

# Defending USAID

By Bruce Bawer

**In 2025, being a Democrat means never having to say you're sorry**

"I've been cynical when it comes to the government," [said](#) Kari Lake about the indefensible expenditures that Elon Musk has uncovered at USAID, "but it's so much worse than even I thought."

Indeed. The [preposterous](#) outlays that politicians and podcasters have been shaking their heads over – for example, \$2 million for sex changes in Guatemala, \$20 million for *Sesame Street* in Iraq, \$8 million to teach Sri Lankan journalists to avoid binary-gendered language, \$1.5 million for trans advocacy in Jamaica, \$1.5 million for the Cuban media, \$3.9 million for trans causes in Macedonia, \$1 million "to [help](#) disabled people in Tajikistan become climate leaders" – are bad enough.



But even worse are the revelations that USAID spent money to defeat populists around the world – Bolsonaro in Brazil, Le Pen in France – and [paid](#) \$20 million for dirt on Rudy Giuliani that could be used to impeach Donald Trump. Huge sums were spent to fund "fact-checking" – and we know what that means. Half a billion dollars [went](#) to the Internews Network, which "trained" thousands of journalists around the globe and promoted censorship of social media. "Nearly the entire mainstream media – worldwide – has been funded by the US government under the USAID," [tweeted](#) Ron Paul. T

Most unbelievable of all, USAID actually sent cash to

terrorist groups and terrorist states, as [outlined](#) by Daniel Greenfield last Friday – for example, \$2.3 billion to Somalia over the last two years, \$2.1 billion to Gaza and the West Bank since October 7, 2023, \$3.7 billion to the Taliban since it took over Afghanistan, \$1.1 billion to Hezbollah-run Lebanon. Even projects that sound like the kind of thing USAID should have been doing turn out to have been incompetently executed: medical shipments that never reached their destinations, a power plant that was never completed. We're learning that USAID was a tool of the CIA and other intelligence agencies, engaging on their behalf in covert activities that had nothing at all to do with foreign aid. Then there's the plain and simple fraud, the kickbacks, the graft, the grift: all kinds of numbers and names are being [thrown](#) around – Bill Kristol, the Clintons (inevitably) – although the full story and exact figures have yet to be established.

And the only thing that's even more mind-blowing than the scale of these outlays is the scale of the phony self-righteous blowback from many of those who participated in, covered up, and/or profited from it – or who are, quite simply, ideologically aligned with the far-left radicals at USAID and knew all along that it was a crooked operation. Instead of slinking off in shame and looking for the nearest cave to hide in, these vermin doubled down on their dishonesty and shifted into ultra-high dudgeon mode.

On Capitol Hill, the usual suspects served up the predictable falsehoods. Bernie Sanders [tweeted](#): “Elon Musk, the richest man on earth, is dismantling USAID, which feeds the poorest children on earth.” This cheesy line was echoed across social media. Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT) [tweeted](#) that Musk's “decimation of USAID” was an example of “the billionaire corruption of our government”: Musk, insisted Murphy, seeks to “keep China happy, and nothing makes China happier than USAID, a major thorn in the side to Beijing, being erased from the

world.” (Corruption! China! Classic Alinsky tactics: accuse your enemy of doing what *you’re* doing.)

Sen. Chris Coons (D-DE) [expanded](#) on Murphy’s fear-mongering: if USAID goes down, “terrorists will win. Russia will win. China will win.” He didn’t mention that USAID, far from protecting America from terrorists, was *actually giving them money*. The phony hand-wringing about poor children was through the roof. Adam Schiff sent out a ludicrous [tweet](#) about how help from USAID after an earthquake inspired kids in Pakistan to play with model U.S. helicopters. “We came to their aid in their darkest hour....Trump doesn’t want us doing that anymore.”

One Democrat after another, emphasizing that nobody had voted for Elon Musk, waxed eloquent about the sacred Constitution (which they’ve rarely if ever enthused over) and the Founding Fathers (men whose statues were being razed a couple of years back by radical nutcases whom these same creeps were cheering on). Rashida Tlaib [tweeted](#) that Musk was “dismantling our democracy....This is a constitutional crisis.” Morgan McGarvey (D-KY) [reminded](#) the public that the Constitution created three branches of government. Yes, we know – and the Department of Education and agencies like USAID are all *part of the second branch*, of which Trump, under the Constitution, is the embodiment.

Noting Trump’s determination to bring down the DoE and USAID, McGarvey asked: “What’s next, Social Security?” He knows better. Just the other day Trump made it clear that he not only doesn’t want to eliminate Social Security – he wants to eliminate the *tax* that recipients pay on their Social Security income. Elizabeth “Pocohontas” Warren [tweeted](#): “I often talk about righteous fights. Make no mistake: we are in one.” Richard Blumenthal [accused](#) Musk of “doing a power grab and information heist, the biggest in American history, and probably the most detrimentally financially to Americans taxpayers.” To believe this, you’d have to know nothing about

what Musk has already uncovered. And you'd have to trust Blumenthal, Mr. Stolen Valor himself, more than you trust Elon Musk.

But the legislator who really took the cake was Sen. Tina Smith (D-MN), who [tweeted](#) that "Elon Musk and his interns meddling in aviation safety is truly terrifying." She must have forgotten that this is the man who landed a gigantic rocket back on earth and is sending a spacecraft to rescue the astronauts stranded by Biden on the space station. Nancy Pelosi, for her part, [smeared](#) Musk as an "unelected billionaire." Yes, he's a billionaire because he's a genius – while Nancy and her husband are super-rich because they're crooks.

Sen. John Kennedy (R-LA) [summed](#) it up neatly: "A lot of my Democratic colleagues and members of the tofu crowd are very upset and screaming like Musk stole their dog. But they are not talking about what Mr. Musk is finding."

No, they weren't. And it wasn't just Democrats on Capitol Hill who were silent about the facts. Reporters without Borders [thundered](#) that Trump had "frozen billions of dollars around the world in aid projects, including over \$268 million allocated by Congress to support independent media and the free flow of information." Not a word about the billions in waste and graft. And how the hell can any news organization be "independent" if it's taking cash from a government? The *Guardian* [tried](#) to sell the lie that government agencies' huge number of outrageously costly subscriptions to Politico Pro were legit. So did another lefty UK sheet, the *Independent*, which [maintained](#) that anyone suggesting that those subs weren't on the up-and-up was pushing a "MAGA conspiracy theory."

And the BBC, while [contending](#) that neither Trump nor Musk had "provided clear evidence" to support their unflattering descriptions of USAID – again, you'd have to know nothing

about Musk's findings in order to buy that lie – shed crocodile tears over the “profound impact” of their actions “on humanitarian programmes around the world.” To be sure, the BBC was honest enough to admit that its own charity, BBC Media Action, had received \$3.23 million from USAID in 2024 – though it didn't explain why USAID should be doling out that kind of American taxpayer money to the BBC, which gets enough cash from robbing Britain's own citizens.

Larry Garber, who was a senior official at USAID under Clinton and Obama, [responded](#) to Musk's findings by asserting “that USAID career staff are professionals who ensure that taxpayer dollars are not wasted and that the benefits from authorized programs are maximized.” But he, too, chose not to respond to specific outlays that prove beyond doubt that USAID had indeed squandered taxpayer dollars. Similarly, *Time Magazine* [provided](#) a long list of mostly noble-sounding USAID programs that may or may not have accomplished anything but, again, didn't try to defend the absurd expenditures uncovered by Musk. Absurdly, Alex Soros – son of George, Mr. Bought Power himself and the inventor of that most peculiar of professions, the non-prosecuting prosecutor – had the audacity to call Musk and his team an “unelected cabal.”

And just-fired USAID director and longtime Obama acolyte Samantha Power, [described](#) by the media personality Lionel as a “pitiful sniveling mastermind,” [proclaimed](#) that the wonderful people who work at USAID don't choose to work there “for the money” but because they “want to make a difference in the world” – yes, by pursuing their own agendas with billions of dollars of other people's money, and with no transparency, no oversight, and no concern whatsoever for the wishes or welfare of American taxpayers.

Power spoke up for “vulnerable people around the world.” What about vulnerable people in the U.S.? Why didn't USAID help the people of Maui, of Pacific Palisades, of western North Carolina? Of course we know why: because if you're a loony

progressive, there's a lot more of a *frisson* in spending \$1.5 million to advance DEI in Serbia or \$2 million to promote "LGBT activism" in Guatemala than in housing and feeding Americans left homeless by fire or flood.

Was USAID on your radar a couple of weeks ago? It was hardly on mine. Yes, like every other American, I've heard all my life about grotesque government waste. But I didn't realize USAID was anywhere near the colossus that it is. An old friend who worked in developmental aid in Central Europe after the fall of Communism told me that for him, Trump's takedown of USAID is a dream come true. When I asked for details, he wrote back explaining that after 1989, the George H. W. Bush administration initially sought to aid the newly free countries of Europe through the private sector – not USAID.

My friend was transferred to a new organization in Central Europe, under the aegis of which major U.S. business leaders selflessly used their expertise to help create stock exchanges and the like. But USAID, whose experience largely involved building dams and addressing humanitarian issues in Third World countries, wanted in: these lefties were "convinced that only they knew how to deliver aid of any sort." Over time, alas, the corporate types moved out and USAID "went in big time," concocting projects and farming them out to "fawning secondary NGOs" while USAID's own staffers "just sat around and 'managed'" – more often than not poorly, turning whole projects into "an uncoordinated farce." Eventually USAID was brought in to help fund my friend's organization, among others. "This," he writes, "is when it got really bad," with USAID repeatedly sending to his office "fact-finding" delegations that were unaware of one another. USAID had become bloated and inefficient. It turned out Central Europe was not Central Africa.

The EU, my friend says, did a better job at this stuff, as did individual European countries, notably the Netherlands. And "it slowly but surely dawned on many that USAID had nothing

that illuminating to bring to the table"; indeed, as Czechia and then Poland and Hungary prospered, they grew embarrassed to be receiving aid from a program "typically associated with third world countries and problems." It didn't help that many USAID officials were not only condescending but also, in many cases, ideologically blinded to the failings of socialism, with some of them actually believing the leftist hype about these countries' broken-down health-care systems.

And that was the 1990s. It almost sounds quaint and innocent compared to what we're learning three decades later, when USAID has ballooned into an institutional leviathan – a patchwork of fanatical progressivism and old-fashioned self-dealing, all shot through with world-class inanity, incompetence, and iniquity. We're only beginning to get a sense of the extraordinary dimensions of the perfidy, and yet it's already, as Kari Lake said, way beyond anything some of us could ever have imagined. Yes, we knew there was a Deep State – but who knew just how deep and vast it would turn out to be? And how many of us are even capable of feeling the amount of outrage that we should all be experiencing after learning just how much we've been ripped off and lied to?

And, as I said at the start, the only thing that's more astonishing than all of this outright criminality is the shamelessness with which the grand poobahs of the left rushed to the defense of USAID and went on a full-throated attack against Trump and Musk.

We've known for a long time, of course, that Schiff, Sanders, Pelosi, Blumenthal, Warren, and company were skunks who've gotten rich on \$193,000 salaries, but to see them turning the appalling reality on its head – painting USAID as a company of saints who've been working selflessly for America, and painting Trump and Musk as ruthless con men who are undermining democracy – is to recognize that the radical lunatics at USAID and their unscrupulous allies are just about as bad as human beings can get: utterly lacking in any

semblance of conscience or conviction, and capable of saying and doing anything to preserve their power and their grift.

Similarly, we knew that Donald Trump was a performer of miracles and Musk a man of genius, but to see them at once successfully pulling the curtain back on, and killing off, this nefarious behemoth of an agency – and already preparing to move on to expose waste and corruption in other parts of the executive branch – is to witness something that feels unprecedented, unparalleled, and almost too good to be true. And what a victory – a victory for ethics and democracy and fiscal responsibility – after years during which the entrenched powers and their media stooges worked overtime to destroy Trump, because they recognized him as the one force that could, just maybe, bring them down. And he's doing so. May justice prevail to the fullest possible extent. When has American politics ever been so patently a matter of good vs. evil?

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