherever these folks are working, they need to be working at posts overseas. Or they are diplomats in residence—

Mr. CASTRO. But then why didn't you cut the jobs? You didn't cut the job.

Mr. RIGAS. No, we canceled those details. They were detailed to working for mayors in the United States of America. We recalled their details to come back to State—

Mr. CASTRO. So to make this one last point, but again, they were working in these roles.

Chairman MAST. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. CASTRO. These roles were not terminated.

Chairman MAST. All members have had their opportunity to ask their questions. I want to thank you for your time today. I am going to give you an opportunity to offer any closing statements, comments. You have been asked many questions. Any closing comments that you wish to make, and we will close out this hearing?

Mr. RIGAS. I just want to thank you, Chairman, and the members of the committee for their questions. It was my honor to be here before today to answer for the members of the committee, and I am happy to do it any time.

I think it is an important function that you perform for the American people, and I appreciate the questions, the hard ones, the easy ones. And I am happy to, you know, give as much transparency as I can about what we are doing and how we are doing it so that your questions and concerns are satisfied.

Chairman MAST. Thank you, Deputy Secretary Rigas.

Pursuant to committee rules, all members may have 5 days so submit statements, questions, extraneous materials for the record, subject to the length limitations.

And without objection, this committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 5:52 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

## **APPENDIX**

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MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD



Chairman Brian Mast

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
FULL COMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128**

**Brian J. Mast (R-FL), Chairman**

July 8, 2025

*Rescheduled*

**TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs to be held at 2:00 p.m. in room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building. The hearing is available by live webcast on the Committee website at <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/>.

**DATE:** ~~Wednesday, July 9, 2025~~  
Tuesday, July 15, 2025

**TIME:** ~~10:00 a.m.~~  
2:00 p.m.

**LOCATION:** 2172 RHOB

**SUBJECT:** FY26 State Department Posture: Management and Resources

**WITNESSES:** The Honorable Michael Rigas  
Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources  
U.S. Department of State

\*NOTE: Witnesses may be added.

**By Direction of the Chair**

*The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202-226-8467 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.*

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
MINUTES OF FULL COMMITTEE HEARING

Day Tuesday Date July 15, 2025 Room 2172 RHOB

Starting Time 14:00 Ending Time 17:52

Recesses ☐ ( \_\_\_ to \_\_\_ ) ( \_\_\_ to \_\_\_ ) ( \_\_\_ to \_\_\_ ) ( \_\_\_ to \_\_\_ ) ( \_\_\_ to \_\_\_ ) ( \_\_\_ to \_\_\_ )

Presiding Member(s)

*Chairman Mast, Rep. Huizenga*

*Check all of the following that apply:*

Open Session ☒

Executive (closed) Session ☐

Televised ☒

Electronically Recorded (taped) ☒

Stenographic Record ☒

TITLE OF HEARING:

*FY26 State Department Posture: Management and Resources*

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

*Attached*

NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

*N/A*

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes ☒ No ☐

*(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)*

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

*Attached*

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE \_\_\_\_\_

or

TIME ADJOURNED 17:52

*Meg Wagner*  
Full Committee Hearing Coordinator

Committee on Foreign Affairs  
119<sup>th</sup> Congress

## ATTENDANCE

Meeting on: FY26 State Department Posture: Management and Resources

Date: July 15, 2025

| Representative   | Present | Absent | Representative           | Present | Absent |
|------------------|---------|--------|--------------------------|---------|--------|
| Chairman Mast    | X       |        | RM Meeks                 | X       |        |
| Rep. McCaul      |         | X      | Rep. Sherman             | X       |        |
| Rep. Smith       | X       |        | Rep. Keating             | X       |        |
| Rep. Wilson      |         | X      | Rep. Bera                | X       |        |
| Rep. Perry       | X       |        | Rep. Castro              | X       |        |
| Rep. Issa        | X       |        | Rep. Titus               | X       |        |
| Rep. Burchett    |         | X      | Rep. Lieu                |         | X      |
| Rep. Green       |         | X      | Rep. Jacobs              | X       |        |
| Rep. Barr        | X       |        | Rep. Cherfilus-McCormick | X       |        |
| Rep. Jackson     |         | X      | Rep. Stanton             | X       |        |
| Rep. Kim         | X       |        | Rep. Moskowitz           |         | X      |
| Rep. Salazar     |         | X      | Rep. Jackson             | X       |        |
| Rep. Huizenga    | X       |        | Rep. Kamlager-Dove       | X       |        |
| Rep. Radewagen   |         | X      | Rep. Costa               | X       |        |
| Rep. Davidson    |         | X      | Rep. Amo                 | X       |        |
| Rep. Baird       | X       |        | Rep. Mfume               | X       |        |
| Rep. Kean        | X       |        | Rep. Jayapal             | X       |        |
| Rep. Lawler      | X       |        | Rep. Latimer             |         | X      |
| Rep. Mills       |         | X      | Rep. Olszewski           | X       |        |
| Rep. McCormick   |         | X      | Rep. Johnson             | X       |        |
| Rep. Self        | X       |        | Rep. McBride             | X       |        |
| Rep. Zinke       | X       |        | Rep. Schneider           | X       |        |
| Rep. Moylan      | X       |        | Rep. Dean                | X       |        |
| Rep. Luna        |         | X      |                          |         |        |
| Rep. Shreve      | X       |        |                          |         |        |
| Rep. Biggs       |         | X      |                          |         |        |
| Rep. Baumgartner |         | X      |                          |         |        |
| Rep. Mackenzie   | X       |        |                          |         |        |

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HEALTH

# The Trump Administration Is About to Incinerate 500 Tons of Emergency Food

Federal workers warned for months that the high-energy biscuits would go to waste.

By Hana Kiro

Illustration of a sack labeled "USAID" on fire against a red background

Illustration by The Atlantic; Sources: Shutterstock.

JULY 14, 2025, 10:21 PM ET [SHARE](#) [SAVE](#)

Five months into its unprecedented dismantling of foreign-aid programs, the Trump administration has given the order to incinerate food instead of sending it to people abroad who need it. Nearly 500 metric tons of emergency food—enough to feed about 1.5 million children for a week—are set to expire tomorrow, according to current and former government employees with direct knowledge of the rations. Within weeks, two of those sources told me, the food, meant for children in Afghanistan and Pakistan, will be ash. (The sources I spoke with for this story requested anonymity for fear of professional repercussions.)

Sometime near the end of the Biden administration, USAID spent about \$800,000 on the high-energy biscuits, one current and one former employee at the agency told me. The biscuits, which cram in the nutritional needs of a child under 5, are a stopgap measure, often used in scenarios where people have lost their homes in a natural disaster or fled a war faster than aid groups could set up a kitchen to receive them. They were stored in a Dubai warehouse and intended to go to the children this year.

get me  
one

Since January, when the Trump administration issued an executive order that halted virtually all American foreign assistance, federal workers have sent the new political leaders of USAID repeated requests to ship the biscuits while they were useful, according to the two USAID employees. USAID bought the biscuits intending to have the World Food Programme distribute them, and under previous circumstances, career staff could have handed off the biscuits to the United Nations agency on their own. But since Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency disbanded USAID and the State Department subsumed the agency, no money or aid items can move without the approval of the new heads of American foreign assistance, several current and former USAID employees told me. From January to mid-April, the responsibility rested with Pete Marocco, who worked across multiple agencies during the first Trump administration; then it passed to Jeremy Lewin, a law-school graduate in his 20s who was originally installed by DOGE and now has appointments at both USAID and State. Two of the USAID employees told me that staffers who sent the memos requesting approval to move the food never got a response and did not know whether Marocco or Lewin ever received them. (The State Department did not answer my questions about why the food was never distributed.)

In May, Secretary of State Marco Rubio told representatives on the House Appropriations Committee that he would ensure that food aid would reach its intended recipients before spoiling. But by then, the order to incinerate the

biscuits (which I later reviewed) had already been sent. Rubio has insisted that the administration embraces America's responsibility to continue saving foreign lives, including through food aid. But in April, according to [NPR](#), the U.S. government eliminated all humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and Yemen, where, the State Department said at the time, providing food risks benefiting terrorists. (The State Department has offered no similar justification for pulling aid to Pakistan.) Even if the administration was unwilling to send the biscuits to the originally intended countries, other places—Sudan, say, where war is fueling the world's worst famine in decades—could have benefited. Instead, the biscuits in the Dubai warehouse continue to approach their expiration date, after which their vitamin and fat content will begin to deteriorate rapidly. At this point, United Arab Emirates policy prevents the biscuits from even being repurposed as animal feed.

Over the coming weeks, the food will be destroyed at a cost of \$130,000 to American taxpayers (on top of the \$800,000 used to purchase the biscuits), according to current and former federal aid workers I spoke with. One current USAID staffer told me he'd never seen anywhere near this many biscuits trashed over his decades working in American foreign aid. Sometimes food isn't stored properly in warehouses, or a flood or a terrorist group complicates deliveries; that might result in, at most, a few dozen tons of fortified foods being lost in a given year. But several of the aid workers I spoke with reiterated that they have never before seen the U.S. government simply give up on food that could have been put to good use.

The emergency biscuits slated for destruction represent only a small fraction of America's typical annual investment in food aid. In fiscal year 2023, USAID purchased more than 1 million metric tons of food from U.S. producers. But the collapse of American foreign aid raises the stakes of every loss. Typically, the biscuits are the first thing that World Food Programme workers hand to Afghan families who are being forced out of Pakistan and back to their home country, which has been plagued by severe child malnutrition for years. Now the WFP can support only one of every 10 Afghans who are in urgent need of food assistance. The WFP projects that, globally, 58 million people are at risk for extreme hunger or starvation because this year, it lacks the money to feed them. Based on calculations from one of the current USAID employees I spoke with, the food marked for destruction could have met the nutritional needs of every child facing acute food insecurity in Gaza for a week.

Despite the administration's repeated promises to continue food aid, and Rubio's testimony that he would not allow existing food to go to waste, even more food could soon expire. Hundreds of thousands of boxes of emergency food pastes, also already purchased, are currently collecting dust in American warehouses. According to USAID inventory lists from January, more than 60,000 metric tons of food—much of it grown in America, and all already purchased by the U.S. government—were then sitting in warehouses across the world. That included 36,000 pounds of peas, oil, and cereal, which were stored in Djibouti and intended for distribution in Sudan and other countries in the Horn of Africa. A former senior official at USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance told me that, by the time she'd left her job earlier this month, very little of the food seemed to have moved; one of the current USAID employees I spoke with confirmed her impression, though he noted that, in recent weeks, small shipments have begun leaving the Djibouti warehouse.

Read: 'In three months, half of them will be dead'

Such operations are more difficult for USAID to manage today than they were last year because many of the humanitarian workers and supply-chain experts who once coordinated the movement of American-grown food to hungry people around the world no longer have their jobs. Last month, the CEOs of the two American companies that make another kind of emergency food for malnourished children both told *The New York Times* that the government seemed unsure of how to ship the food it had already purchased. Nor, they told me, have they received any new orders. (A State Department spokesperson told me that the department had recently approved additional purchases, but both CEOs told me they have yet to receive the orders. The State Department has not responded to further questions about these purchases.) But even if the Trump administration decides tomorrow to buy more food aid—or simply distribute what the government already owns while the food is still useful—it may no longer have the capacity to make sure anyone receives it.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Hana Kiros**

 Follow

Hana Kiros is an assistant editor at *The Atlantic*.

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## Gaza: 875 people confirmed dead trying to source food in recent weeks



© UNICEF/Mohammed Nateel | Child malnutrition is on the rise in Gaza 'especially since March' when the Israeli near-total aid blockade began, says the the UN agency for Palestinians, UNRWA.

15 July 2025 | [Peace and Security](#)



recent weeks trying to fetch food, with most deaths linked to private aid hubs run by the so-called Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), the UN human rights office, OHCHR, said on Tuesday.

"As of 13 July, we have recorded 875 people killed in Gaza while trying to get food; 674 of them were killed in the vicinity of GHF sites," said Thameen



Al-Kheetan, [OHCHR](#) spokesperson, referencing the US-Israeli run private organization which has bypassed regular humanitarian operations.

The remaining 201 victims were killed while seeking food “on the routes of aid convoys or near aid convoys” run by the UN or UN-partners still operating in the war-shattered enclave, Mr. Al-Kheetan told journalists in Geneva.

Killings linked to the controversial US and Israeli-backed aid hubs began shortly after they started operating in southern Gaza on 27 May, bypassing the UN and other established NGOs.

**The latest deadly incident happened at around 9am on Monday 14 July, when reports indicated that the Israeli military shelled and fired towards Palestinians seeking food at the GHF site in As Shakoush area, northwestern Rafah.**

According to OHCHR, two Palestinians were killed and at least nine others were injured. Some of the casualties were transported to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) hospital in Rafah. On Saturday medics there received more than 130 patients, the “overwhelming majority” suffering from gunshot wounds and “all responsive individuals” reporting they were attempting to access food distribution sites.

## **Deadly hunger**

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees, [UNRWA](#), expressed deep concerns about the continuing killing of civilians trying to access food, while deadly malnutrition spreads among children.

**“Our teams on the ground - UNRWA teams and other United Nations teams - have spoken to survivors of these killings, these starving children included, who were shot at while on their way to pick up very little food,”** said Juliette Touma, UNRWA Director of Communications.

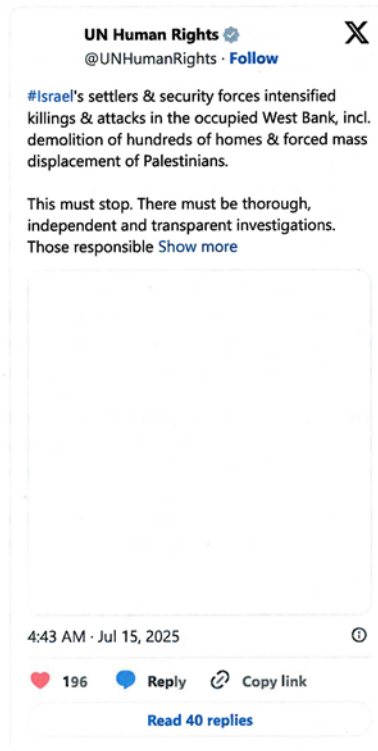
Speaking via video from Amman, Ms. Touma insisted that the near-total Israeli blockade of Gaza has led to babies dying of the effects of severe acute malnutrition.

“We’ve been banned from bringing in any humanitarian assistance into Gaza for more than four months now,” she said, before pointing to a

**"significant increase" in child malnutrition since the Israeli blockade began on 2 March.**

Ms. Touma added: "We have 6,000 trucks waiting in places like Egypt, like Jordan; it's from Jordan to the Gaza Strip it's a three-hour drive, right?"

In addition to food supplies, these UN trucks contain other vital if basic supplies including bars of soap. **"Medicine and food are going to soon expire if we're not able to get those supplies to people in Gaza who need it most, among them one million children who are half of the population of the Gaza Strip," Ms. Touma continued.**



## **West Bank: 'Silent war is surging'**

Meanwhile in the occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem, Palestinians continue to be killed in violence allegedly linked to Israeli settlers and security forces, UN agencies said.

According to OHCHR, two-year-old Laila Khatib was shot in the head by Israeli security forces on 25 January while she was inside her house in Ash-Shuhada village, in Jenin.

On 3 July, 61-year-old Walid Badir was shot and killed by Israeli security forces, reportedly while he was cycling back home from prayers, passing through the outskirts of the Nur Shams camp, the UN rights office continued, pointing to intensifying "killings, attacks and harassment of Palestinians in past weeks.

"This includes the demolition of hundreds of homes and forced mass displacement of Palestinians," OHCHR's Mr. Al-Kheetan noted, with some 30,000 Palestinians forcibly displaced since the launch of Israel's operation "Iron Wall" in the north of the occupied West Bank earlier this year.

"We should recall that international law is very clear about this in terms of the obligations of the occupying power," he said. "Bringing about a permanent demographic change inside the occupied territory may amount to a war crime and is tantamount to ethnic cleansing."

**"We continue to have a silent war that is surging,** where heavy restrictions on movement continue, where poverty is increasing as people are cut off from their livelihoods and unemployment soars," said UNRWA's Ms. Touma.

With its current focus on the northern occupied West Bank, the Israeli military operation has impacted the refugee camps of Jenin, Tulkarem and Nur Shams.

"It is causing the largest population displacement of the Palestinians in the West Bank since 1967," Ms. Touma continued.

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## GAZA

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Reuters

My News  **Former DOGE official rushed grant to Trump-backed Gaza aid group over staff objections**

By Jonathan Landay

July 9, 2025 8:27 PM EDT · Updated July 13, 2025



[U2] FILE PHOTO: Palestinians gather to collect what remains of relief supplies from the distribution center of the U.S.-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, June... [Purchase Licensing Rights](#)  [Read more](#)

**Summary**

State Department foreign aid chief waives nine mandatory safeguards for \$30 million grant

More than 500 Palestinians have been killed near aid group's distribution sites

Email cites 'strong Admin support' for controversial aid group

WASHINGTON, July 9 (Reuters) - A top U.S. State Department official waived nine mandatory counterterrorism and anti-fraud safeguards to rush a \$30 million award last month to a Gaza aid group backed by the Trump administration and Israel, according to an internal memorandum seen by Reuters.

Jeremy Lewin, a former Department of Government Efficiency associate, signed off on the award despite an assessment in the memorandum that the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation's (GHF) funding plan failed to meet required "minimum technical or budgetary standards."

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The June 24 action memorandum to Lewin was sent by Kenneth Jackson, also a former DOGE operative who serves as an acting deputy U.S. Agency for International Development administrator. The pair has overseen the agency's dismantling and the merger of its functions into the State Department.

Lewin also overrode 58 objections that USAID staff experts wanted GHF to resolve in its application before the funds were approved, according to two sources familiar with the matter.

Lewin, who runs the State Department's foreign aid program, cleared the funds only five days after GHF filed its proposal on June 19, according to the June 24 "action memorandum" bearing his signature seen by Reuters.

"Strong Admin support for this one," Lewin wrote to USAID leaders in a June 25 email - also seen by Reuters - that urged disbursement of the funds by the agency "ASAP."

The action memorandum was first reported by CNN.

Lewin and Jackson did not respond to requests for comment.

The documents underline the priority the Trump administration has given GHF despite the group's lack of experience and the killing of hundreds of Palestinians near its Gaza aid distribution hubs.

GHF, which closely coordinates with the Israeli military, has acknowledged reports of violence but says they occurred beyond its operations area.

Lewin noted in the email that he had discussed the funds with aides to Steve Witkoff, President Donald Trump's negotiator on Gaza, and Secretary of State Marco Rubio's office.

He acknowledged that authorizing the funds would be controversial, writing: "I'm taking the bullet on this one."

The White House, asked for comment, referred to a State Department statement provided to Reuters. Witkoff and Rubio did not reply to a question about whether they were aware of and supported the decision to waive the safeguards.

The State Department said in its statement that the \$30 million was approved under a legal provision allowing USAID to expedite awards in response to "emergency situations" to "meet humanitarian needs as expeditiously as possible."

"The GHF award remains subject to rigorous oversight, including of GHF's operations and finances," the statement said. "As part of the award, GHF was subject to new control and reporting requirements."

#### RAISING THE RISK

In response to a request for comment, a GHF spokesperson said: "Our model is specifically designed to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse. Every dollar we receive is safeguarded to ensure all resources — which will eventually include American taxpayer funds — reach the people of Gaza."

The spokesperson added that such requests for clarification from the U.S. government about fund applications were routine.

Speaking about the nine conditions that were waived, the spokesperson said: "We are addressing each question as per regulations and normal procedure and will continue to do so as required."

GHF says its operation is preventing Hamas from hijacking food aid and using it to control the enclave's population, charges denied by the Islamist militants who ran Gaza.

In the June 24 action memorandum, Jackson wrote that GHF is "uniquely positioned to operate in areas with restricted access," and said it has delivered millions of meals and diluted Hamas' control over Gaza's 2.1 million Palestinians.

He acknowledged that GHF "is a new organization that has not met USAID's various formal criteria for eligibility" for the \$30 million award.

Jackson listed nine conditions that applicants normally must satisfy before receiving USAID funds, explicitly outlining the terms of each and the risks of waiving them.

For instance, he noted a "legal requirement" that aid organizations working in Gaza or the West Bank undergo vetting for ties to extremist organizations before they are awarded USAID funds, the document said.

"Waiving the requirement could increase the risk" that an aid group, its subcontractors or vendors "could be found ineligible due to terrorism-related concerns," said the document.

Jackson also wrote that USAID was required to examine whether an organization has sufficient internal controls to manage awards. He warned that waiving the condition "could raise the risk of misuse of taxpayer resources," according to the document.

GHF submitted a plan – required prior to approval of funds – that was incomplete on how it would deal with legal and operational risks of operating in Gaza, the document said.

Waiving the need for a full plan "could risk programmatic diversion, reputational harm, and potential violations of U.S. counterterrorism laws," it continued.

Despite the risks, Jackson recommended waiving all nine requirements and allowing GHF to fulfill them later because of the "humanitarian and political urgency" of its operation, the memo said. Lewin checked a box labeled "Approve" on each of the recommendations, it showed.

In addition to waiving the nine requirements, two sources familiar with the matter said, Lewin overrode 58 objections from USAID staff reviewing GHF's application.

Two former top USAID officials said they had never heard of a senior official like Lewin expediting an award over the objections of professional staff.

"I oversaw something like 1,500 grants. I never saw it happen," said Sarah Charles, who led USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance from 2021-2024. "Very occasionally, we would do the vetting after an award in a sudden onset emergency - think earthquake - but that was at the recommendation of staff."

In the review, the USAID experts questioned how GHF would ensure the safety of Palestinians collecting food packages at its sites; whether its staff had proper humanitarian training and its plans to distribute powdered infant formula in an enclave with scarce access to clean drinking water, the sources said.

Reporting by Jonathan Landay; Additional reporting by Humeysa Pamuk and Alexander Cornwell in Jerusalem; Editing by Don Durfee and Suzanne Goldenberg

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July 14, 2025

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**Department Reorganization FAQs**  
(as of May 2, 2025)

**\*Note:** As needed, this FAQ will be updated with relevant information. Please submit any questions you have to the comment portal (available [HERE](#)).\*

**FAQs added on May 2, 2025**

**Q: During the reorganization, can employees undergo lateral movements within the Department?**

A: GTM will freeze all lateral transfers and internal promotions while the reorganization is underway. We will lift the freeze after the implementation of the reorganization. Any lateral movements that have already been processed prior to May 1 can proceed. Limited exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis.

**Q: If I receive a RIF notice, can I rotate into a Y-tour assignment?**

A: Y-tour assignments will not be available. Limited exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis.

**FAQs published on April 22, 2025**

**Q: My office is being eliminated. What happens to me and my colleagues?**

A: Consistent with applicable law, employees in offices being eliminated will receive Reduction-in-Force (RIF) notices within the next sixty (60) days. The specific effect of a RIF notice will depend on individual employment classifications, circumstances, seniority, and office assignment. GTM/CDA will work with employees and bureaus to facilitate new assignments as appropriate.

In general, Civil Service employees subject to RIF will be separated from the Department at the conclusion of a legally-sufficient notice period, with the exception of Senior Executive Service (SES) employees, who may be reassigned to other vacant SES positions.

Foreign Service employees subject to a RIF may be separated from federal service, or may be assigned to a different open global role within the Department. Foreign

service employees who receive a RIF notice should contact their CDO for further guidance.

Generally, contract employees in offices being eliminated will receive termination notices within sixty (60) days, consistent with the contractual terms and rights in their individual agreements with the Department and third-party contractors.

The Secretary has tasked each Under Secretary with formulating specific reorganization and workforce optimization plans. Following approval of those plans by the Secretary, the Under Secretaries will communicate how these Department-wide changes will affect specific bureaus and offices that report to them.

**Q: My bureau is being moved to another office. What happens to me and my colleagues?**

A: The Department will evaluate the staffing needs of the bureau on a position-by-position basis. Decisions to realign or abolish positions may result in employees being reassigned or separated from federal service. As noted, Under Secretaries will be preparing reorganization and implementation plans for their bureau families. As those plans develop, there will be more specific guidance regarding what these changes mean for specific bureaus and employees.

**Q: Will my office physically move at this time?**

There are no immediate changes to work locations or schedules resulting from today's reorganization announcement. As bureau and family reorganization plans are developed, Under Secretaries will communicate any office or work location changes, and provide sufficient adjustment resources as required by law and Department policy.

**Q: During the reorganization, can employees in eliminated offices apply for open jobs in other bureaus?**

A: For employees affected by an upcoming RIF action, forthcoming RIF packets will contain specific and detailed information about transfer, separation, and career services rights and procedures. The following information reflects general

practice under federal rules and regulations but is merely advisory and may not reflect individual circumstances.

**Civil Service:** When an office is eliminated as part of a reorganization, Civil Service employees affected by a reduction in force (RIF) are eligible for the Department's Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP). Under CTAP, employees who meet the eligibility criteria receive priority consideration for vacancies in the Department. To comply with CTAP procedures, the Department must post vacancies for a minimum of five business days before filling the position through reassignment or other means. This gives eligible employees an opportunity to apply and be considered before other candidates. After the employee's final separation date, if they have not secured another position, they may be eligible for the Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan, or ICTAP, which provides similar priority consideration for vacancies in other federal agencies. However, the CTAP and ICTAP provide limited opportunities due to the current hiring freeze.

**Foreign Service:** Foreign Service RIF procedures are set forth in the FAM. Foreign Service Officers may be eligible for reassignment to another open global position at the Department, depending on their individual circumstances and Department needs. Foreign Service Officers subject to a RIF should contact their CDO for further guidance.

**Q: Who is subject to Reduction in Force (RIF) procedures? Are they different for Foreign Service and Civil Service?**

**A:** RIF procedures differ for Civil Service and Foreign Service employees, based on the legal authorities and policies that govern each personnel system.

Civil Service employees are subject to RIF procedures outlined in 5 CFR Part 351, which include factors such as organization, tenure group, length of service, performance ratings, and veterans' preference. These rules determine the order of retention when positions are eliminated. The Senior Executive Service (SES) are subject to different RIF rules (i.e., 5 U.S.C. 3595) than those that apply to General Schedule RIFs. Retention and job placement opportunities may depend

on other factors, including whether an entire competitive area is being eliminated in the RIF action, and the applicability of the government-wide hiring freeze.

Foreign Service employees are subject to RIF procedures as outlined in Section 611 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, which provides the legal authority for such actions. The detailed procedures for implementing a RIF are specified in [3 FAM 2580](#) and explain the compilation of service wide retention registers by skill and grade – which include factors such as tenure groups, selection board ratings, veterans' preference and length of service. The present assignment of Foreign Service employees is not a factor for RIFs.

**Q: Will the centralization to the executive secretariat change the immediate functioning of the Department?**

No, this change will be communicated to the Department once a plan for centralization has been approved by Department leadership.

**Q: How will this affect transfer season? What if my onward position is being eliminated?**

A: If a Foreign Service employee is assigned to a position that has been eliminated, they should contact their CDO for guidance. GTM/CDA will work with employees and bureaus to facilitate new assignments. You may have to rebid for your onward assignment depending on the reorganization plan submitted by your Under Secretary.

**Q: When will TalentMAP be updated to reflect the reorganization's changes?**

A: The Department evaluates staffing needs on an ongoing basis. As with any bidding season, current projected vacancies may change. Bidders are encouraged to take a close look at TalentMAP once the bid cycle opens, as their bidding preferences and strategies may be affected. Our goal is to be transparent and to keep the workforce updated as decisions are made regarding the available positions in the Summer 2026 Cycle.

**Q: What is the status of additional voluntary retirement options?**

A: The Department of State is actively exploring voluntary retirement mechanisms and will have more information in the very near future.

**Q: What happens to overseas employees (Locally Employed Staff, Foreign Service, Civil Service, contractors) at posts during the reorganization?**

A: The reorganization announced today only affects domestic offices and personnel. No embassy, consulate or overseas post closure decisions have been made at this time. Likewise, no overseas personnel actions are being announced at this time. Operations at overseas posts should continue in the normal course.

**Q: When will I know what the new reorganization plan will be for my bureau?**

A: Once Department leadership has reviewed and approved a bureau/family plan, your Under Secretary will communicate how the reorganization will affect your bureau or office, and what your new reporting and organizational structure will look like.

**Q: What will happen to my benefits if I am RIFed?**

A: If you receive a RIF notice, it will include information on your benefits. All Department employees will receive all benefits and compensation to which they are entitled, and nobody will lose earned benefits as a result of this reorganization.

**Q: How much notice can I expect if I am subject to a RIF?**

A: All affected Department employees will receive a RIF notice period at least as long as the period required by law. Depending on individual circumstances, generally this means at least 60 or 90 days.

**Q: How does this impact ongoing programming?**

A: This reorganization will not result in any immediate changes to the Department's ongoing programming. As the Secretary has made clear, following the conclusion of the recent full-scope programming review, the Department's ongoing programs will be fully supported and are expected to remain active. The Department will continue, as necessary and consistent with relevant authorities,

to align its activities and programs to the foreign policy priorities of the President and Secretary.

**Q: How does this reorganization affect the J Family?**

As the Secretary has announced, the bureaus currently under the Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights (J) will be realigned to the Office of Foreign Assistance and Human Rights (F), transferred elsewhere within the Department, or abolished consistent with applicable law.

As with the rest of the Department, J family bureaus and offices will not experience any immediate change. Employees in these areas remain on active duty and approved programs will remain active, ongoing, and fully supported. A detailed implementation plan will be developed by July 1 to integrate or restructure functions currently within the J family. No other organizational or reporting changes have been made at this time.

**Q: How does this reorganization relate to the USAID Integration?**

This Departmental reorganization is separate from the ongoing efforts to integrate certain USAID foreign assistance programs and functions to the Department. The existing USAID Transition Working Group, led by Ambassador Howard VanVranken, will continue to lead the Department's efforts to assume responsibility for USAID's ongoing foreign assistance programming by July 1. Today's announcements do not change the USAID integration plan or timeline.

While implemented separately, these two distinct reorganization efforts are highly complementary, and the Secretary and Department leadership continue to carefully consider the integration of former USAID programs and functions in developing and implementing the Department's reorganization plan.

**\*Note: As needed, this FAQ will be updated with relevant information. Please submit any questions you have to the comment portal (available [HERE](#)).\***

# Evaluating the impact of two decades of USAID interventions and projecting the effects of defunding on mortality up to 2030: a retrospective impact evaluation and forecasting analysis

Daniella Medeiros Cavalcanti, Lucas de Oliveira Ferreira de Sales, Andreia Ferreira da Silva, Elisa Landin Bastena, Daiana Pena, Caterina Monti, Gonçalo Burrell, Natanael J Silva, Paula Vaz, Francisco Saute, Gonzalo Farjuel, Quique Bassat, Denise Noriche, James Macinko, Davide Rasetti

## Summary

**Background** The US Agency for International Development (USAID) is the largest funding agency for humanitarian and development aid worldwide. The aim of this study is to comprehensively evaluate the effect of all USAID funding on adult and child mortality over the past two decades and forecast the future effect of its defunding.

**Methods** In this retrospective impact evaluation integrated with forecasting analysis, we used panel data from 133 countries and territories—including all low-income and middle-income countries (LMICs)—with USAID support ranging from none to very high. First, we used fixed-effects multivariable Poisson models with robust SEs adjusted for demographic, socioeconomic, and health-care factors to estimate the impact of USAID funding on all-age and all-cause mortality from 2001 to 2021. Second, we evaluated its effects by age-specific, sex-specific, and cause-specific groups. Third, we did several sensitivity and triangulation analyses. Lastly, we integrated the retrospective evaluation with validated dynamic microsimulation models to estimate effects up to 2030.

**Findings** Higher levels of USAID funding—primarily directed toward LMICs, particularly African countries—were associated with a 15% reduction in age-standardised all-cause mortality (risk ratio [RR] 0.85, 95% CI 0.78–0.93) and a 32% reduction in under-five mortality (RR 0.68, 0.57–0.80). This finding indicates that 91839663 (95% CI 85690135–98291626) all-age deaths, including 30391980 (26023132–35482636) in children younger than 5 years, were prevented by USAID funding over the 21-year study period. USAID funding was associated with a 65% reduction (RR 0.35, 0.29–0.42) in mortality from HIV/AIDS (representing 25.5 million deaths), 51% (RR 0.49, 0.39–0.61) from malaria (8.0 million deaths), and 50% (RR 0.50, 0.40–0.62) from neglected tropical diseases (8.9 million deaths). Significant decreases were also observed in mortality from tuberculosis, nutritional deficiencies, diarrhoeal diseases, lower respiratory infections, and maternal and perinatal conditions. Forecasting models predicted that the current steep funding cuts could result in more than 14 051 750 (uncertainty interval 8 475 990–19 662 191) additional all-age deaths, including 4 537 157 (3 124 796–5 910 791) in children younger than age 5 years, by 2030.

**Interpretation** USAID funding has significantly contributed to the reduction in adult and child mortality across low-income and middle-income countries over the past two decades. Our estimates show that, unless the abrupt funding cuts announced and implemented in the first half of 2025 are reversed, a staggering number of avoidable deaths could occur by 2030.

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## Introduction

For the past 20 years, the USA has been the leading government donor to humanitarian response plans, development aid, and multilateral development banks, mainly through the US Agency for International Development (USAID). USAID was established in 1961 as an independent agency in the executive branch under the direct authority and guidance of the Secretary of State.<sup>1</sup> The agency's aim was twofold: the first was to provide humanitarian assistance, and the second to also assist and support economic growth and self-resilience

of developing countries, especially those deemed strategic for the US economic and geopolitical impact.<sup>2</sup> In each mission and country where USAID has been operational, the agency engaged with diverse partners, such as central governments, private entities, local organisations, and international and national non-governmental organisations operating mostly bilaterally. Over the years, and despite a relatively modest effort in relation to its national wealth, the USA's importance as a donor for development and humanitarian aid has overshadowed any other donor. Although the USA has



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## Research in context

## Evidence before this study

Despite the US Agency for International Development (USAID) being the world's leading donor for humanitarian and development aid, there is scarce evidence in the literature assessing its impact on global health. Few evaluations have attempted to estimate the effects of USAID funding on maternal and child mortality in selected low-income and middle-income countries (LMICs), and some reports have offered only approximate estimates for specific diseases. Since the onset of substantial funding cuts, few studies have evaluated the consequences of reductions in USAID-funded interventions. In a few cases, websites have provided rough estimates on the cumulative effect of these cuts on tuberculosis, child mortality, and other health diseases or conditions.

## Added value of this study

To our knowledge, this study is the first comprehensive analysis to assess the impact of total USAID funding—including support for health care, nutrition, humanitarian aid, development, education, and related sectors—on mortality in LMICs over the past two decades. Our study also disaggregates effects by age group and cause of death. Importantly, it is the only study to integrate retrospective evaluations with forecasting models that project the effects of current and proposed funding cuts on child and all-age mortality to 2030. We

estimate that over the past two decades, USAID-funded programmes have helped prevent more than 91 million deaths globally, including 30 million deaths among children. Projections suggest that ongoing deep funding cuts—combined with the potential dismantling of the agency—could result in more than 14 million additional deaths by 2030, including 4.5 million deaths among children younger than 5 years. These results provide essential evidence for policy makers, planners, and advocates navigating the future of US global health engagement.

## Implications of all the available evidence

USAID funding has had a crucial role in improving global health, particularly by reducing mortality from poverty-related diseases and saving the lives of millions of adults and children. Current and proposed US aid cuts—along with the probable ripple effects on other international donors—threaten to abruptly halt and reverse one of the most important periods of progress in human development. For many LMICs, the resulting shock would be similar in scale to a global pandemic or a major armed conflict. Unlike those events, however, this crisis would stem from a conscious and avoidable policy choice—one whose burden would fall disproportionately on children and younger populations, and whose consequences could reverberate for decades.

indeed been the largest donor in absolute terms—providing more than US\$55 billion in official development assistance (ODA) in 2023 and accounting for approximately 30% of total Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries' ODA—it ranked only 25th out of 30 DAC members in terms of ODA relative to national income, allocating just 0.24% of its gross national income. By contrast, countries such as Norway (1.09%) and Luxembourg (1.00%) exceeded the 0.7% target of the UN, reflecting a substantially higher proportional commitment to international development.

In 2023, the USA accounted for 43% of all government funding donated by countries to the humanitarian system, up from about 39% a decade earlier. USAID has been estimated in 2024 to have managed more than \$35 billion.<sup>1</sup> Although the USA engages in a wide range of sectors, the biggest sectors being funded were humanitarian assistance (\$9.9 billion) and health (\$9.5 billion), and the largest benefiting region was sub-Saharan Africa (\$12.3 billion). However, throughout the years, and according to USAID reports, the agency also funded education projects by investing in teacher training, curriculum development, and school infrastructure, supporting, only between 2011 and 2015, more than 52 million children in 45 countries.<sup>1</sup>

Between 2017 and 2020, the agency responded to more than 240 natural disasters and crises worldwide; in 2016 alone, the organisation provided food assistance to more

than 53 million people across 47 countries.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, USAID has been a supporter of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) and pledged \$1.16 billion over 2020–23 to support the organisation. USAID has also been involved in combating malaria through the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI). USAID is also one of the seven agencies involved in the direct implementation of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), launched in 2003, and investing an accumulated amount of over \$100 billion in the global HIV/AIDS response.<sup>1</sup> In 2023, 60% of PEPFAR's bilateral HIV assistance was obligated and implemented by USAID. It is important to recognise that the USAID funding model—like that of other US federal agencies—is largely driven by political negotiations within Congress and the Senate. Consequently, ensuring the long-term sustainability of funding is inherently challenging, particularly in the absence of strong support from the executive branch.<sup>1,2</sup> For these reasons, a few USAID sectors have been elaborating plans to promote the scalability and durability of their interventions.

On Jan 20, 2025, the Trump administration released the Executive Order 14169, Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid, which suspended existing foreign aid programmes, except for emergency food assistance and military aid.<sup>3</sup> On March 10, 2025, it was announced that 83% of the programmes run by USAID would be cancelled.<sup>4</sup> These cuts are already being

challenged in court, and the outcome of the process is uncertain, at least for the current fiscal year. Assuming the cancellations stand, this could include a potential 88% cut in support to maternal and child health aid, 87% to epidemics and emerging diseases surveillance, and 94% cuts to programming for family planning and reproductive health.<sup>2</sup>

Suspended US contracts for the PMI have halted hundreds of millions of dollars annually to countries such as Nigeria and Uganda, threatening an increase of nearly 15 million additional cases and 107 000 additional deaths globally in just 1 year of a disrupted malaria-control supply chain.<sup>68</sup> The UN World Food Programme has closed its southern Africa office, placing 27 million people at risk of hunger amidst the country's worst drought in decades.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, a recent survey has estimated that 79 million people previously targeted for assistance are no longer being reached because of USAID programme cuts, and that the local capacity of national non-governmental organisations has been profoundly affected.<sup>70</sup> If these substantial cuts continue, the vast majority of USAID-funded activities will be affected, with most likely to be terminated.

To date, only a few assessments, most of them not peer-reviewed and focused on health-related USAID programmes, have tried to estimate the impact of USAID and the effects of the current funding cuts on specific diseases.<sup>13–18</sup> This study aims to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of total USAID funding—including support for health care, nutrition, development, humanitarian relief, education, and other sectors—on mortality in low-income and middle-income countries (LMICs) over the past two decades. The analysis includes disaggregated estimates by age group and cause of death and employs forecasting models to project the potential effects of current funding cuts on all-age and child mortality to 2030.

## Methods

### Study design

Our study combined a retrospective impact evaluation (ex-post, covering the period 2001–21) with forecasting analyses (ex-ante, projecting from 2022 to 2030). Both components relied on a shared underlying data structure, study design, and analytical approach.

The impact evaluation had a longitudinal ecological design, whereby countries (unit of analysis) were observed and projected over time. This longitudinal dataset combined aggregated demographic, socioeconomic, health, and USAID data from several sources (all data used in this study are publicly available from the sources listed in the appendix p 10.) during 2001–23. From all countries and territories worldwide, we selected 133 low-income, lower-middle-income, and upper-middle-income countries with consolidated data available up until 2023. Models

including all countries, and weighting by population size were also estimated (appendix p 21).

### Study variables

The main dependent variable in the analysis was age-standardised all-cause mortality (ASMR) per 1000 inhabitants. In addition, mortality was examined across different age groups, including child mortality (children younger than 5 years per 1000 live births). Given that USAID interventions are expected to have the greatest effect on children, we further disaggregated under-five mortality into specific age categories: infancy (0–1 year), preschool (2–4 years), child (younger than 5 years), and school age (5–9 years). To assess cause-specific associations, we also selected a set of mortality categories linked to USAID priorities and poverty-related conditions on the basis of existing literature.<sup>13–20</sup> These associations were defined using the International Classification of Diseases, 10th revision (ICD-10), and included tuberculosis (A15–A19 and B90), HIV/AIDS (B20–B24), maternal causes (O00–O99), lower respiratory infections (J09–J22, P23, and U04), malnutrition (E00–E02, F40–F46, E50, D50–D53, D64.9, and E51–E64), diarrhoeal diseases (A00, A01, A03, A04, and A06–A09), malaria (B50–B54, P37.3, and P37.4), and neglected tropical diseases (A66, A67, A69.1, A71, A77, A78, A79, B55–B56, B57, B65, B66, B73–B74, B76–B77, B79, B83, B88.0, B88.1, and B88). Lastly, specific injury-related mortality (V01–Y89, excluding X41–X42, X44–X45, and U12.9) was included as a negative control, as in previous studies.<sup>16</sup>

Our exposure variable was the financial assistance provided by USAID, in all sectors and areas of interventions, specifically measured as USAID funding per capita. The USAID funding per capita was calculated, similarly to previous studies,<sup>17,21</sup> by dividing the total disbursed amount (numerator, in monetary values) by the total population (denominator) for each of the 133 countries across each fiscal year from 2001 to 2023. As in previous studies,<sup>20,22</sup> we categorised the USAID funding per capita to estimate the non-linear dose-response relationship associated with increasing levels of intervention implementation. In the absence of established reference values in the literature—and in line with previous evaluations that classify interventions intensity into three levels (low, intermediate, and high).<sup>20,23</sup> and considering the countries where USAID mostly operates—USAID funding per capita was categorised using quartiles of its distribution in low-income countries: baseline, considered as not exposed (\$0–1.96 per capita per year); low (25th percentile, \$1.97–3.96); intermediate (50th percentile or median, \$3.97–7.09); and high (75th percentile, \$7.10 and higher). This categorical approach was preferred over a continuous specification because the functional form of the dose-response relationship was unknown, and the exposure variable included potential outliers that could

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## Articles

disproportionately influence effect estimates in continuous models. Nevertheless, we also tested models with continuous variables and several alternative categorisations (and the results remained robust across all different specifications; more details on these sensitivity analyses and alternative categorisations are available in the appendix pp 18–20).

All relevant time-variant demographic, socioeconomic, and health-care adjusting variables, according to the literature,<sup>13,14,23</sup> were included in the models: gross domestic product (GDP) per capita at purchasing power parity (GDP pc PPP); public expenditures on education, health, and the military (each on as a percentage of GDP); literacy rate; Gini index; the percentage of households with inadequate sanitation and with access to piped water; the number of doctors per 1000 population; and the number of hospital beds per 1000 population. Additional covariates and specifications were also tested in sensitivity analyses (appendix pp 16–33). As in previous studies,<sup>8,21</sup> to harmonise the model with the categorised exposure variables and to mitigate the influence of potential outliers, we dichotomised these covariates according to their median value over the period. Moreover, we included time

dummy variables (for 2008–09, 2013–14, 2015–16, and 2020–21) to adjust for major economic and health shocks that occurred globally in the past two decades.<sup>24</sup>

#### Data sources

Data on age-standardised mortality, per cause and age groups, were collected from the Global Burden of Disease Collaborative Network.<sup>25</sup> The data on USAID funding was collected from US Government agencies reporting foreign assistance.<sup>1</sup> Demographic, socioeconomic, and healthcare-related variables were obtained from the World Bank data and the WHO Global Health Observatory data.<sup>26</sup> The complete list of data sources and related detailed methods is presented in the appendix (p 10).

#### Statistical analyses

In the retrospective impact evaluation, we estimated the effect of USAID per capita funding during the years 2001–21 on age-standardised mortality, overall and for age-specific and cause-specific groups, using Poisson multivariable regression models with robust SEs and fixed-effects specifications. Additional estimates included

For more on World Bank data see <https://data.worldbank.org>

|                                                                    | 2001            | 2011            | 2021              | Change from 2001 to 2021 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Mortality rate</b>                                              |                 |                 |                   |                          |
| Overall ASMR per 1000 population                                   | 11.65 (3.46)    | 9.77 (7.90)     | 10.19 (3.47)      | –13%                     |
| Children younger than 5 years per 1000 live births                 | 73.71 (46.31)   | 57.43 (36.97)   | 37.61 (26.96)     | –49%                     |
| USAID amount (constant US\$)                                       |                 |                 |                   |                          |
| Average funding per country (in millions of US\$)                  | 151 (209)       | 279 (420)       | 253 (293)         | +68%                     |
| USAID per capita                                                   | 1.38 (3.85)     | 2.96 (11.20)    | 2.71 (7.51)       | +97%                     |
| <b>Population size</b>                                             |                 |                 |                   |                          |
| All 133 countries                                                  | 5 059 516 974   | 5 832 211 621   | 6 619 196 694     | +31%                     |
| All countries without China and India*                             | 2 742 373 742   | 3 235 429 413   | 3 781 955 734     | +58%                     |
| <b>Other covariates</b>                                            |                 |                 |                   |                          |
| GDP per capita PPP (US\$)                                          | 5984.6 (5004.5) | 9745.2 (6867.4) | 13 432.6 (8316.7) | +124%                    |
| Gini index                                                         | 0.55 (0.07)     | 0.58 (0.06)     | 0.58 (0.05)       | +5%                      |
| Health expenditure (% GDP)                                         | 4.33 (1.52)     | 4.32 (1.62)     | 5.01 (2.18)       | +16%                     |
| Education expenditure (% in public institutions)                   | 88.65 (1.71)    | 89.41 (1.10)    | 88.0 (1.90)       | –1%                      |
| Military expenditure (% GDP)                                       | 2.24 (2.35)     | 1.93 (2.22)     | 1.89 (2.56)       | –15%                     |
| Primary education (% population)†                                  | 67.25 (23.90)   | 69.64 (22.21)   | 75.61 (19.71)     | +12%                     |
| Piped water (% population)                                         | 77.23 (17.52)   | 84.14 (15.18)   | 90.10 (13.10)     | +17%                     |
| Adequate sanitation (% population)                                 | 16.37 (16.61)   | 62.22 (22.91)   | 77.47 (22.24)     | +67%                     |
| Proportion of individuals older than 15 years who are literate (%) | 63.6 (15.54)    | 66.49 (20.72)   | 69.38 (12.42)     | +9%                      |
| Fertility rate                                                     | 3.94 (1.47)     | 3.37 (1.40)     | 2.87 (1.25)       | –27%                     |
| Hospital bed rate per 1000 population                              | 1.70 (1.33)     | 1.65 (1.45)     | 1.58 (0.71)       | –7%                      |
| Rate of physicians per 1000 population                             | 0.99 (0.90)     | 1.09 (0.94)     | 1.45 (1.11)       | +46%                     |

Data are presented as mean (SD), percentage, or absolute number. Mortality (all ages) is expressed per 1000 population, and mortality for children younger than 5 years per 1000 live births. GDP values are reported in constant US dollars, adjusted for purchasing power parity. ASMR: age-standardized mortality rate. USAID: US Agency for International Development. \*China and India were initially included in the analysis as baseline cases (ie, with no or low per-capita USAID aid). We also did analyses excluding these two countries, with results remaining robust (appendix p 21). †Primary education refers to the primary completion rate (percentage of the relevant age group, ie, 75 years or older).

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics of mortality, USAID funding, and demographic, socioeconomic, and health-care-related variables for selected countries (n=133) from 2001 to 2021**

sex-age-specific mortality, further stratified by country groupings based on income level, GDP, Gini index, and Human Development Index (HDI). This is a consolidated methodological approach that, accompanied by extensive sensitivity and triangulation analyses, enables the estimation of the effects of interventions on mortality using panel data at the aggregate level.<sup>26,27,28</sup> The fixed-effects models include a term to control for unobserved characteristics of the unit of analysis that are approximately constant during the study period, such as some geographical, historical, infrastructural, or sociocultural aspects of each country, and could be associated both with the outcome and with the intervention implementation.<sup>29,30</sup> To evaluate the robustness of the estimates, we did several sensitivity analyses (appendix pp 13–33). First, to evaluate the

influence of the exposure categorisation, we fitted the models by using continuous variables and by changing the number of categories and variable thresholds. Second, to assess the external validity of our estimates—that is, to verify that the findings hold true in a broader context—we fitted the models using all 204 countries and territories in the world. We also tested the effect of population weighting in the regression and assess the effect of excluding highly populated countries, such as China and India. Third, to investigate the influence and relevance of the time trends, we tested different sets of time variables. Fourth, to evaluate the stability of the results with alternative models, we fitted negative binomial regression models and compared their estimates with Poisson models. Fifth, to verify the specificity of the USAID funding-per-capita effects, we fitted the same models with

|                                                                  | Overall (ASMR)                        | Childhood school age                  |                                     |                                       |                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|                                                                  |                                       | Infancy (0–1 year)                    | Preschool (2–4 years)               | Child (5–9 years)                     | School age (10–14 years)         |
| <b>USAID per capita</b>                                          |                                       |                                       |                                     |                                       |                                  |
| Baseline (mean \$ 0.45, 0–1.96)                                  | 1 (ref)                               | 1 (ref)                               | 1 (ref)                             | 1 (ref)                               | 1 (ref)                          |
| Low (mean \$2.88, 1.97–3.96)                                     | 0.94<br>(0.89–0.99; p=0.029)          | 0.90<br>(0.83–0.98; p=0.0058)         | 0.79<br>(0.69–0.90; p=0.00028)      | 0.86<br>(0.78–0.96; p=0.0019)         | 0.91<br>(0.83–0.98; p=0.012)     |
| Intermediate (mean \$5.36, 3.97–7.09)                            | 0.91<br>(0.85–0.97; p=0.0063)         | 0.84<br>(0.73–0.97; p=0.021)          | 0.72<br>(0.60–0.87; p=0.00063)      | 0.80<br>(0.68–0.93; p=0.0043)         | 0.88<br>(0.79–0.99; p=0.034)     |
| High (mean \$20.45, 7.10 or more)                                | 0.85<br>(0.78–0.93; p=0.0014)         | 0.74<br>(0.62–0.88; p=0.0028)         | 0.56<br>(0.449–0.69; p=0.0001)      | 0.68<br>(0.566–0.81; p=0.0001)        | 0.80<br>(0.692–0.93; p=0.014)    |
| <b>Control variables</b>                                         |                                       |                                       |                                     |                                       |                                  |
| Gini index                                                       | 1.06<br>(1.01–1.10; p=0.0072)         | 1.09<br>(0.99–1.19; p=0.064)          | 1.03<br>(0.94–1.13; p=0.49)         | 1.08<br>(0.99–1.18; p=0.074)          | 0.95<br>(0.88–1.07; p=0.19)      |
| Primary education                                                | 0.98<br>(0.94–1.02; p=0.33)           | 0.95<br>(0.88–1.03; p=0.24)           | 0.95<br>(0.85–1.06; p=0.37)         | 0.95<br>(0.88–1.04; p=0.27)           | 0.98<br>(0.90–1.07; p=0.68)      |
| Education expenditure                                            | 0.93<br>(0.87–0.97; p=0.049)          | 0.97<br>(0.87–0.97; p=0.0011)         | 0.85<br>(0.78–0.92; p=0.0017)       | 0.89<br>(0.84–0.95; p=0.00029)        | 0.87<br>(0.81–0.93; p=0.00082)   |
| Piped water                                                      | 0.96<br>(0.94–0.98; p=0.0016)         | 0.83<br>(0.79–0.87; p=0.0001)         | 0.67<br>(0.61–0.73; p=0.0001)       | 0.80<br>(0.77–0.83; p=0.0001)         | 0.78<br>(0.71–0.87; p=0.0001)    |
| Adequate sanitation                                              | 0.92<br>(0.86–0.98; p=0.0052)         | 0.84<br>(0.71–0.98; p=0.026)          | 0.80<br>(0.67–0.949; p=0.011)       | 0.83<br>(0.71–0.98; p=0.027)          | 0.88<br>(0.79–0.97; p=0.017)     |
| Nurses                                                           | 0.88<br>(0.85–0.91; p=0.0001)         | 0.84<br>(0.77–0.97; p=0.0001)         | 0.74<br>(0.68–0.81; p=0.0017)       | 0.81<br>(0.75–0.89; p=0.0001)         | 0.77<br>(0.73–0.82; p=0.0001)    |
| Hospital beds                                                    | 0.99<br>(0.97–1.02; p=0.78)           | 1.00<br>(0.95–1.06; p=0.87)           | 0.98<br>(0.91–1.05; p=0.33)         | 1.00<br>(0.94–1.06; p=0.97)           | 1.0<br>(1.07–1.16; p=0.013)      |
| Health expenditure                                               | 0.94<br>(0.88–1.01; p=0.014)          | 0.97<br>(0.91–1.03; p=0.033)          | 0.93<br>(0.86–1.01; p=0.012)        | 0.96<br>(0.90–1.02; p=0.071)          | 0.94<br>(0.89–1.01; p=0.022)     |
| Military expenditure                                             | 1.08<br>(1.01–1.15; p=0.022)          | 1.14<br>(1.05–1.24; p=0.0079)         | 1.18<br>(1.01–1.38; p=0.036)        | 1.15<br>(1.04–1.27; p=0.0057)         | 1.15<br>(1.03–1.28; p=0.0080)    |
| Time trend control                                               | Yes                                   | Yes                                   | Yes                                 | Yes                                   | Yes                              |
| Total number of deaths prevented by USAID (2003–21)*             | 91 839 663<br>(85 690 135–98 291 626) | 13 286 157<br>(11 536 769–15 287 795) | 8 665 606<br>(7 203 360–10 415 507) | 30 391 980<br>(25 023 333–35 482 636) | 1 047 777<br>(936 488–1 173 273) |
| Percentage of deaths averted relative to total deaths (2003–21)* | 7.0%                                  | 11.5%                                 | 27.4%                               | 17.6%                                 | 9.0%                             |
| Number of observations                                           | 2793                                  | 2793                                  | 2793                                | 2793                                  | 2793                             |
| Number of countries                                              | 133                                   | 133                                   | 133                                 | 133                                   | 133                              |

Data are rate ratio coefficients (95% CI). In the row headers, data are mean (lowest value to highest value). Time shocks are controls for specific years of economic or health crisis (2007–08, 2015, 2020, and 2021). ASMR=age-standardised mortality rate; USAID=US Agency for International Development. \*To estimate the number of deaths averted by USAID between 2001 and 2021, we simulated a counterfactual scenario in which USAID funding was set to zero, while keeping all other variables constant. We predicted coefficient  $E(Y_i | X_i)$ , where  $X_i$  represents the set of covariates including the interventions, and  $Y_i$  are the mortality rate at country  $i$ , in year  $t$ . Thus, 100 000 Monte Carlo simulations were used to get a more accurate CI (appendix pp 31–32).

Table 2: Adjusted rate ratios from multivariable fixed-effects Poisson models for the association between age-standardized mortality and annual USAID funding per capita

## Articles

injury-related mortality, used as a negative control.<sup>30,31</sup> Finally, to reach a higher degree of confidence in the causal inference and the overall impact evaluation, we did

triangulation analyses<sup>32</sup> using difference-in-difference with propensity score matching,<sup>33,34</sup> evaluating the countries with low USAID coverage versus medium and high coverage in the years 2001 and 2021. We used Stata (version 17.0) for database processing and analysis.

For the forecasting analysis, we employed validated country-level microsimulation models to project the health effects of current USAID defunding and its progressive phase-out until 2030. Microsimulation is widely regarded as one of the most accurate forecasting methods, because it enables the incorporation of country-specific characteristics and their associated outcome probabilities into the modelling process. This characteristic is especially true when models are developed using projections on the basis of retrospective real-world cohorts, preserving the original distribution of variables, their intercorrelations, and country-specific trends.<sup>35</sup> Our modelling approach, based on previous studies,<sup>21,25,31</sup> was done in two stages: first, we created a synthetic cohort of all countries for the years 2024–30, extrapolating and modelling each country-level independent variable from the retrospective dataset; second, we predicted mortality using these independent variables as inputs in the same multivariate regression models employed in the retrospective analysis, incorporating the effect estimates derived from the ex-post evaluation.

In the first stage, we simulated two USAID scenarios: first, a business-as-usual scenario, keeping USAID funding at the levels of 2023; and second, the currently projected 83% funding cuts of 2025, and the potential termination of USAID funding from 2026 to 2030 (appendix pp 39–40). In the second stage, for each outcome and each scenario, we did 1000 Monte Carlo simulations, allowing parameter values to vary in each simulation cycle according to their underlying distribution. All-age mortality and under-five mortality across scenarios were compared using mortality rate ratios and absolute differences in the number of deaths, including estimates of the cumulative number of excess deaths over the entire 2025–30 period.

Further details of the modelling process—done in accordance with international model reporting guidelines (ISPOR-SMDM)<sup>36</sup>—are provided in the appendix (pp 39–44). These details also include model calibration, validation, parameter distributions for Monte Carlo simulations, and the model equations. All forecasting analyses were done using R (version 4.1.2).<sup>37</sup>

#### Role of the funding source

The funder had no role in the study design, data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, or writing of the manuscript and the decision to submit for publication.

#### Results

We calculated the mean values and trends of all the variables in the selected countries over the study

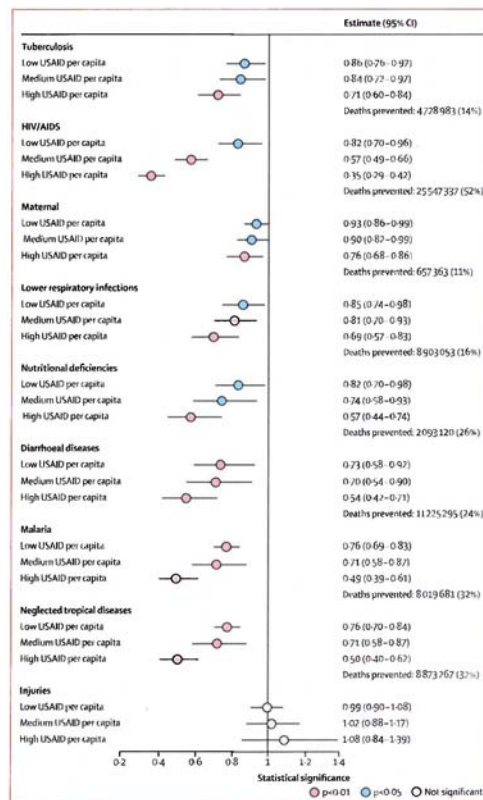


**Figure 1:** Rate ratios from the fixed-effect Poisson models for the association between specific causes of death related to USAID focus areas and USAID funding per capita per year. All models were adjusted for covariates (table 2; appendix p 27). To estimate the number of deaths averted by USAID between 2001 and 2021, we simulated a counterfactual scenario in which USAID funding was set to zero, while keeping all other variables constant. We predicted the coefficient  $E[Y_i|X_i]$ , where  $X_i$  represents the set of covariates including the interventions and  $Y_i$  the mortality at country  $i$ , in year  $t$ . Then, 100 000 Monte Carlo simulations were used to get a more accurate CI (appendix pp 37–38). USAID=US Agency for International Development.

period (2001–21; table 1). Overall ASMR started in 2001 at 11.65 (SD 3.46) per 1000 population and decreased by 13% until 2021, whereas the under-five mortality started at 73.71 (46.31) and reduced by 49%. On average, USAID funding increased by 97% (from \$1.38 to \$2.71 capita), whereas the average funding per country increased by 68% (from \$151 million to \$253 million). Overall, socioeconomic conditions improved, both in terms of GDP per capita, adequate sanitation, primary education, and other indicators. Health expenditure as a percentage of GDP and the number of physicians also increased. The Gini Index, hospital beds per 1000 population, and a few other indicators showed mild deterioration.

We calculated the associations between different levels of USAID funding per capita and decreases in mortality rates by age groups (table 2). High levels of funding were associated with lower mortality, in particular a 15% reduction for overall ASMR, 44% for toddler mortality, and 32% for under-five mortality. An estimated 91839663 (95% CI 85690135–98291626) all-age and all-cause deaths, including 30391980 (26023132–35482636) all-cause deaths in children younger than 5 years were averted by USAID funding over the study period.

We calculated the associations between different levels of USAID funding per capita and decreases in mortality by group of causes (figure 1). The strongest association was found for HIV/AIDS with a 65% reduction, followed by malaria with 51%, and neglected tropical diseases with 50%. Strong associations were also found for diarrhoeal diseases, nutritional deficiencies, lower respiratory infections, maternal mortality, and tuberculosis. No statistically significant association was observed with injuries, used as a negative control.

We calculated the average per-capita USAID disbursement from 2001 to 2021 across the 133 LMICs under study, along with the estimated percentage of total all-age and child deaths prevented over the same period by USAID funding, assuming homogeneous effectiveness across countries (figure 2).

Moreover, we developed stratification analyses evaluating the effects of USAID funding according to countries' characteristics; the effects were stronger in countries with lower HDI, low GDP per capita, and higher Gini Index. Further analyses according to age and sex showed that USAID funding had more effect on women, particularly during their reproductive age (appendix pp 30–31).

The findings withstood all the sensitivity analyses, showing that our results are robust, and all the triangulation analyses, increasing the confidence in the causal interpretation of the statistical associations (appendix pp 13–38).<sup>26</sup> Moreover, we evaluated all sensitivity, triangulation, and complementary results according to the consolidated Bradford Hill causal inference criteria for epidemiological studies (appendix

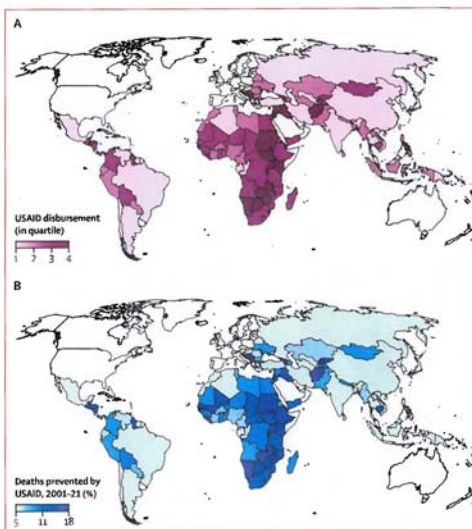


Figure 2: Average per capita USAID disbursement from 2001 to 2021, by quartile, across 133 low-income, lower-income and middle-income, and upper-middle-income countries and territories (A), and deaths (all ages) prevented by USAID implementation as a percentage of the total over the study period 2001–21. USAID disbursement (in quartiles; A) and deaths prevented by USAID, 2001–21 as a percentage (B). USAID=US Agency for International Development.

|         | Number of deaths at all ages | Number of deaths in children younger than 5 years |
|---------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 2025    | 1776539 (567604–2496308)     | 689900 (436368–911004)                            |
| 2026    | 2499575 (1521410–3490070)    | 878970 (575089–1178316)                           |
| 2027    | 2477031 (1507936–3458985)    | 798188 (553276–1039475)                           |
| 2028    | 2454816 (1494286–3428201)    | 768294 (531228–1003073)                           |
| 2029    | 2432809 (1480890–3396272)    | 739719 (513316–962867)                            |
| 2030    | 2411030 (1467499–3366678)    | 712098 (494694–926596)                            |
| 2025–30 | 14051750 (8475990–19662191)  | 4537157 (3124796–5950751)                         |

Data are number of deaths (95% uncertainty intervals). USAID=US Agency for International Development.

Table 3: Mortality rate ratios and numbers of avoidable deaths from the comparison of the forecast scenario of USAID defunding versus baseline from 2025 to 2030

pp 13–16). Finally, we estimated the number of deaths averted by USAID over the past two decades (2001–21), comparing predicted outcomes to a counterfactual scenario without USAID (USAID funding per capita of 0). We also validated these estimates with a prevented fraction for the population analysis (appendix pp 37–38),<sup>27</sup> which calculates the proportion of deaths averted by

comparing observed outcomes under actual USAID disbursements to those predicted in the absence of the intervention.

The microsimulation models (table 3) indicated that, in 2025, reductions in USAID funding per capita would result in approximately 1776539 (95% uncertainty interval 967604–2496308) all-age deaths and 689900 (436368–911004) deaths in children younger than 5 years. Over the remainder of the period, the complete defunding of USAID would cause an estimated 2450000 all-age deaths annually, leading to a total of 14051750 (8475990–19662191) excess all-age deaths and 4537157 (3124796–5910791) excess under-five deaths by 2030.

### Discussion

To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first to evaluate the impact of USAID funding—including all areas of its humanitarian and development assistance—on mortality, both overall and disaggregated by age and cause, over the past two decades and with projections to 2030. Our findings show that USAID-supported efforts have helped to prevent more than 91 million deaths across all age groups, including 30 million deaths among children. High levels of USAID funding were associated with a 15% reduction in all-age and all-cause mortality, a 65% reduction in mortality from HIV/AIDS, a 51% reduction from malaria, and a 50% reduction from neglected tropical diseases. Substantial decreases were also observed in mortality from tuberculosis, nutritional deficiencies, diarrhoeal diseases, lower respiratory infections, and maternal and perinatal conditions. By age group, the most pronounced reductions were seen in children younger than 5 years (32%). According to the forecasting models, the current steep funding cuts—coupled with the potential dissolution of the agency—could lead to more than 14 million additional deaths by 2030, averaging more than 2.4 million deaths per year. These deaths include 4.5 million among children younger than 5 years, or more than 700 000 deaths annually.

The strategic objective of USAID has been to administer assistance to nations identified as being of importance to the USA, as well as countries experiencing conflicts.<sup>1</sup> The agency leads US initiatives aimed at alleviating poverty, combating diseases, and addressing humanitarian needs globally. Additionally, USAID supported US commercial interests by promoting economic growth in developing countries and enhancing their capacity to engage in international trade. Since the 1990s, the health sector has received the most substantial funding from USAID. However, in 2022, humanitarian assistance emerged as the highest-funded sector because of the escalation of global humanitarian crises, in which USAID was responsible for 57.2% of nutrition interventions, 50.0% of food distribution, 54.4% of agricultural interventions, and 41.9% of clean water, sanitation, and hygiene projects.

In 2023, governance became the most funded sector, but humanitarian assistance returned to the top position in 2024, followed by health and governance. In the same years, education, agriculture, infrastructure, and economic growth also received relevant USAID investments.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, the impact of USAID on health and mortality reduction extends beyond its direct funding of health programmes and interventions. A substantial part of its influence stems from improvements in the social determinants of health, particularly among the poorest populations. In particular, USAID's support for poverty alleviation, education, and water and sanitation interventions—among many others—might have had a substantial effect on health outcomes, also considering the broader spillover effects these interventions can have on entire communities. Indeed, poverty alleviation interventions alone have demonstrated important effects on reducing both adult and child mortality. For example, cash transfer programmes have been shown to reduce adult female mortality by 20% and child mortality by 8% in LMICs,<sup>11</sup> with even greater reductions observed in specific contexts—such as an 18% reduction in under-five mortality in Brazil<sup>12</sup> and a 24% reduction across Latin America.<sup>13</sup> Education is another crucial determinant of health. A recent global meta-analysis found that each additional year of education reduces adult mortality risk by 1.9%.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, mothers who complete secondary education can reduce the mortality risk of their children younger than 5 years by as much as 31%.<sup>15</sup> Nutritional interventions, especially those targeting malnourished children, have also demonstrated profound effects, significantly lowering child mortality risk.<sup>16</sup> In addition, interventions aimed at improving access to safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene have been shown to reduce child mortality by 17%.<sup>17</sup> In addition to the effect on mortality through interventions addressing the social determinants of health, USAID also contributes substantially through its support for targeted health promotion, prevention, and treatment initiatives. These initiatives include disease-specific programmes such as PEPFAR for HIV/AIDS and PMI for malaria, both of which rely heavily on USAID for implementation, and partnerships such as Gavi for vaccine-preventable diseases, among many others. Data on funding according to some diseases and conditions, together with a comparison with the deaths averted, are provided in the appendix (pp 32–33).

Previous studies evaluating the effect of USAID interventions in the past decades showed a substantial effect on the reduction of mortality among women of reproductive age,<sup>18</sup> estimated at 1.3 million over the past two decades, and child mortality, with a reduction of 29 deaths per 1000 live births from 2000 to 2016.<sup>19</sup> By 2024, PEPFAR was estimated to have saved more than 25 million lives by supporting access to antiretroviral treatments and enabling 7.8 million babies to be born HIV free.<sup>20</sup> It has been estimated that, together with its

partners, PMI has helped to save 11.7 million lives and prevent 1.1 billion malaria cases since 2000.<sup>16</sup> Studies have attempted to estimate the potential effect of the 2025 USAID funding cuts, focusing on specific health-related interventions, using a variety of methodological approaches, ranging from rapid health impact assessments to advanced infectious-disease modelling. Some estimates suggest that USAID can prevent approximately 3.3 million all-cause, all-age deaths annually, with an uncertainty range of 2.3–5.6 million,<sup>17</sup> being the majority for HIV/AIDS (1.6 million deaths), tuberculosis (305 997 deaths), malaria (292 998 deaths), and many being prevented by humanitarian relief (548 951 deaths) and vaccinations (501 037 deaths). An impact counter estimated that USAID funding discontinuation caused 62 557 adult deaths and 130 535 child deaths just until mid-April 2025, with an average of 103 deaths per hour, and moving forward, could account for almost 1 million deaths per year.<sup>18</sup> A modelling study for HIV/AIDS estimated that HIV-related international aid reductions plus discontinued PEPFAR support could cause 4.43–10.75 million new HIV infections and 0.77–2.93 million HIV-related deaths between 2025 and 2030.<sup>19</sup> Regarding nutritional interventions, some estimates indicate that US-based disbursement for nutrition prevented approximately 600 000 child deaths in 2023 in LMICs,<sup>20</sup> while others suggest that its reduction for severe acute malnutrition will cut off treatment for millions of children, potentially causing 163 500 child deaths yearly.<sup>21</sup> A modelling study assessing the potential effect of reductions in USAID's disease-specific and health condition-specific programmes projected that, between 2025 and 2040, such cuts could result in an additional 15.2 million AIDS-related deaths, 2.2 million tuberculosis deaths, and 7.9 million child deaths.<sup>22</sup>

The results of our study—drawing on both retrospective (ex-post) and prospective (ex-ante) evaluations—align with previously cited assessments of deaths averted by USAID. However, our estimates tend to be higher, because they capture not only the direct effects of health-specific USAID interventions, as considered in earlier studies, but also the broader effect of USAID-supported programmes on the social determinants of health. These effects could have substantially contributed to the agency's overall influence on mortality reduction.

Following the announcement of the termination of more than 83% of USAID's programmes, humanitarian organisations have raised serious concerns about the absence of adequate notice or planning for a phased transition. Without time to implement adaptive responses, the most severe effects cannot be mitigated. The short-term, medium-term, and long-term consequences for public health, economic development, and societal stability could be profound.

However, the US administration's decisions compound cuts by other donors, pushing both humanitarian and development systems to the brink of collapse. As a matter

of fact, other western donors have announced reductions in aid budgets,<sup>23</sup> including the UK (40%), France (37%), the Netherlands (30%), and Belgium (25%), which represents a substantial funding crisis in the humanitarian and development aid sector. For 2025, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development estimates official development assistance could drop between 9% and 17%.<sup>24</sup> These decreases not only threatens to reverse three decades of unprecedented human progress, but also intensifies the extraordinary uncertainty and vulnerability already caused by the ongoing polycrisis.<sup>25</sup> Although local governments have had a crucial role in the improvements observed over the past decade—often supported by development aid—they will now need to further strengthen their capacities to respond effectively in this new context.

In our study, the substantial reduction in under-five mortality observed in countries receiving the highest levels of USAID funding suggests that an important portion of the global decline in child deaths over the past two decades—primarily in LMICs—could be attributable to humanitarian and development aid. Between 2000 and 2023, the number of global under-five deaths decreased from 10.1 million to 4.8 million.<sup>26</sup> Our projections indicate that disruptions to such aid could jeopardise this progress, making it increasingly difficult—if not impossible—for the poorest and most vulnerable countries to achieve Sustainable Development Goal target 3.2, reducing the under-five mortality rate to 25 or fewer deaths per 1000 live births by 2030.<sup>27</sup>

This study has several limitations. First, the causal interpretation of the statistical associations must be approached with caution. While the sensitivity and triangulation analyses, along with the application of the Bradford Hill criteria, support a high degree of confidence in a causal interpretation, the study design does not fully eliminate the possibility that the observed associations might not reflect a true causal relationship. Thus, the findings should be interpreted as providing strong support for a causal relationship, though they do not constitute definitive evidence. Another limitation pertains to the use of an aggregate-level analysis, which is subject to ecological fallacy—that is, the inferences drawn are valid at the country level, but not necessarily at the individual level. However, this design can also be considered a strength, as it allows for the inclusion of potential spillover effects—particularly relevant in the context of socioeconomic interventions, which might influence national mortality. Moreover, although the use of a comprehensive set of adjustment variables—based on the relevant literature—and the inclusion of two-way fixed effects (for country and year), along with the results of sensitivity analyses using alternative adjustment sets and the negative control analysis, all support the robustness of the findings and suggest an unbiased estimation of the effects of USAID funding, the potential for residual confounding due to

omitted-variable bias cannot be entirely ruled out. Nevertheless, triangulation analyses confirm the presence of a statistically significant effect, and comparisons with other studies support the plausibility of the observed effect sizes.

An additional limitation is that the study cannot disentangle the specific interventions or causal mechanisms through which USAID per capita funding produces its effects. Although the extensive sensitivity and triangulation analyses—along with comparisons to existing literature—reinforce the plausibility of the findings and their magnitude, only alternative study designs (eg, programme-specific evaluations) could precisely evaluate the effectiveness of individual USAID-funded interventions in LMICs. Our study also focused exclusively on evaluating the effects of USAID funding, among all donors involved in humanitarian and development aid, and should be interpreted accordingly. The magnitude of the observed association for USAID funding does not preclude the possibility that other donors or local governments might have similar—or even greater—impacts. For example, the substantial reductions attributed to USAID, such as a 65% decline in HIV/AIDS mortality in countries with high levels of funding, do not imply that other actors cannot have achieved similar results. The magnitude of a rate ratio—reflecting the difference between exposed and unexposed groups for a specific intervention—should not be interpreted as limiting effectiveness of other concurrent or complementary interventions.

Another limitation is that the forecasted scenarios carry inherent uncertainties, driven by two main factors: the difficulty in accurately predicting which specific USAID programmes will be reduced or terminated in the short, medium, and long term; and the inability to account for exogenous shocks, given the current volatility of the global economic and political landscape. Nonetheless, the primary aim of our analysis was not to model in detail the full range of potential USAID defunding scenarios or their varied effects. Instead, it was to estimate the consequences of a worst-case scenario—defined by the most severe funding cuts—relative to a business-as-usual continuation of USAID operations. Importantly, our goal was not to forecast the exact all-age and child mortality by 2030, but to compare two parallel scenarios that differ only in the path of the main exposure variable, USAID funding. Consequently, although external factors such as economic changes, climate events, or conflict might influence future mortality and deviate from our projections, the relative comparisons—such as mortality rate ratios and differences in the number of deaths—are expected to remain valid and robust.

Despite these limitations, the main strength of our study lies in the extensive range of sensitivity analyses done, all of which consistently confirmed the robustness of our findings. Additionally, triangulation analyses using

difference-in-differences combined with propensity score matching models provided further validation, strengthening confidence in the causal interpretation of the ex-post impact evaluation associations. Furthermore, the integration of these findings with validated microsimulation models enhanced the reliability of the forecasted scenarios (appendix pp 39–44).

In conclusion, our study demonstrates the crucial role that USAID funding has had in reducing mortality rates across LMICs over the past two decades, and the profound effect that the recent abrupt funding cuts could have on adult and child mortality in the coming years. Beyond causing millions of avoidable deaths—particularly among the most vulnerable—these cuts risk reversing decades of progress in health and socioeconomic development in LMICs, and could substantially undermine the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

#### Contributors

DMC and DR developed the study concept. DMC and ELB collected the data. AFS and ELB accessed and verified the data. DMC, DR, and LS designed the study investigation. DMC and LS did the data analysis. AFS and ELB accessed and verified the codes and routines. DR, DMC, LS, DP, and CM wrote the first draft of the manuscript. All authors contributed to data interpretation and reviewed and edited the manuscript. All authors consented to submit the manuscript, with DR and DMC taking responsibility for the final decision to submit it. DR coordinated and supervised the study process.

#### Declaration of interests

We declare no competing interests.

#### Data sharing statement

The data used are public and available from the US Government's Foreign Assistance (<https://foreignassistance.gov/>), the Global Burden of Disease (<https://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-results/>), WHO (<https://platform.who.int/mortality/>), and the World Bank (<https://data.worldbank.org/region/world>).

#### Acknowledgments

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Joaquin Castro #1  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Where do things stand with respect to scholarship support provided to American Universities in the Middle East like American University in Cairo (AUC) and the American University of Beirut (AUB)? Our understanding is that the State Department has turned back on two previously terminated USAID Scholarships for AUB, but not AUC. Will you reinstate AUC's USAID scholarships? If not, why were AUB's reinstated and not AUC's?

**Answer:**

The Department continues to provide scholarship support to American universities in the Middle East. Two Higher Education Scholarship awards to the American University in Beirut have been transferred to the Department from USAID. At this time, there are no plans to reinstate previously supported USAID scholarship programming at the American University in Cairo. Decisions regarding future funding allocations will be made in line with America First foreign policy objectives.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Joaquin Castro #2  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Do you plan to clear on allocations for the “tomorrow’s leaders program” in support of waived FY24 scholarship funding before the funds expire on September 30?

**Answer:**

The Department is committed to ensuring U.S. taxpayer dollars are used wisely and for their intended purpose, consistent with the law, including for U.S. foreign assistance programs. The Department intends to continue the Tomorrow’s Leaders (TL) Program with \$20 million in FY 2024 funding, for which you will shortly receive a formal congressional notification. The ongoing OMB-mandated foreign assistance review process may not be complete before TL implementing partners must make scholarship offers to a prospective Fall 2025 student cohort.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Joaquin Castro #3  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

What is the current status of the Department of State Student Internship Program established in 22 USC 2737? How many interns has the Department taken on for the Summer of 2025 and how much funding has the Department allocated for this program?

**Answer:**

The Department is reviewing the purpose and impact of all fellowship and internship programs and is committed to honoring its obligations to the existing Rangel and Pickering Fellowship Program, Foreign Affairs Information Technology Fellowship, and DS Clarke Fellowship.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Joaquin Castro #4  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

What is the status of current and incoming recipients of the Pickering and Rangel Fellowships? Has the Department confirmed that these two signature fellowship programs will continue receiving applications and remain in operation?

**Answer:**

The Department is reviewing the goals and impact of all fellowship and internship programs and is committed to honoring its obligations to the existing Rangel and Pickering Fellowship Program, Foreign Affairs Information Technology Fellowship, and DS Clarke Fellowship.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Joaquin Castro #5  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Has the Department contracted any services to analyze overseas positions for potential RIFs? If so, please share the details of such contracts.

**Answer:**

The Department does not comment on deliberative processes.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Joaquin Castro #6  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

How is the Department ensuring that it meets its statutory responsibility to declassify and publish historical diplomatic documents in its work with the State Department Historical Advisory Committee?

**Answer:**

The Office of the Historian is responsible for publishing the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) series. The Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation, sometimes called the Historical Advisory Committee (HAC), provides monitoring, advice, and recommendations to the Office of the Historian and the Secretary. The Department is committed to its legal duties with FRUS publications and is working on reconstituting the HAC.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Joaquin Castro #7  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

What is the most recent volume published by the State Department Historical Advisory Committee? What volumes are expected to be released in the near future?

**Answer:**

The Historical Advisory Committee (HAC) does not publish and is not responsible for publishing the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) series. The Department's Office of the Historian has statutory responsibility. The Department published "National Security Policy, 1985-88, Part 1," from the Reagan administration series on Friday, August 1. Before the end of the fiscal year, the Department plans to publish three chapters on Western Europe, 1977-80, as well as the volume on START, 1989-92 from the George H.W. Bush administration series.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Joaquin Castro #8  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

In April/May, the Trump administration ended the appointment of nine members of the State Department's Historical Advisory Committee, which is established in statute and performs a vital function to improve transparency into U.S. diplomatic history. Why did the administration choose to end these appointments?

**Answer:**

The Secretary has the authority to appoint and dismiss the members of the Historical Advisory Committee (HAC). The prior members were dismissed consistent with the need to promote rotation and institutional renewal. The terms of some members were due to expire in August and others in 2026. The Department is in the process of reconstituting the HAC. The Department intends to select new nominees before the end of the fiscal year.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Joaquin Castro #9  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

The State Department has historically provided diplomatic license plates to foreign missions and international organizations in the United States. The Department has also provided license plates to entities that may not receive diplomatic privileges and immunities, such as the Taiwan Economic and Cultural Relations Office (TECRO). What is the Department's process for assigning such plates?

**Answer:**

The Department's Office of Foreign Missions (OFM) is the sole authority in the United States for the issuance of diplomatic license plates, which indicate that the bearer may enjoy some degree of immunity. TECRO and its subsidiary offices operate in the United States pursuant to the Taiwan Relations Act and the AIT-TECRO Agreement on Privileges, Exemptions, and Immunities. OFM issues diplomatic license plates to vehicles registered to TECRO personnel reflecting the status and privileges they enjoy under that agreement.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Joaquin Castro #10  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Does an international organization require privileges and immunities to be extended under the International Organizations Immunities Act before being able to receive plates from the State Department?

**Answer:**

The Department's Office of Foreign Missions issues diplomatic license plates to qualifying international organizations and their personnel, which are entitled to varying levels of immunity. Those immunities may derive from U.S. and international law including, but not limited to, the International Organizations Immunities Act.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Joaquin Castro #11  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

What is the nature of the kinds of plates that TECRO has received? Does it come with any particular treatment under U.S. law? Do any other entities receive similar plates?

**Answer:**

Diplomatic license plates solely indicate that the bearer may enjoy some degree of immunity. Plates issued to TECRO and its subsidiary offices bear an “E” prefix code to differentiate it from other foreign missions while still indicating the immunities granted to TECRO personnel under U.S. law via the Taiwan Relations Act and the AIT-TECRO Agreement on Privileges, Exemptions, and Immunities. Vehicles of certain other foreign missions that are not embassies or consulates also receive plates with an “E” prefix code.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Joaquin Castro #12  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Is the Department able to provide a list of countries or entities that have received plates from the State Department, along with the two-letter codes assigned by OFM to each country?

**Answer:**

The Department is available to brief you on this request.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Joaquin Castro #13  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

The Foreign Service Families Act of 2021 required public universities to provide in-state tuition to members of the Foreign Service and their dependents, starting with July 2024. Has the Department confirmed that members of the Foreign Service and their dependents are able to access in-state tuition, provided they otherwise qualify, at public universities in the United States? Are there any university systems that have not implemented the required changes to extend this treatment to members of the Foreign Service and their dependents?

**Answer:**

While the Foreign Service Families Act mandates the provision of in-state tuition for eligible employees, individual states retain discretion over the specific documentation required and procedures that must be followed.

Students and families may need to consult the relevant state higher education authorities to determine the exact process for applying for in-state tuition under this provision. The Department can provide employment verification to employees if required by the respective state but does not regularly hear from employees regarding issues related to this entitlement.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Joaquin Castro #14  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question**

What is the status of the implementation of the Foreign Service Families Act of 2021's provisions related to the termination of residential or motor vehicle leases and telephone service contracts (22 USC 4087)?

**Answer:**

The Department inserted additional text into employee travel orders to inform employees of the Foreign Service Families Act protection and confirm to landlords and vendors the applicability of the FS Families Act. Department contact information for verification purposes was included. The current process, with the additional enhancements described above, fulfills the intent and requirements of this legislation.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Joaquin Castro #15  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024 established the ‘Bureau Chief Data Officer Program’ to increase the use of data throughout the State Department. What procedures has the Department put in place to coordinate the work of the range of bureau-level AI officers?

**Answer:**

The bureau chief data and artificial intelligence officers (BCDAOs) are critical to advancing the use of data and AI across the Department; ensuring data is managed as a strategic asset and enabling data-informed, AI-enabled decision making. Representing their bureau leadership, BCDAOs engage in key Department enterprise data and AI governance councils led by the chief data and artificial intelligence officer. BCDAO activities are also coordinated through centralized support from the Bureau of Diplomatic Technology Center for Analytics to ensure alignment of data and AI initiatives.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Joaquin Castro #16  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Were any individuals at the Center for Analytics terminated as a part of the July 2025 Reductions-in-Force? If so, why was the Center for Analytics, which enjoys significant bipartisan support and performs a vital role, targeted for Reductions in Force?

**Answer:**

The Center for Analytics was impacted by the July Reductions-in-Force. RIF actions have been made based on the procedures described in the Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Joaquin Castro #17  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Please describe the process for the State Department to provide such approval, including the offices involved in the approval process and what considerations are taken into account before accepting or rejecting a request for permission.

**Answer:**

The Department does not comment on deliberative processes.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Joaquin Castro #18  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

How many individuals has the Department provided such approval to in the last two years? Please share information on which U.S. service those individuals are affiliated with and which foreign government they were approved to receive employment or compensation from.

**Answer:**

The Department does not comment on deliberative processes.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Sydney Kamlager-Dove #1  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

How many positions at the State Department were dedicated to the CARE Office or otherwise associated with Afghan relocation mission (e.g. the Afghan SIV Unit) on January 19, 2025?

**Answer:**

On January 19, CARE and others associated with the Afghan relocation mission maintained a team of 1,792 individuals that included 59 direct hire personnel, 1,660 third party contractors, 68 personal service contractors, and three re-employed annuitants both in Washington, DC, and Doha, Qatar. On January 19, the Afghan SIV Unit, which is separate from the Office of Afghanistan Affairs, had 140 staff members.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Sydney Kamlager-Dove #2  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

How many people are currently working in the CARE Office or otherwise associated with the Afghan relocation mission? If positions were reprogrammed to a different office or eliminated since January 19, 2025, please provide a detailed accounting of what happened to them.

**Answer:**

The Department realigned positions related to CARE's core functions to the Office of Afghanistan Affairs. The Department has a team of 1,516 individuals working on these issues, including 30 direct hire personnel, 1,447 third party contractors, 37 personal services contractors, and two re-employed annuitants both in Washington, DC, and Doha, Qatar. From January to July, platform closures and a series of consolidations among contracts and positions led to a decrease in positions. As of July, the Afghan SIV Unit, which is separate from the Office of Afghanistan Affairs, has 101 staff.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Sydney Kamlager-Dove #3  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

How many people working in the CARE Office or otherwise associated with the Afghan relocation mission received Reduction in Force notices since January 19, 2025? Have any of these notifications subsequently been rescinded, and if so how many?

**Answer:**

Ten civil service and foreign service positions with CARE were reduced on July 11. The Department is in the process of implementing the reorganization of offices and duties. Thus, the Department is not in a position at this time to accurately provide a specific quantification of the rescission of RIF notices, if any.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Sydney Kamlager-Dove #4  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

In your testimony, you noted that the functions formerly performed by the CARE Office will be aligned to the Bureau of South and Central Asia's Office of Afghanistan Affairs. How many people in the Afghanistan Affairs Office will be performing functions formerly the responsibility of CARE or otherwise associated with the Afghan relocation mission?

**Answer:**

The Department assigned a senior advisor to lead the integration of CARE's core functions within the Office of Afghanistan Affairs and manage its transition. Ten civil service and foreign service positions with CARE were reduced on July 11. The Department maintains 1,516 positions working on these issues, including U.S. direct hires, third-party contractors, and personal services contractors in Washington, DC, and in Doha to manage relocation efforts.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Sydney Kamlager-Dove #5  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Section 7810 of PL 118-159 requires the appointment of a Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts. Please provide a complete list of who has served in this role since January 19, 2025 and the period of time for which they were designated as the coordinator.

**Answer:**

As Deputy Secretary Rigas previously stated to committee staff, the Secretary intends to appoint the assistant secretary for south and central Asian affairs, once confirmed, as the coordinator for Afghan relocation efforts. The integration of the Department's Afghan relocation efforts into the Office of Afghanistan Affairs is currently being managed by a senior advisor, while the Doha platform director oversees day to day operations, and the efforts as a whole are being supervised by the office director and the SCA Front Office, including the SCA senior bureau official.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Sydney Kamlager-Dove #6  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Who currently serves as the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts? Do you anticipate that changing due to the State Department's reorganization or other planned shifts?

**Answer:**

As Deputy Secretary Rigas previously stated to committee staff, the Secretary intends to appoint the assistant secretary for south and central Asian affairs, once confirmed, as the coordinator for Afghan relocation efforts. The integration of the Department's Afghan relocation efforts into the Office of Afghanistan Affairs is currently being managed by a senior advisor, while the Doha platform director oversees day to day operations, and the efforts as a whole are being supervised by the office director and the SCA Front Office, including the SCA senior bureau official.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Sydney Kamlager-Dove #7  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Please provide a breakdown by month of how many Special Immigrant Visas were issued since January 2025.

**Answer:**

From January 1 through August 3, 2025, there were a total of  
7,130 Special Immigrant Visas issued (all chargeabilities).

| <b>Visa Category</b>      | <b>Jan.<br/>2025</b> | <b>Feb.<br/>2025</b> | <b>March<br/>2025</b> | <b>April<br/>2025</b> | <b>May<br/>2025</b> | <b>June<br/>2025</b> | <b>July<br/>2025</b> | <b>Aug.<br/>2025</b> | <b>Grand<br/>Total</b> |
|---------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| SQ1 (Principal Applicant) | 402                  | 242                  | 276                   | 186                   | 247                 | 185                  | 202                  | 32                   | 1,772                  |
| SQ2 (Spouse of SQ1)       | 311                  | 143                  | 200                   | 135                   | 182                 | 144                  | 162                  | 21                   | 1,298                  |
| SQ3 (Child of SQ1)        | 1,024                | 455                  | 637                   | 415                   | 502                 | 430                  | 474                  | 82                   | 4,019                  |
| SW*                       | 5                    | 6                    | 21                    |                       | 3                   | 3                    | 1                    | 2                    | 41                     |
| <b>Grand Total</b>        | <b>1,742</b>         | <b>846</b>           | <b>1,134</b>          | <b>736</b>            | <b>934</b>          | <b>762</b>           | <b>839</b>           | <b>137</b>           | <b>7,130</b>           |

\*SW-Surviving spouse or child of an SQ1 eligible person and their derivatives

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Sydney Kamlager-Dove #8  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Please provide a breakdown by month of how many principal applicants have received consular interviews since January 2025.

**Answer:**

There were 1,865 principal applicants (all chargeabilities) interviewed from January 1 to August 3, 2025.

| <b>Visa Category</b> | <b>Jan. 2025</b> | <b>Feb. 2025</b> | <b>March 2025</b> | <b>April 2025</b> | <b>May 2025</b> | <b>June 2025</b> | <b>July 2025</b> | <b>Aug. 2025</b> | <b>Grand Total</b> |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| SQ1                  | 418              | 279              | 213               | 207               | 253             | 240              | 210              | 10               | 1,830              |
| SW1                  | 7                | 14               | 5                 |                   | 3               | 4                | 2                |                  | 35                 |
| <b>Grand Total</b>   | <b>425</b>       | <b>293</b>       | <b>218</b>        | <b>207</b>        | <b>256</b>      | <b>244</b>       | <b>212</b>       | <b>10</b>        | <b>1,865</b>       |

\*SW-Surviving spouse or child of an SQ1 eligible person and their

derivatives.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Sydney Kamlager-Dove #9  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Assuming availability of visas and funding, a qualifying employment deadline of December 31st, 2024, and an application deadline of December 31st, 2025, by when does the Department currently estimate that they would complete processing of eligible Afghans?

**Answer:**

Following Chief of Mission (COM) approval, Afghan Special Immigrant Visa applicants submit required documentation and can then schedule their visa interview at a U.S. embassy or consulate that processes immigrant visas. A significant number of COM-approved Afghan SIV applicants have not requested their visa interview be scheduled; therefore, their cases remain pending. Since action lies with SIV applicants to schedule their visa interviews, it is not possible to predict how long it will take to complete processing all eligible applicants.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Sydney Kamlager-Dove #10  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

In your testimony, you noted that you were unfamiliar with Camp As Sayliyah (CAS), the major “lily pad” for Afghan evacuees potentially eligible for relocation to the United States. As the official responsible for the Department’s overseas’ footprint, do you plan to close down CAS or other overseas facilities that previously supported Enduring Welcome activities?

**Answer:**

The Department is actively considering the future of the Afghan relocations program. At this time, no final decisions have been made. The Department continues to support Afghans currently at Camp As-Sayliyah.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Sydney Kamlager-Dove #11  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Can you commit to keeping CAS and other “lily pads” operational until the Afghan relocation mission is fully complete, as defined by the parameters employed in Question Nine?

**Answer:**

The Department is actively considering the future of the Afghan relocations program. At this time, no final decisions have been made. The Department continues to support Afghans currently located at Camp As-Sayliyah. This location in Doha, Qatar, is the remaining U.S. platform for the relocation of Afghans. Afghan Special Immigrant Visa processing continues, as does processing of immediate family immigrant visas.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Sydney Kamlager-Dove #12  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Can you commit to keeping CAS and other “lily pads” operational or at least until their existing population has been relocated to the United States or a safe third country?

**Answer:**

The Department is actively considering the future of the Afghan relocations program. At this time, no final decisions have been made. The Department continues to support Afghans currently located at Camp As-Sayliyah. This location in Doha, Qatar, is the remaining U.S. platform for the relocation of Afghans.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Brian Mast #1  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Has D-MR given procurement guidance related to implementing the America First agenda in foreign assistance, specifically in regard to global health commodities?

**Answer:**

The Department is continuing procurement for approved lifesaving global health commodities related to HIV/AIDS, Malaria, Tuberculosis, Maternal and Child Health programs, and nutrition that align with the America First agenda. No additional procurement guidance has been issued.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #1  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

What are the specific policy priorities that this reorganization aims to support?

**Answer:**

The reorganization of the Department supports the White House's "America First" foreign policy agenda by streamlining operations, reducing bureaucracy through the consolidation of functions, and eliminating redundant and non-statutory offices. Key to this effort was the integration of USAID to ensure foreign aid aligns with broader foreign policy goals and national interests. This will make the Department more accountable to the American taxpayers and empower the workforce from the ground up, from the bureaus to the embassies.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #2  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Why were these priorities not included in your communication to staff?

**Answer:**

The Department has communicated with its workforce about reorganization priorities and structural changes, including the potential for layoffs and reassignments. The Department operates under structured policies and procedures for staffing and reorganization, which prioritize coordination, approval, and resolution at higher levels before communicating changes to staff.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #3  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

What specifically are you trying to accomplish through this reorganization and budget?

**Answer:**

The President has made a clear commitment to cutting the federal deficit and improving the return on investment for the American people. Both the FY 2026 Budget Request and the reorganization of the Department further the same objective of delivering a more agile, focused Department that will always put America first on the global stage. The reorganization is calibrated to ensure that the Department's operations, from its regional diplomatic core to its foreign assistance capacities, are maximally efficient and fully aligned with and support core U.S. national security and foreign policy objectives.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #4  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

How do you justify an 85% budget reduction to make the U.S. stronger and safer?

**Answer:**

The FY 2026 budget request of \$28.5 billion for the Department will allow us to fulfill our mission, while streamlining programs and operations for a more effective and efficient Department for the American people. This request aggressively aligns resources toward objectives that are in the best interests of our nation and at an overall cost savings.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #5  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Are you aware of any detailed, written strategy, beyond charts and bullet points, that outlines how the Department's new organizational structure accounts for personnel and resource cuts? If so, will you provide these documents to the Committee?

**Answer:**

On May 29, the Department transmitted a 136-page Congressional Notification (CN 25-032) outlining the rationale and strategy for reorganizing the Department's domestic operations. The CN provides details on changes to bureaus and offices that address structural problems of bureaucratic overgrowth and overlapping office mandates. The CN also includes information about personnel and resource changes associated with the reorganization.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #6  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Considering the Administration's use of "America First" as its stated guiding principle please explain how "America First" translates into concrete goals, strategic priorities, or performance metrics for the State Department reorganization?

**Answer:**

The Department's 2025 reorganization, guided by the "America First" principle, focused on a major overhaul of the Department's structure, funding, and foreign policy objectives. A central goal is to streamline the Department and eliminate a bloated bureaucracy which involves consolidating, eliminating, or realigning the Department's structure and operations to better advance U.S. foreign policy and national interests.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #7  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

What questions or prompts were communicated to employees for their input?

**Answer:**

The reorganization was an interactive and inclusive process, designed to align the Department with 21st century challenges. Early in the process, a comment portal was established to gather feedback from the workforce, ensuring transparency and collaboration. The reorganization reflects input from employees and aims to empower regional bureaus and embassies while reducing inefficiencies. This approach prioritizes efficiency and responsiveness, ensuring the Department operates at the speed of relevance to advance America's core national interests.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #8  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

How were employees made aware of the opportunity to provide input?

**Answer:**

In April, the Department launched an internal website to provide comprehensive information about the reorganization and actively solicit feedback from the workforce. The portal – which received over 650 comments – included a dedicated link where employees were encouraged to share their thoughts, ideas, and perspectives on the proposed changes, ensuring their input was considered in shaping the reorganization.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #9  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Were respondents afforded the opportunity to provide input anonymously?

**Answer:**

The Department reorganization was an interactive and inclusive process, designed to align the Department with 21st century challenges. Early in the process, a comment portal was established to gather feedback from the workforce, ensuring transparency and collaboration.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #10  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Were any other employee surveys or baseline assessments conducted prior to initiating this reorganization? If not, why were such assessments not conducted?

**Answer:**

As part of the reorganization process, Department leadership developed thoughtful and deliberative plans based on extensive feedback from Congress and members of our workforce.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #11  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Please provide employees' comments with the needed redactions of names along with any other employee surveys or baseline assessments prior to initiating this reorganization.

**Answer:**

Using the internal comment portal for the reorganization, most respondents stated the reorganization of the Department was long overdue and voiced support for the effort.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #12  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Have you engaged directly with State Department staff about how management decisions impact their day-to-day responsibilities?

**Answer:**

I am committed to continued communication with the workforce to ensure the reorganization is implemented in a transparent way that allows the Department to remain relevant and effective. Undersecretaries – as well as many senior bureau officials – also held town halls immediately following reorganization plans to answer employees' questions directly.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #13  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Given your experience and current role, do you believe you have a comprehensive understanding of the complexities and operational nuances of the State Department to effectively oversee its management and reorganization?

**Answer:**

Yes, I am confident I have the right experience for my current role to oversee the Department reorganization. It is my responsibility to ensure we are good stewards of the taxpayer dollars Congress provides the Department and that they are spent in accordance with the goals of the President and the Secretary and I take this responsibility very seriously.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #14  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

How was the decision to reduce the workforce by 15% specifically determined?

**Answer:**

As the Secretary has stated, we must reform and streamline the Department so that it becomes an effective instrument of American foreign policy. This reduction of the domestic footprint was necessary to ensure we move at the speed of relevance.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #15  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Can you explain why this percentage was selected as opposed to other figures such as 5%, 20%, or a different number?

**Answer:**

We must reform and streamline the Department so that it becomes an effective instrument of American foreign policy. This reduction of the domestic footprint was necessary to ensure we move at the speed of relevance.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #16  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Is the Administration considering a similar percentage reduction in the personnel of other departments?

**Answer:**

I cannot comment on the Administration's plans for other Departments.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #17  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Given the significant scope of these workforce reductions, how does the Department plan to mitigate potential impacts on its ability to carry out U.S. foreign policy and diplomatic missions globally?

**Answer:**

The reorganization empowers bottom-up decision making by enabling embassies and regional bureaus with greater authority to make decisions based on local needs and conditions, ensuring foreign aid and policy implementation are tailored to specific regions that advance security and economic growth.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #18  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Is the Department considering similar workforce reductions for Foreign Service personnel assigned overseas?

**Answer:**

The Department is not planning reductions to overseas personnel at this time.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #19  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Can you clarify whether overseas personnel have already been affected by these reductions? If so, was this due to intentional policy or because of an administrative error in the implementation process?

**Answer:**

RIF lists were based on the official system of record assignment of employees as of May 29, and overseas personnel may have been impacted based on encumbered positions as of that date.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #20  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

How does the Department intend to ensure that workforce reductions do not adversely impact the U.S.'s ability to effectively engage with foreign governments, support American citizens abroad, and advance national interests?

**Answer:**

Workforce reductions were tailored to affect non-core and / or duplicative functions. Care was taken not to compromise core diplomatic functions.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #21  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

How many veterans were fired from the Department this year?

**Answer:**

The reorganization implementation has not concluded, so final details are not yet available.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #22  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

In the case of an error, what are the processes to correct these mistakes?

**Answer:**

RIF notifications provided clear guidance, including a dedicated email address for employees to report and resolve any errors promptly.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #23  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

How can an employee request a review of their termination if they think it is done mistakenly or illegally?

**Answer:**

Employees were advised to review their HR data to ensure it was accurate in March and in June. They were provided with instructions on how to correct any data errors. Employees were advised in their RIF letters to contact the Department and were provided with an email inbox specifically for this purpose.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #24  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Why was the FAM amended in June 2025 to establish significantly narrower “competitive areas” whereby each office and overseas post is treated as a separate competitive area?

**Answer:**

Reductions were tailored, consistent with applicable law, to affect non-core and / or duplicative functions. Care has been taken not to compromise core diplomatic functions, including diplomatic security, passport services, and diplomats staffing country desks.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #25  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

How does this change ensure that the Department retains the highest-performing Foreign Service Officers within its competitive diplomatic corps?

**Answer:**

The purpose of the domestic reorganization is to focus the Department's resources on policy priorities and eliminate redundant functions to better deliver for American taxpayers and empower the workforce from the ground up, from the bureaus to the embassies. The Department is focused on meritocratic promotion and ensuring employees' talents are used and their accomplishments recognized to retain the most talented diplomatic corps.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #26  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

How does this new approach to RIFs ensure that the rights of veterans and other protected groups are preserved when offices are slated for elimination?

**Answer:**

Reductions were tailored, consistent with applicable law, to affect non-core and duplicative functions. Care has been taken not to compromise core diplomatic functions, including diplomatic security, passport services and diplomats staffing country desks. 3 FAM 2585 describes retention criteria and points.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #27  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Can you confirm that you will continue to affirm the obligation of the Department to comply fully with laws enacted by Congress regarding appropriations and authorized activities?

**Answer:**

The Department implements enacted appropriations consistent with applicable law.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #28  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

What is the Department's legal justification for restructuring USAID from an independent agency into a bureau within the State Department?

**Answer:**

As of July 1, the management of USAID programs transitioned to the Department, with targeted humanitarian and strategic programs continuing while USAID closes out funding and programming tied to canceled activities.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #29  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

How does the Department justify canceling or reducing programs that were previously authorized and funded by Congress at USAID and other related agencies?

**Answer:**

As of July 1, the management of USAID programs transitioned to the Department, with targeted humanitarian and strategic programs continuing while USAID closes out funding and programming tied to canceled activities.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #30  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

What safeguards, if any, were put in place to ensure that Foreign and Civil Service Officers were not targeted for removal solely because they had previously served in assignments focused on recruitment, retention, or workplace diversity?

**Answer:**

The reorganization ensured personnel reductions were data-informed and not arbitrary, relying on thorough reviews and operational needs. Leadership across the Department provided critical input to ensure decisions were informed and strategic. The reorganization aimed to eliminate redundancy and align functions with national priorities, enhancing efficiency.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #31  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Given that State Department employees rotate through a variety of assignments often based on Departmental needs rather than personal preference, how did the Department distinguish between routine career assignments and politically motivated activity?

**Answer:**

RIF lists were based on the official system of record assignment of employees as of May 29. The reorganization ensured personnel reductions were data-driven and not arbitrary, relying on thorough reviews and operational needs. Leadership across the Department provided critical input to ensure decisions were informed and strategic. The reorganization aimed to eliminate redundancy and align functions with national priorities, enhancing efficiency and agility.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #32  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

What procedures were implemented to ensure that individuals were not removed based on perceived political affiliation, such as having served in a DEI-related portfolio, but rather based on objective performance criteria?

**Answer:**

RIF lists were based on the official system of record assignment of employees as of May 29. The reorganization ensured personnel reductions were data-informed and not arbitrary, relying on thorough reviews and operational needs. Leadership across the Department provided critical input to ensure decisions were informed and strategic. The reorganization aimed to eliminate redundancy and align functions with national priorities, enhancing efficiency.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #33  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Has the Department complied with each of the requirements under Section 5403?

**Answer:**

The Secretary and I are committed to implementing the President's executive order 14173: Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit Based Opportunity by ensuring that all internal and external hiring, recruitment, career development, and performance management policies and programs are merit-based and free from language that may violate the text and spirit of longstanding civil-rights laws and comply with statutory requirements.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #34  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

What is the Department's justification for the reported termination of these programs which were designed to advance these objectives?

**Answer:**

The Secretary and I are committed to implementing the President's executive order 14173: Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit Based Opportunity by ensuring that all internal and external hiring, recruitment, career development, and performance management policies and programs are merit-based and free from language that may violate the text and spirit of longstanding civil-rights laws and comply with statutory requirements.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #35  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Is the Department currently collecting the data specified under this provision?

**Answer:**

The Department will comply with statutory requirements related to workforce data.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #36  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Will the Department submit the required report to Congress?

**Answer:**

The report will be submitted to Congress when complete.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #37  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Have you or your office had any discussion with officials from OPM or OMB about this proposed schedule and its implications for the State Department?

**Answer:**

The Department does not comment on internal personnel matters.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #38  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Has the State Department created or begun work on a plan to convert career Foreign and Civil Service employees into a new classification under Schedule Policy/Career?

**Answer:**

The Department does not comment on internal personnel matters.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #39  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

If career officials implemented policy priorities in good faith under the previous administration, does that not demonstrate their willingness to serve professionally, regardless of political leadership?

**Answer:**

As the Secretary has said, the Department must be reformed to improve its efficiency, responsiveness, and accountability to make it more effective at promoting U.S. interests around the world. Career officials are expected to fully and faithfully execute U.S. foreign policy initiatives, as defined by the President, regardless of the political affiliation of the administration then in office.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #40  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

On what basis are some State employees being labeled as “crooked” or “dishonest” for performing their official duties?

**Answer:**

The Department expects all employees to fully and faithfully execute U.S. foreign policy initiatives, as defined by the President.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #41  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Is the Department currently considering the closure of any U.S. embassies, consulates, or other overseas posts?

**Answer:**

The Department continues to assess our global posture to ensure we are best positioned to address modern challenges on behalf of the American people.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #42  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

What specific criteria, date, or policy priorities are informing the Department's internal analysis regarding the potential closure of diplomatic missions abroad?

**Answer:**

No embassy or consulate closures have been announced, and operations continue as normal. The Department continues to assess our global programs and posture to ensure we are best positioned to address modern challenges on behalf of the American people.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #43  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

What steps, if any, is the Department taking to mitigate the long-term strategic risk associated with diminishing U.S. presence and influence in international education and exchange?

**Answer:**

The Department regularly reviews programs to ensure alignment with the Administration's priorities for the benefit of the American people and effectiveness for the American taxpayer. The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs conducts globally recognized programs and platforms that build U.S. influence, promote U.S. values, and support the Administration's priorities, such as America250 and hosting the FIFA World Cup and LA2028 Olympics.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #44  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

The 9/11 Commission concluded that American national security depends on not only military strength, but also on development, good governance, and opportunity abroad. Given that conclusion, how does the Administration justify an 85% cut to the State Department and USAID budget, reductions that directly diminish the U.S.'s ability to lead on governance, economic development, and stabilization efforts globally?

**Answer:**

As the Secretary stated, the Administration will continue to provide foreign assistance when it is clearly in the national interest of the United States. The Department is aligning foreign assistance with foreign policy and will ensure that every dollar spent is justified to the American taxpayer. At the same time, the Department will look to innovative partners, including in the private sector, on how to better structure programs that are funded by Department foreign assistance to achieve tangible results.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #45  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

When you refer to loyalty in the context of public service, to whom or to what are you referring; loyalty to the President, to the State Department, to the Constitution, or to something else?

**Answer:**

Foreign service officers take an oath of office wherein we swear to support and defend the U.S. Constitution, and to discharge the duties of the office into which we are entering well and faithfully, which in the case of the Department, means pursuing the nation's foreign policy goals, as defined by the Administration.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #46  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Given the legal and ethical requirement that civil servants remain apolitical, how do you reconcile the call for loyalty with the statutory protections that ensure merit-based hiring and retention?

**Answer:**

All foreign service officers take an oath of office to support and defend the U.S. Constitution and to discharge the duties of the office into which we are entering well and faithfully. In the case of the Department, discharging the duties of the office into which we are entering fully and faithfully means pursuing the nation's foreign policy goals, as defined by the President, to the best of our abilities. Adhering to that oath of office is a requirement for the job. Should an employee find themselves unable to comply with the terms of that oath, then they have an obligation to leave the organization.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #47  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Do you believe that political loyalty should be a formal consideration in the hiring or retention of career public servants at the State Department?

**Answer:**

All foreign service officers take an oath of office to support and defend the U.S. Constitution, and to discharge the duties of the office into which we are entering well and faithfully. In the case of the Department, discharging the duties of the office into which we are entering fully and faithfully means pursuing the nation's foreign policy goals, as defined by the Administration, to the best of our abilities. Adhering to that oath of office is a requirement for the job. Should an employee find themselves unable to comply with the terms of that oath, then they have an obligation to leave the organization.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #48  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Do you believe that a 28-year-old with no substantial prior experience in foreign assistance, international development, or humanitarian policy is qualified to oversee and sign off on billions of dollars in global funding on behalf of the American taxpayer?

**Answer:**

The Department is committed to ensuring it is appropriately resourced to advance the Administration's priorities, and I support the Secretary's efforts to put a team in place that fully supports his priorities and foreign policy agenda including necessary staffing changes.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #49  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

How does placing an individual without subject-matter expertise into a position of significant authority over global development resources advance the Department's long-term effectiveness, accountability, or strategic posture?

**Answer:**

The Department is committed to ensuring it is appropriately resourced to advance the Administration's priorities, and I support the Secretary's efforts to put a team in place that fully supports his priorities and foreign policy agenda including necessary staffing changes.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #50  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Who is now overseeing these programs? For the Rangel, Pickering and Payne Fellows, can you guarantee that they will secure positions in the USAID and State Department Foreign Service as required by contracts the U.S. government has signed?

**Answer:**

The Department is reviewing the future of all fellowship and internship programs and is committed to honoring its obligations to the existing Rangel, Pickering, Clarke, and FAIT Fellows.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #51  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

How does the Department ensure that employees affiliated with external organizations maintain impartiality in executing their official duties?

**Answer:**

The Department instructs employees on “Conflicts of Interest and the Standard of Impartiality” in 11 FAM 612.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #52  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Given recent changes affecting other employee affinity groups, can you describe how the Department views the role and influence of the Ben Franklin Fellows?

**Answer:**

In response to executive order 14173: Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity, the Department continues to pause activities for all employee affinity organizations and has not recognized the Ben Franklin Network as an employee organization since at least February 1.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #53  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

How does the Department ensure that personnel decisions, including hiring and promotion, remain grounded in merit and the Department's mission, particularly considering the involvement of external organizations such as the Ben Franklin Fellows?

**Answer:**

Employees are expected to work to advance Administration priorities, while upholding professionalism and integrity. The Department's hiring policy is founded upon recruiting the best-qualified employees through fair and open competition, ensuring compliance with merit system principles and Equal Employment Opportunity laws.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #54  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Do you agree that the American public has a right to transparency regarding how taxpayer dollars are allocated and the policy objectives they support?

**Answer:**

The Department agrees that transparency is important in how these funds are allocated and the policy objectives they support, as this fosters accountability and public trust. The Department is committed to ensuring that U.S. taxpayer dollars are used wisely and for their intended purpose, consistent with the law, including for U.S. foreign assistance programs.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #55  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Can you provide details on whether the United States has provided funding to the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation?

**Answer:**

USAID obligated \$30 million in FY 2024 International Disaster Assistance (IDA) through a grant to the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation on June 26. The Department is now managing this award and has disbursed \$10.5 million under the grant, to date.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #56  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

If so, please specify the amount, the rationale for the funding, and the intended goals of this support.

**Answer:**

The Secretary determined the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) was the sole and best option for delivering life-saving aid to Gazans without diversion or interception by Hamas and other bad actors. This funding has helped GHF to deliver more than 100 million meals across multiple distribution centers, while mitigating the risk of diversion by Hamas.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #57  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

How does the Department ensure transparency and accountability for U.S. funding directed to this initiative?

**Answer:**

Gaza Humanitarian Foundation is subject to the same compliance oversight consistent with applicable U.S. law and regulatory requirements as all organizations receiving foreign assistance.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #58  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Are you aware of reports that in July 2025, Jeremy Lewin, Acting Under Secretary for Foreign Assistance, Humanitarian Affairs and Religious Freedom, approved a \$30 million grant to the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, potentially waiving key counterterrorism and anti-fraud safeguards?

**Answer:**

The United States awarded this life-saving grant to provide life-saving assistance to people in Gaza. USAID waived certain pre-award requirements at the outset, turning them into post-award milestones.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #59  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

If so, please provide your assessment of this decision.

**Answer:**

To meet the needs of people in Gaza in a manner consistent with our commitments to Israeli security, the Department is applying full effort to alleviate the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and roundly condemns all actions that interfere with the distribution of food. Our support for the Gaza Humanitarian Fund is key to this effort.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #60  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Were you aware of any objections raised by Department personnel about funding the GHF?

**Answer:**

I was not involved in the process of obligating this award. Any time there are concerns by Department personnel about a project, those are taken into due consideration. In the end, policy decisions are made based on the priorities of the Secretary that he receives from the President.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #61  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

How does reducing American farmer's access to international markets through cuts to the Food for Peace program align with the broader goal of promoting American prosperity?

**Answer:**

The FY 2026 request represents a streamlining of foreign assistance.

This includes the proposed International Humanitarian Assistance (IHA) account, which can be used to respond to emergency food needs through the most effective and appropriate means for each crisis – including procurement of agricultural commodities from American farmers.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #62  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Have you or other Department officials engaged directly with farmers or beneficiaries of the Food for Peace program to assess the impact of the proposed elimination of this initiative?

**Answer:**

The FY 2026 Request proposes the International Humanitarian Assistance (IHA) account, which includes the ability to address emergency food needs through the procurement of agricultural commodities (including from American farmers), as well as market-based assistance.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #63  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

The strategic competition between the U.S. and China is global in scope, with China significantly expanding its diplomatic and development efforts worldwide. In 2018, China surpassed the U.S. in spending on international scholarships and exchange programs, aiming to cultivate influence among emerging global leaders. The U.S. has traditionally used this approach through programs such as Fulbright. Given the Administration's proposal to eliminate all U.S. educational programs abroad, how does the Administration plan to maintain or enhance the U.S.'s competitive position against China in this regard?

**Answer:**

All Department programs must benefit the American people and reflect a responsible use of taxpayer funds. Strategically targeting resources allows us to respond nimbly to emerging challenges from China through cost-effective tools and platforms that build U.S. influence around the world. This model will place us in a stronger position to challenge China's exploitative economic, security, and political practices while advancing U.S. national security and economic interests.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #64  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Can you specify which Presidential or administrative priorities the America First Opportunity Fund is intended to support?

**Answer:**

The America First Opportunity Fund would increase the Department's ability to appropriately and quickly respond to new and emergent national security needs. For example, the account could support some of our most enduring and critical partners, such as Jordan and Egypt; advance activities critical to keeping Americans safe, such as supporting repatriation and removal operations by foreign governments; fund activities that strengthen U.S. national security by countering China and other near-peer rivals; support activities that advance U.S. economic interests, such as the South Pacific Tuna Treaty and the emerging U.S.-India COMPACT.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #65  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

What controls and safeguards will be implemented to ensure that funds from the America First Opportunity Fund (AIOF) cannot be used for personal or political benefits of any individual in the Administration?

**Answer:**

If enacted, the AIOF will be used to fund strategic investments that make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous. It would not be used for the personal or political benefit of any individual. Decisions about use of the fund would be made by the leadership of the Department and will respond to both enduring and emergent U.S. national security priorities.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #66  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

What specific oversight mechanisms will Congress have over expenditures from the America First Opportunity Fund (AIOF)?

**Answer:**

Congress plays a critical role in appropriating funding for the Department and foreign assistance. If the AIOF is enacted, the Department will engage Congress in accordance with applicable laws on the use of funds.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #67  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Could you explain the rationale behind proposing the elimination of established foreign assistance programs, which operate under robust Congressional oversight, in favor of a new discretionary fund subject primarily to Executive branch control?

**Answer:**

The America First Opportunity Fund is proposed to replace several disparate economic and development assistance accounts to ensure the Department provides more streamlined and responsive foreign assistance. This will allow the Department to respond to 21st century challenges. Congress will continue to play an important oversight role, in addition to providing funding through the annual appropriations process.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #68  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

What strategic, performance-based, or operational analyses were conducted to support the decision to wind down USAID as an independent agency?

**Answer:**

Planning for the Department reorganization and the transition of USAID programs to the Department was calibrated to ensure the Department is fully equipped to perform rigorous oversight of foreign assistance programs. Centralizing capabilities and transitioning USAID's core life-saving and strategic aid programs to the Department enables this administration to significantly enhance the efficiency, accountability, uniformity, and strategic impact of foreign assistance programs.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #69  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

What transition planning was conducted prior to initiating the closure of USAID?

**Answer:**

At USAID, a task force of senior policy advisors, in consultation with the Office of Foreign Assistance at the Department, conducted a substantive, individualized evaluation of foreign assistance programs. Foreign assistance awards were reviewed to ensure that they reflected the President's foreign policy priorities, advanced American interests and reflected responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars. Responsibility for managing ongoing programs has transitioned to the Department, and USAID is continuing to conduct certain legacy functions, including the close-out of terminated programs.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #70  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Specifically, what steps were taken to mitigate disruption to U.S. foreign assistance operations, personnel, and program continuity in partner countries?

**Answer:**

The Department has taken significant steps to ensure continuity in U.S. foreign assistance operations, personnel, and programming transitioned from USAID. Using expedited hiring authorities approved by the Office of Personnel Management, the Department has recruited direct hire staff, including 291 domestic Schedule A personnel and 117 overseas Limited Term Foreign Service appointments, primarily from USAID. Additionally, 417 locally employed staff will be brought on board. Where appropriate, many term-limited appointments are expected to transition into permanent roles. Most of the new U.S. direct-hire employees were onboarded before July 1, with locally employed staff on-boarding in August.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #71  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

What oversight mechanisms has the Department put in place to ensure continuity, accountability, and impact measurement across foreign assistance activities following USAID's closure?

**Answer:**

The Department has a long history of providing robust oversight over its foreign assistance programs. In addition, the Department is in the final stages of hiring personnel from USAID with experience in foreign assistance policy and program oversight and management. These resources, when combined with existing Department capabilities, will provide the necessary expertise and capacity to provide oversight, ensure continuity of programming and guarantee the accountable use of taxpayer funds to achieve foreign policy objectives going forward.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #72  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

How is the Department ensuring that the transition results in improved outcomes and more efficient use of taxpayer resources?

**Answer:**

The focus of this restructuring has been to enable the Department to operate at the speed of relevancy and to develop and shape a diplomatic vision that delivers for our nation long into the future. Some examples of steps we intend to take to ensure increased effectiveness and efficiency around the use of taxpayer funds include: streamlining the Department, consolidating the number of bureaucratic hurdles that encumber the Department from operating smoothly, equipping regional bureaus with the necessary tools to conduct modern diplomacy, and centralizing certain administrative and support functions.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #73  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

What is the Department's current capacity to administer foreign assistance programs that support democracy, human rights, and civil society engagement abroad following the reduction in force at DRL?

**Answer:**

In line with the Secretary's vision that country experts lead on country-specific policy and programs, we are in the process of transitioning responsibility for implementing targeted DRL programs to the regional bureaus, where appropriate, and where it advances U.S. national interests. The Department will continue to administer foreign assistance-funded democracy programs in line with administration policy and consistent with applicable requirements.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #74  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

How does the Department intend to ensure continuity in U.S. support for individuals and organizations working to advance democratic reforms, especially in countries where civil society is under pressure or facing threats?

**Answer:**

DRL continues to do its statutorily required work to defend the rights core to our nation's founding.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #75  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Given the recent changes, how is the Department ensuring that foreign assistance programming, including grants already awarded, is subject to effective oversight and accountability mechanisms?

**Answer:**

All foreign assistance programming, including grants already awarded, is subject to thorough oversight and accountability measures. The new Office of Foreign Assistance Oversight houses the Department's monitoring, evaluation, vetting and accountability functions and is critical to the Secretary's commitment to greater accountability in the delivery of foreign assistance.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #76  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

To your knowledge, when and how did the Administration determine that the public statement in question was inaccurate?

**Answer:**

I was not employed by the Department at that time and cannot speak to any such determination.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #77  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Was a formal internal review conducted, and if so, can you summarize its findings?

**Answer:**

I was not employed by the Department at that time.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #78  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

The Administration has made public claims of fraud, waste, and abuse related to USAID and State Department programs, in some cases suggesting criminal conduct. Can you provide a summary of the evidence underlying those claims, and any referrals that have been made to independent investigative bodies?

**Answer:**

I refer you to the USAID and Department's Offices of Inspector

General for further information.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #79  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Can you commit to maintaining preserving the USIP headquarters building and not allowing occupancy by any organization other than the United States Institute of Peace until these legal processes are exhausted?

**Answer:**

The Department of State does not have custody of this building and therefore is not in a position to make decisions about its use.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #80  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

What is the Administration's strategy to support a just resolution that holds Russia accountable for its actions, including the targeting of civilians and other violations of international law?

**Answer:**

The President has made it clear the violence and killing in Ukraine are unacceptable and that there can be no military solution to this war. The devastating human toll of this war is precisely why the President is committed to peace. The President's priority is creating conditions for the Kremlin to agree to a ceasefire and stop the killing. We will judge Russia's commitment to peace by its actions and not its words.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #81  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Can you clarify the current process through which U.S. foreign policy toward Ukraine is being formulated and executed? Specifically, who is leading the interagency process and making final determinations about U.S. support for Ukraine?

**Answer:**

The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, Special Presidential Envoy for Ukraine Kellogg, Special Envoy Witkoff, and the Secretary collaborate closely to advance the President's call to stop the bloodshed in Ukraine and achieve a durable and lasting end to this war. Many other offices contribute their expertise and effort to this multifaceted mission.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #82  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Why has the Administration canceled programs, such as those implemented by the Conflict Observatory, that supported this work?

**Answer:**

The Department is continually evaluating our foreign assistance programs to ensure they make America stronger, safer, and more prosperous. Following the Department's review of awards to ensure every dollar spent is based on the administration's priorities, the Conflict Observatory program was terminated on February 26. Ukraine has developed an effective interagency platform to track and work toward the return of Ukrainian children forcibly transferred or deported by Russia. This effort has strong multinational and private donor participation and support.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas by  
Representative Gregory Meeks #83  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Why defer or delay accountability efforts that the international community and the U.S. have previously championed?

**Answer:**

The President's priority is ending the violence and killing by creating the conditions to get Putin to negotiate, reach a ceasefire, and ultimately achieve enduring peace through a negotiated settlement.

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**Questions for the Record Submitted to  
Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas  
Representative Dena Titus #1  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
July 15, 2025**

**Question:**

Would you support congressional authorization of the Diplomatic Reserve Corps and is the Department adequately resourced to support such a personnel system?

**Answer:**

The Department ensures readiness while adapting to a new fiscal landscape by optimizing existing infrastructure and expertise.

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