

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 7, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio:

We write with escalating concern about the spiral of destabilizing and likely illegal orders drafted by officials under your direct authority and often approved by you, with said orders providing directives to the global workforce of USAID. While any new administration has a right to review programs, you do not have authority to unilaterally dismantle USAID, an independent agency created and funded by federal law, and destroy its infrastructure and workforce in a manner that would be difficult and even more costly to repair, despite how critical they are to our national security.

The February 4, 2025, communication to USAID staff announcing administrative leave for the global USAID workforce, along with a declaration that the Agency is working on a plan to force and fund the return of the global workforce—including their family members—raises a series of urgent questions to which Congress is owed immediate answers. While your directive suggests that exceptions will be granted for designated programs and personnel with extenuating circumstances, the necessary guidance hasn't been provided and many personnel have already been cut off from their emails with little way to seek clarity. We are incredulous that any such plan, which would come with great logistical challenges and cost to taxpayers, could be lawfully organized and funded under current requirements. Public reporting that an appointee<sup>1</sup> under your direction suggested that the military would step in if the impossible deadlines that were set for this global retreat were not met raises even more questions about how these appointees would be authorized to obligate U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) funds and manpower, at the direct cost of our military readiness.

We are extremely skeptical about the legal authority under which such an evacuation may be undertaken but also the counterproductive and inefficient nature of the order.

Therefore, we request answers to the following series of questions. We look forward to your response no later than February 12, 2025.

1. What is the expected cost of the forced recall of USAID staff from overseas locations? Please detail the estimated cost of transportation for staff, for dependents, for obligated but unused housing and all other anticipated costs separately.

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<sup>1</sup> ABC News, "USAID to place all direct-hire staff on administrative leave starting Friday," Will Steakin, Lucien Bruggeman & Shannon K. Kingston, February 4, 2025, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/state-department-recalling-usaid-staffers-foreign-assignments-sources/story?id=118460434>.

2. From what accounts is this funding expected to be withdrawn, and under what authority would the Agency use funding in this manner?
3. What are the terms of leases for office space that will be impacted by this forced recall, how quickly do you anticipate terminating them and how many months of rent for unused office space will U.S. taxpayers pay for?
4. Please name the “applicable requirements and laws” to be taken into consideration in planning the evacuation, as referenced in the notification to all USAID staff.
5. What specific congressional funding directives will go unmet as a result of the forced withdrawal of these personnel?
6. Given the abrupt nature of the forced recall of USAID staff, what plans would the Agency have to provide a resettlement allowance for resettled staff and what amount is intended for that allowance?
7. From what accounts would such resettlement allowances be withdrawn and under what authority would the Agency use funding in this manner?
8. Who is responsible for making case-by-case determinations as referenced in the announcement to all USAID staff, by name and office? What accommodations will be available to those with medical and familial needs?
9. What is the specific process for requesting and evaluating those determinations and what is the timeline for these decisions?
10. What coordination is happening with DoD regarding potential support for evacuations?
11. Who at DoD is responsible for this coordination, by name and by office?
12. Under what authority is DoD potentially providing assistance for this evacuation?
13. What specific platforms and assets are being requested of DoD to support this evacuation and how would their capabilities and responsibilities be covered while on this task deviating from their normal mission set?
14. What is the estimated cost to DoD in dollars and in manhours required to support this evacuation?

An abrupt withdrawal of overseas personnel for this critical agency directly contradicts your statements during your confirmation that the United States needs to show up and be engaged as we work to counter our adversaries around the world, in support of our own national security. The work of development is critical to this national security mission, as it reduces drivers of global instability that contribute to conflict and mass migration, in addition to saving lives. This

preventative action comes at a low cost to the taxpayer for the value provided, and a literal retreat from this global mission would amount to burning taxpayer dollars and even military readiness for an emergency of your own making. Images of withdrawal would provide a defining and lasting stain on the United States' reputation and our failures, and we urge you to shift course.

Sincerely,



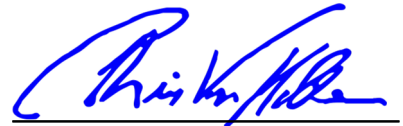
Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



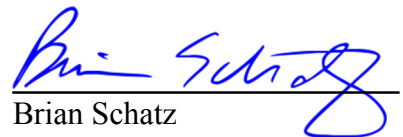
Jeffrey A. Merkley  
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