



U.S. Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-MD) speaks outside the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) building, after billionaire Elon Musk, who is heading U.S. President Donald Trump's drive to shrink the federal government, said work is underway to shut down the U.S. foreign aid agency USAID, in Washington, U.S., Feb. 3, 2025. (Reuters/Kent Nishimura)

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U.S. President Donald Trump is considering merging the U.S. Agency for International Development with the State Department to boost its efficiency and ensure its spending is in line with his administration's agenda, a senior White House official said on Monday (Feb. 3).

"President Trump has entrusted Elon (Musk) to oversee the efficiency of this agency," said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity. He added that there were discussions about sending a notification to U.S. Congress to inform lawmakers of the administration's plans.

Billionaire Musk is heading Trump's drive to cut wasteful spending within the federal government. But Musk's increasingly harsh accusations against USAID — many lodged without evidence — have raised questions about whether his political views are driving efforts to gut the agency.

The rush of events has also underlined Musk's powerful role in setting Trump's agenda. Last week, Musk's team at the Department of Government Efficiency gained access to the most sensitive payment systems at Treasury and, as Reuters reported, locked some federal personnel career employees out of their agency's own computers.

Hundreds of USAID programs covering billions of dollars worth of lifesaving aid across the globe came to a grinding halt after Trump on Jan. 20 ordered a freeze of most U.S. foreign aid, saying he wanted to ensure it is aligned with his "America First" policy.

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If USAID were put under the State Department, it would likely have dramatic consequences for the distribution of aid from the world's largest single donor, the United States.

Trump told reporters on Feb. 2 that USAID has "been run by a bunch of radical lunatics." He added, "We're getting them out, and then we'll make a decision."

Musk said in a broadcast on Feb. 3 that USAID was "beyond repair," and that Trump agreed it should be shut down.

In the broadcast, Musk said he had discussed USAID in detail with Trump. "I want to be clear," Musk said. "I actually checked with him a few times. I said, 'Are you sure?' 'Yes.'"

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters in San Salvador that he was now the acting head of USAID, calling the agency "completely unresponsive" and accusing the staff there of being "unwilling to answer simple questions" about programs.

Over the past week, mayhem has prevailed at USAID's offices in Washington, D.C., where dozens of staff have been put on leave. Over the weekend two senior security staff were also put on leave after refusing to provide classified documents to DOGE employees on site. On Feb. 3, USAID employees were told their headquarters in downtown Washington had been shut for the day.

"At the direction of the Agency leadership, the USAID headquarters at the Ronald Reagan building in Washington, DC will be closed to Agency personnel on Monday, February 3, 2025," said an internal email to USAID staff, seen by Reuters.

The White House official said employees were asked to stay home due to security concerns on property.



People hold placards outside the USAID building, after billionaire Elon Musk, who is heading U.S. President Donald Trump's drive to shrink the federal government, said work is underway to shut down the U.S. foreign aid agency USAID, in Washington, U.S., Feb. 3, 2025. (Reuters/Kent Nishimur)

The row between DOGE staff and USAID triggered outrage among Democrats. A group of Democratic lawmakers said they would gather at 1 p.m. ET outside the USAID headquarters to protest the closure, calling it "the Trump administration's and Elon Musk's illegal shutdown."

In fiscal year 2023, the U.S. disbursed \$72 billion of aid worldwide on everything from women's health in conflict zones to access to clean water, HIV/AIDS treatments, energy security and anti-corruption work. It provided 42% of all humanitarian aid tracked by the United Nations in 2024.

The State Department issued worldwide stop-work directives after Trump's freeze order, with the exception of emergency food assistance. Experts warned the move risks killing people.

Three sources familiar with the matter told Reuters that USAID personal services contractors (PSC) — who carry out the bulk of the work in the agency's humanitarian bureau — have also

been locked out of their government accounts.

"Without PSCs, there is no longer functionally a Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance in USAID. The waivers from Secretary of State Rubio for emergency food and other urgent assistance are a smokescreen and farce if there is no one to make the awards happen," a USAID official said.

(Reporting by Steve Holland, Jonathan Landay, Jarrett Renshaw, Humeyra Pamuk, Erin Banco, Daphne Psaledakis and Pete Schroeder; Additional reporting by Patricia Zengerle; Writing by Daphne Psaledakis; Editing by Humeyra Pamuk, Mark Porter and Nia Williams)