

**FISCAL YEAR 2025 UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR  
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT BUDGET REQUEST**

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**HEARING**

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS**

**UNITED STATES SENATE**

**ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS**

SECOND SESSION

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**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2024**

U.S. SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Benjamin L. Cardin, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Cardin [presiding], Menendez, Shaheen, Kaine, Booker, Van Hollen, Duckworth, Risch, Romney, Ricketts, Paul, and Cruz.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM MARYLAND**

The CHAIRMAN. The hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

Our hearing today is for the United States Agency for International Development budget request for fiscal year 2025. We welcome the Honorable Samantha Power with us today.

The director is doing an incredible job with all the challenges we have around the world so we thank you very much for your public service.

From the civil war in Sudan to terror attacks and coups in western Africa and the Sahel region to the famine in Gaza to the humanitarian crisis in Haiti, there are more and more challenges in the world today.

[Disturbance in the hearing room.]

The CHAIRMAN. There will be no outbreaks. You will be asked to leave. I am going to have to ask you to leave. I have to ask you to leave.

And yet despite the best efforts of our colleagues on the Appropriations Committee—I know that we have Senator Shaheen here with Senator Coons, who chairs the subcommittee—the foreign assistance budget for this year enacted 6 months into the year declined by 5 percent and some parts of USAID budgets by as much as 10 percent. The result is that when we try to address one crisis we often have to use money from somewhere else.

We should not have to choose between addressing the climate crisis or helping vulnerable communities adapt to our rapidly changing world, or housing refugees fleeing violence, or funding anti-cor-

ruption programs, or strengthening our global health initiatives. We need to expand the pie.

Administrator Power, I know you deal with these daunting challenges every day at USAID. I appreciate your leadership, and thank you for appearing before us today.

I recognize that you and your team work in some of the toughest and dangerous places in the world by supporting economic development in the Pacific Island nations to Latin America, USAID is pushing back against China's growing influence.

By helping Ukraine with direct budget support you are keeping the government open while it fights back against Putin's brutal attacks. Our nation's generosity is a stark contrast to programs like China's Belt and Road Initiative.

The United States international development strategy is about supporting the aspirations of millions of average citizens around the world. It is about promoting prosperity, independence, and peace, as opposed to the debt trap diplomacy Beijing uses to exert tremendous influence to weaken democracy, foment corruption, and assert control over decisionmaking in sovereign nations.

This is why the success of USAID is so central to the United States' national security interests, because the more free and thriving democratic nations that exist in the world the safer and more prosperous we will be at home.

I think good governance and anti-corruption efforts must be at the heart of USAID's mission on the ground, and I hope you will give us an update in this regard. I also look forward to hearing about the progress USAID is making in putting local communities in the lead of delivering programs as you pledged to do 2 years ago, and we had a pretty healthy discussion about that during your testimony at that time.

Localizing our assistance is critical to building sufficiency and getting the most bang for our buck. I also want your assessment of USAID's humanitarian relief around the world. Sudan faces a famine. I know Senator Booker was just recently in Sudan and reported to some of us the circumstances he saw, which are extremely dire.

Haiti is a challenging environment, although the World Food Programme supported by Food for Peace has an enormous warehouse in Port-au-Prince with grain stacked to the ceiling, and yet we have a crisis in Haiti.

We need to get to people before they go hungry. Even as we respond to the world crisis and natural disasters we also need to plan for the long term—energy security, infrastructure, water and sanitation, improving opportunity for women and girls, democracy and good governance assistance.

Many of these issues USAID handles will boomerang back at us in the future if we do not make real progress on addressing these challenges today. Your work is critically important to the United States' national security interests.

So, Administrator Power, we have a lot to cover, and I look forward to your testimony.

At this time I will recognize my distinguished ranking member, Senator Risch.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES E. RISCH,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM IDAHO**

Senator RISCH. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Administrator Power, thank you for being here today, and let me say before I launch into my in depth criticisms I fully appreciate the position you are in.

You have got one of the toughest jobs in the Administration. There is never enough money for anything that we do. But this is really tough, and particularly when you are making choices that are life and death choices. We understand that, and believe me, the criticisms I have here are meant to move us forward as opposed to backward. So thank you for that.

In theory, we are here today to discuss a budget for fiscal year 2025. Unfortunately, Congress only passed a budget for fiscal year 2024 19 days ago and are still debating the supplemental budget request that was submitted 8 months ago.

Meanwhile, Putin's war machine has been hammering Ukraine for more than 2 years. Hamas has been holding innocent civilians hostage and using humanitarians as human shields for more than 6 months. A brutal civil war has been raging in Sudan for 10 months, pushing 25 million people to the brink of starvation, and these are just a few of the challenges USAID has been forced to confront.

Obviously, there is many others—the chairman made reference to a number of those. The pressures on the international affairs budget have become too great, and our process is overwhelmed.

We are at a point really where it is time to start making some difficult choices, ones we have to make, and to prioritize.

I really feel, unfortunately, this budget does not do that. For example, for the third year in a row the Administration has requested billions of dollars in mandatory spending to outcompete China.

Well, I agree it is imperative to find ways to compete with and counter China around the world. Congress has already rejected requests for mandatory funding not one once but twice, because by law it really offsets from other critical programs, as we all know.

It is painfully obvious that these funds are being pushed into a mandatory request so the Administration can prioritize its favored projects in climate and gender within the discretionary budget. These budget gimmicks are a dangerous game and need to stop if we are all going to pull the wagon together.

It is time for the Administration to take seriously the threat China poses to American values and interests and align our discretionary budget priorities accordingly.

Administrator Power, I would like to hear, based on reality, how USAID will adapt its budget to address this threat after I am sure Congress will reject the third mandatory funding request.

The proposed budget also fails to include funding to meet the U.S. obligations of the Budapest agreement relating to Ukraine in its fight against Russian aggression. It is clear that this obligation cannot be met through a supplemental appropriations request.

It needs to be part of a comprehensive strategy, and more importantly, be included in the regular budgeting process. On the situation in Gaza it is clear UNRWA is a morally bankrupt institution

beyond the point of redemption, and this has been so for years. That is why Congress has prohibited funding for UNRWA in 2025 by law.

It is essential USAID accelerate the scale up of trusted implementers without ties to terrorism to replace UNRWA in the West Bank and Gaza. We cannot keep wasting time burying our heads in the sand hoping UNRWA will magically change. It will not. It has not.

You have got to move faster on getting hooked up with our trusted implementers in the region.

Turning to Afghanistan, the Taliban have erased the rights of women and girls. It is imperative we keep educational opportunities open, including through distance learning models for vulnerable Afghan women and girls. I understand the American University of Afghanistan is prepared to scale up to meet the need and will be interested in your thoughts on this matter.

In Syria both State and USAID continue to pour funds into early recovery and stabilization activities including in regime held area. There is a lot of us that are greatly opposed to this. This is unacceptable and is opening doors for some of our Gulf partners to embrace the regime, again, which we oppose.

We must ensure all U.S. activities are compliant with Caesar sanctions and continue to isolate this regime. I look forward to Senate movement on the Assad anti-normalization act at its first opportunity.

Finally, in Africa there are critical issues that require USAID's immediate collaboration and partnership with African nations and organizations.

These include deteriorating democracies, more military coups and authoritarian rule, unprecedented humanitarian emergencies and escalating insecurities that drive armed conflict, terrorism, unparalleled levels of displacement. I think all of us are disappointed with the direction that the conflict is going.

Not only are these issues causing widespread suffering and instability, but importantly, they harm our national interest. The President's budget needs to adequately resource USAID and other agencies to help address these critical issues. It is regrettable the budget request, again, lacks discipline.

If the Administration cannot prioritize, Congress will have to do it. You, USAID, are in a better position to prioritize, but it requires very, very tough choices. We know that. I get it. Someone has to do it, and it really should be you and not us.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Risch.  
Administrator Power, you may proceed.

**STATEMENT OF HON. SAMANTHA POWER, ADMINISTRATOR,  
U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, WASHINGTON, DC**

Ms. POWER. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Ranking Member Risch, and thanks for all the collaboration that we have—you, your teams and the committee. It is absolutely invaluable. It really feels like whatever our differences, that we are



on the same team, on Team America, in a really, really difficult set of circumstances in the world.

I just want to start with a reflection on something that right now is sitting in the lobby of the Republic of Korea's development agency, which is their equivalent of USAID.

In the lobby they have chosen to display an old bag of flour from the 1940s, which is marked with the words "From the American people" and this is a reminder of how the United States supported them when they were one of the poorest countries on the planet to help them fight hunger and disease and to kick start the remarkable journey toward the kind of economic growth that we see today.

South Korea is today one of the world's richest nations, and last year—and this should be really heartening to everyone—it spent nearly \$4 billion providing aid to other nations. This year the Republic of Korea plans to spend nearly \$5 billion. That is a 30 percent increase.

The decades that the United States has supported countries in charting their own paths of development have in fact brought extraordinary results for our partners and for our own people.

We have helped stop the spread of diseases that threaten us all. We have helped develop more resilient high yield crops that can feed growing populations. Some of this innovation also shows up on American farms subsequently.

We have helped people and nations rise from poverty, and in doing so we have invested billions in U.S. small businesses, and we have opened up new markets for American products.

Eight of America's top 10 trading partners were once recipients of U.S. assistance. Under President Biden's leadership and in partnership with this committee, we are building on that remarkable legacy.

In Ukraine, USAID has helped farmers withstand Putin's attempts to destroy the agricultural sector. We have gotten farmers the seeds, equipment, and worked with European Union and the Ukrainians to get them the alternative export routes, particularly when the Black Sea was almost entirely out of commission—the alternate export routes that they needed.

The results of this are actually staggering, and I feel in light of the debate, particularly and the need to get the supplemental across the finish line the Senate supplemental passed in the House, it is really worth noting that Ukraine's grain exports now are very near their prewar export levels.

That is remarkable. It is a tribute above all to the courage and the ingenuity of Ukrainians, but it is also a tribute to the decisions made up here to provide USAID with the resources to support the agricultural sector, to crowd in the private sector, and to get farmers planting, harvesting, and exporting again.

Global food prices, of course, are related to what happens in Ukraine on those farms. They are now down 26 percent from their 2022 peak, and again, that comes from work on the ground helping Ukrainians do what they had every intention of doing before Putin began brutalizing their people and their economy.

In Nigeria we are providing community health workers with technologies to spot diseases like tuberculosis early, which helped

increase TB diagnoses by a third in a single year, so that patients can get treatment and outbreaks do not spread across the planet.

Across Africa we are working to connect African and American companies and reduce barriers to trade through the PROSPER Africa Initiative, efforts that since 2019 have generated some \$86 billion in trade and investment, and that is work that builds prosperity for both our African partners, and again, for businesses here at home.

Bipartisan support for these efforts makes Americans safer and more prosperous and provides a critical foundation for American influence and leadership in a world where other global powers are working aggressively to erode U.S. alliances, to undermine democracy, and to diminish basic rights and freedoms.

For example, the PRC's global lending spree has made it now, and this really bears repeating, the world's largest debt collector. That is what the PRC has become. For every dollar of assistance it provides to low income and middle income countries, the PRC has provided around \$9 in debt, so a dollar in grant for every \$9 in debt.

The opposite is true of the United States. For every dollar of debt that we provide, we provide at least \$9 of assistance. The PRC's assistance tends to be negotiated behind closed doors, fueling corruption, and it can demonstrate a flagrant disregard for human rights.

Many of you are familiar with the PRC's Safe Cities Initiative whereby they have provided surveillance and facial recognition technology that can monitor critics, journalists, and activists, that technology provided so far to at least 80 countries.

We need American leadership to advance models of development and governance that honor freedom, transparency, and dignity, as well as economic opportunity for all.

The Biden-Harris administration's fiscal year 2025 request of \$28.3 billion for USAID's fully and partially managed accounts would give us the resources to continue that leadership.

With these funds we will help nations around the world strengthen food security, improve health, and—and this is a particular area of emphasis for us, particularly coming out of the COVID—is driving economic growth.

We will respond as well to historic levels of humanitarian need. USAID teams have been working day and night to address the catastrophic humanitarian crisis in Gaza, where nearly the entire population is living under the threat of famine.

Add to that the ongoing crises in Ukraine, Sudan, and beyond, and continued battering from a growing number of natural disasters, and the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance—and this is really a staggering statistic—has increased by nearly a third from 274 million in 2022 to 363 million at the end of 2023.

That is—I do not know that there has ever been a time in history where you have seen that amount of growth in under 2 years, in basically just over a year.

To meet these needs we will need both the \$10 billion in this budget as well as the \$10 billion in emergency humanitarian assistance in the pending national security supplemental request.

Otherwise, we are going to have to make draconian cuts to rations all around the world. The fiscal year 2025 request recognizes the need for tradeoffs, and it is a very, very important point. We really do embrace that reality.

Crucially, this budget gives us specific resources to help us deliver better results and better value for money. We have worked really closely with your teams inaugurating our new Office of the Chief Economist last July, growing that team.

That team is helping us expand the use of rigorous data analysis across the agency to identify the programs with the highest impact per dollar invested so that those programs can be scaled.

I will give you one brief example. They identified a poverty reduction program our Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance has piloted in Uganda, and this is a program that offers a sequenced set of supports like training and financial services that help refugees move from requiring humanitarian assistance to earning sustainable livelihoods of their own. We want to do much more of this around the world, and we have to because of the chronic refugee populations.

For every dollar that we invest households are seeing over four times the return in economic benefits in that program, and so now we are expanding it to other nations.

Beyond maximizing our own resources we are drawing in new partners through tools like our Edge Fund, and thanks to this Congress for resourcing the Edge Fund. Again, we would like to see those resources grow over time.

But this is exactly what we need to be doing at a time where the private sector has to drive a lot of development and where we have to leverage any resources you give us and turn it into more.

So the Edge Fund is an incentive fund that basically applies the private sector's unique comparative advantages to some of the world's largest development challenges. We are working with companies like Citibank, Wal-Mart, Johnson & Johnson, to boost our impact and drive progress beyond our narrow programs.

From fiscal year 2021 to fiscal year 2023 alone, and this is really something that has mattered a great deal to us and I hope a great deal to you, private sector partner contributions to USAID activities jumped by more than 60 percent, and that is the trajectory that we need to remain on. We need to keep investing in order to do so in a work force that is nimble, able to embrace private sector partnerships, trained accordingly, and empowered to pursue catalytic change, to view USAID as a hustler and a broker also have other development investments.

If we do make these investments in our work force—and thanks for the support for operational expenses—I have no doubt that we can continue America's extraordinary legacy of leadership in building a more stable and prosperous world for all.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Power follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Ms. Samantha Power**

Thank you Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Risch, and other distinguished members of the Committee.

In the lobby of the Republic of Korea's development agency—their equivalent of USAID—they display an old bag of flour from the 1940s, marked with the words:

“From the American People.” It’s a reminder of how the U.S. supported them when they were one of the poorest countries on the planet to fight hunger and disease and kickstart economic growth. Today, of course, South Korea is one of the world’s richest nations—and last year spent nearly four billion dollars providing aid to other nations. This year they plan to spend nearly five billion.

The decades that the United States has supported countries in charting their own paths of development have brought extraordinary results—for our partners and for our own people. We’ve helped stop the spread of diseases that threaten us all and develop more resilient, high-yield crops that can feed growing populations. We’ve helped people and nations rise from poverty, and in doing so invested billions in American small businesses and opened up new markets for American products; eight of our top ten trading partners were once recipients of U.S. assistance.

Under President Biden’s leadership and in partnership with this Committee, we are building on that remarkable legacy. In Ukraine, for example, USAID has helped farmers withstand Putin’s attempts to destroy the agricultural sector by getting them the seeds, equipment, and alternative export routes they need—efforts that have helped Ukraine rebound their grain exports to near pre-war levels and helped bring global food prices down 26 percent from their 2022 peak. In Nigeria, we’re providing community health workers with technologies to spot diseases like tuberculosis early, which helped increase TB diagnoses by a third in a single year—so patients can get treatment and outbreaks won’t spread across the planet. Across the African Continent, we are working to connect African and American companies and reduce barriers to trade through the Prosper Africa Initiative—efforts that since 2019 have generated some \$86 billion in trade and investment that builds prosperity for both our African partners and businesses here at home.

Bipartisan support for these efforts makes Americans safer and more prosperous—and provides a critical foundation for American influence and leadership in a world where other global powers are working aggressively to erode U.S. alliances, undermine democracy, and diminish basic rights and freedoms.

For example, the PRC’s global lending spree has made it the world’s largest debt collector. For every dollar of aid it provides to low-income and middle-income countries, China has provided \$9 of debt, while the opposite is true of the U.S.: for every dollar of debt we provide, we provide at least \$9 of aid. The PRC’s assistance tends to be negotiated behind closed doors, fueling corruption, and can demonstrate a flagrant disregard for human rights. To offer one chilling example, through the PRC’s efforts to help countries build so-called “Safe Cities,” they have provided surveillance and facial recognition technology that can monitor critics, journalists, and activists to at least 80 countries.

We need American leadership to advance models of development and governance that honor freedom, transparency, human dignity, and opportunity for all.

The Biden-Harris administration’s fiscal year 2025 request of \$28.3 billion for USAID’s fully and partially managed accounts give us the resources to continue that leadership.

With these funds, we will help nations around the world strengthen food security, improve health, and drive economic growth. And we will respond to historic levels of humanitarian need. USAID teams have been working day and night to address the catastrophic humanitarian crisis in Gaza, where nearly the entire population is living under the threat of famine. Add to that ongoing crises in Ukraine, Sudan, and beyond, and continued battering from a growing number of natural disasters during this particularly strong El Niño, and the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance has increased by nearly a third—from 274 million in 2022 to 363 million at the end of 2023. To meet these needs, we will need both the \$10 billion in this budget as well as the \$10 billion in emergency humanitarian assistance in the pending national security supplemental request. Otherwise, we will be forced to make draconian cuts to rations all around the world.

The fiscal year 2025 request recognizes the need for tradeoffs even as global needs are escalating. And crucially, this budget gives us specific resources to help us deliver even better value for money. Since we inaugurated our new Office of the Chief Economist last July, the team is already expanding our use of rigorous data analysis across the agency to identify the programs with the highest impact per dollar invested so they can be scaled. For instance, they identified a poverty reduction program our Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance is piloting in Uganda, which is offering a sequenced set of supports like trainings and financial services that help refugees move from requiring humanitarian assistance to earning sustainable livelihoods for themselves. For every dollar we invest, households are seeing over four times the return in economic benefits. We are now expanding the program to other nations.

And beyond maximizing our own resources, we are drawing in new partners through tools like our EDGE Fund—an incentive fund designed to apply the private sector’s unique edge to some of the largest global development challenges. We’re working with companies like Citibank, Walmart, and Johnson & Johnson to boost our impact and drive progress beyond our programs. From fiscal year 2021 to fiscal year 2022 alone, private-sector partner contributions to USAID activities jumped by 31 percent. To continue to drive this progress, we need to keep investing in a workforce that’s nimble and empowered to pursue truly catalytic change.

If we do make these investments, I have no doubt that we can continue America’s extraordinary legacy of leadership in building a more secure, prosperous, and stable world for all.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much for your comments, but more importantly thank you very much for your service.

I just really want to first underline the point you made about PRC, China, and their debt diplomacy—debt traps, I would say—to other countries.

It points out how we have to strengthen our own tools in order to deal with that issue, but also we need to do a better job in public relations and explaining the difference between partnerships with the United States and partnerships with the People’s Republic of China because, as you point out, we leverage so that the country can control its fate.

The PRC leverages so that China can control their fate, and that point I think needs to be underscored a lot more than we have in the past. I just point that out.

We are here to talk about the fiscal year 2025 budget but we have to first talk about the fiscal year 2024 budget. You made reference to the importance of the supplemental appropriation bill that passed the U.S. Senate that is now in the House of Representatives.

We have had a lot of discussions in the press and publicly about the importance to Ukraine and their military defense against Putin’s aggression. We have had conversations here about the aid in the Middle East to Israel in regards to Hamas’s attack against Israel.

We have had discussions here about the importance in the Indo-Pacific area against PRC’s aggression, particularly as it relates to Taiwan.

We need to concentrate today on the importance in regards to humanitarian needs and your ability to carry out your mission for the remainder of this year and into next fiscal year.

So I want to concentrate in three areas. We have a humanitarian crisis in Sudan. I mentioned that Senator Booker was just recently in the country and told many of us about just the dire needs that are there. We see every day the challenges in Gaza.

We know we have to do more on the humanitarian front, and that requires U.S. leadership and U.S. dollars, and we know that in Ukraine we have the humanitarian crisis because of the war.

So tell us how important it is to pass the funds that are in the supplemental. We passed the fiscal year 2024 budget. Is that enough to deal with these concerns, or do you need the supplemental, and how critically important is the supplemental to deal with those incredibly challenging crises that we see every day?

Ms. POWER. Thank you. I know we do not have a lot of time but this is such an important question so let me first start by saying

that the word supplemental for the countries and the crises that you mentioned is in many ways a misnomer.

Why is that? Because a lot of the resource, and Senator Risch alluded to some of this maybe in a different way, but a lot of the resources that we had previously channeled through the regular budget were moved in previous years to the supplemental.

So if the national security supplemental were not to pass or were not to pass at the current level that was sent over by the Senate, you would basically be seeing, in terms of humanitarian needs including in Gaza, Sudan, and Ukraine, the three places you mentioned, you would be seeing in this year an increase of, roughly, 40 percent in humanitarian need, and a decrease, roughly, of between 35 and 40 percent of humanitarian funding.

So, and that is because, again, we were generously funded in the past. We were able to lead in response to crises as the numbers of people displaced and in dire need of food to survive increased because Congress stepped up, but stepped up also by moving resources that had been in the base to the supplemental.

On Ukraine, without the supplemental we actually have no resources to do the kind of energy, agriculture, anti-corruption work, the core development work that everybody up here, I think, supports us doing, but many assume that we have resources to do under the regular budget.

So this just gets to sort of how the budget was organized, but it also gets, of course, to the indispensability of these needs.

So on Sudan, on Gaza, on Ukraine, as Putin pulverizes communities, as he again tries to weaponize winter and take out energy infrastructure with really an unprecedented spate of attacks just in recent weeks, it is just heartbreaking that resources that Ukrainians need on the ground to be able to repair that energy infrastructure, for us to procure far enough in advance also so we can look ahead to next winter, because we know he is going to pursue the same approach if the war is not over by then, that those resources would be so close to passage in principle, and yet, where a vote cannot even be taken that is—on the package that reflects a bipartisan majority here in the Senate is—the human consequences cannot be overstated.

The CHAIRMAN. I would just make one last point on this. We all know we need to do more in all three of the areas that I mentioned. We see that every day. More has to be done.

The United States has been the leader in providing the resources for these humanitarian responses. If the United States does not provide the expected leadership in providing resources, what happens with the global community's response to these humanitarian needs?

Ms. POWER. Well, as you know, in Ukraine for every dollar that the U.S. has provided, other donors have provided \$2.

As we have been stalled on our ability to provide direct budget support to the government of Ukraine as Putin seeks to destroy its economy and destroy its ability to finance health, education, other things, we have asked our partners to front load their funding and to step up.

They have done so with a calculated view on the basis of recent history over the last 2 years that America will show up, that we

cannot abandon freedom, and we cannot leave Ukraine to be the victim of aggression at a time like this.

There is absolutely no guarantee that we would be able to continue to leverage our leadership if we are not exercising it sufficiently, and that is what is at stake here, and Ukraine is just one example.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Risch.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

A couple of things you said were really impressive. That Korea story is something that needs to be repeated again and again in America. We always beat ourselves up and do not talk about the successes. That is a tremendous success, and it is kind of lost in the fog of stuff that goes on here.

But to be able to say that not only did we do that, and admittedly, we spent a lot of blood and a lot of treasure getting there, but not only did we do that, but the fact that the Koreans recognize that we did that and give credit to the United States for doing that is really an impressive fact.

The second one that struck me in the comments that you made was the comparison of what we do compared to what China does and your characterization of China as being the largest debt collector in the world I had never heard before, but is obviously true because of the tremendous amount of debt that they have got out there and that they are collecting in many cases from, like, a loan shark collecting it from people that cannot afford to pay it.

And as the chairman pointed out, China uses that to actually bolster their national security by controlling what happens in another country, which is 180 from what we do.

So I think both of those points you made are really, really good points and really need to be underscored for all of us in the United States when we get to feeling badly about how things are degrading, and they are degrading in a lot of places as we know.

I do want to talk about a couple of things that you and I have talked about before, and that is, look, for years I have been saying we need to put UNRWA out of business, and we defunded them, as you know, in the 2025 budget, and I have got to tell you that is the majority view in Congress. I understand there is others that think that UNRWA is—somehow there is some good parts of UNRWA.

If there are I have not seen them yet. It is going to be really important, because I really believe Congress is going to continue down that line.

Now, the things that UNRWA does that we have them do—we pay them to do and provide the resources for them to do—are really important. They need to be done. The best example of that is in Jordan.

What UNRWA does in Jordan is—with our money, is absolutely imperative with the millions of refugees that have there. The Jordanian government cannot stand without that.

So tell me about your efforts in that regard to identify other implementers, and I assume it is a begrudging transfer to other implementers. Tell me what you are doing. Give me some hope here.

Ms. POWER. First of all, thank you for recognizing a couple of points that I made in my opening comments, and I agree with also your implied point, which is that our communications game lags behind the facts, and that is a challenge that all of us are facing in an environment of misinformation and a very cluttered media environment.

But it is just so important. I think notwithstanding that point, which is a very good one, it is interesting to see the polling and the turn in public opinion as it relates to PRC lending and investment.

It is also noteworthy that the PRC, in part because they are the debt collector and a lot of the debts are not able to be collected because the interest rates were so high or because of COVID or for whatever reason, they are also pulling back a lot.

If you look at Belt and Road investments they are way, way down over the last few years, creating a huge opening for America's model of development.

To UNRWA I think—to answer your question, first of all, USAID does not fund UNRWA. The State Department does, but we are one U.S. Government trying to mobilize a humanitarian response.

USAID partners like World Food Programme, UNICEF, Save the Children, International Medical Corps, are implementing partners. They are the ones out there, of course, getting—seeking to get convoys in to reach people who are facing desperate conditions.

They do rely, as you well know, on the humanitarian infrastructure, and there is no ready substitute, and I think even maybe just pivoting to Jordan for a second—we can come back to Gaza.

But it is not like another international organization or another NGO in the sense that it is the school system for refugees in Jordan who, as you know, I think it is 2 million kids are cared for by UNRWA run schools.

So you are talking not about what international organizations or NGOs normally—it is not like there is hundreds of thousands of teachers from elsewhere who are on standby waiting to get the call.

It is an extremely complex question. But as you note, this is something that the Jordanian government does not have the fiscal space or the human capacity to take on.

And so right now other donors, notwithstanding the deeply alarming allegations and the investigations that are underway, most of them have resumed funding because of the indispensability of the services and because of the view that notwithstanding, again, very, very problematic allegations against specific individuals in Gaza that those allegations do not extend across UNRWA funding across the region.

So right now the UNRWA infrastructure is still being relied upon including by USAID's partners. I would note that the government of Israel even a month or 2 ago or a month ago said UNRWA cannot be involved in convoys inside Gaza because of, of course, the allegation infiltration with those individuals potentially, and they have had to change that position because there is no way to deliver food to prevent further famine without UNRWA at the heart of the response.

So now UNRWA is able to be not leading convoys but part of convoys in terms of how the government of Israel is engaging with



that question. I am not pretending that the government of Israel is embracing UNRWA, but I am making a point more about necessity and the indispensability of meeting the humanitarian imperative.

Senator RISCH. Well, thanks for that. I got to tell you I understand all the arguments. But look, if UNRWA is in I am out, period. I understand the arguments that oh, they got to be there, blah, blah, blah.

Look, you have seen the texts like I have seen the texts. It is U.S. taxpayer money teaching these young kids, these young Palestinian kids, how to be a terrorist, and not only how to be a terrorist but that it is their obligation under their religious practices and everything else.

It is just sickening, to be honest with you. Then, of course, this thing that happened on October 7 where they actually had members of UNRWA included in the attack on Israel.

We have got to go a different direction. So if UNRWA cannot do it too bad. I am out. But I have had it with UNRWA, and I think a lot of my colleagues are in the same position.

But in any event, my time is up. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Menendez.

Senator MENENDEZ. Madam Administrator, it is fair to say from your testimony that if you do not get the \$10 billion in the supplemental that you will not be able to meet your humanitarian mission across the globe as it is presently challenged?

Ms. POWER. Yes, that is true.

Senator MENENDEZ. Which means that every day that House Republicans wait, people die.

Ms. POWER. There are going to be catastrophic humanitarian effects to not bring in more resources to bear, for sure.

Senator MENENDEZ. They will die on the battlefield in Ukraine, and they will die of hunger in various parts of the world, and so this is not an esoteric exercise.

In a bipartisan way the Senate sent a package that would meet not only Ukraine's needs, meet our challenge in the Indo-Pacific, but at the same time meet our humanitarian challenge and obligation in the world and the ability to leverage other countries.

And so people are dying. They are dying on the battlefield. They are dying of hunger, and for some reason House Republicans cannot put a simple vote on the floor, and it is pretty outrageous.

How will you get assistance, assuming you get the money, into Gaza? I just heard your whole conversation with Senator Risch. Succinctly, please, because I know you have a professorial way about you from your history.

But can you—and since I have limited time how will you be able to get assistance into Gaza?

Ms. POWER. Well, the gating issue up to this point—because we are drawing on the resources that we do have because we are where we are in the fiscal year, we still have resources—but the gating issue has not yet been resources. It has been access. It has been the restrictions on moving—

Senator MENENDEZ. So if the gating systems are resolved, if the access is resolved, you will—

Ms. POWER. No. No. The access is not resolved.

Senator MENENDEZ. If the access is resolved, you will have the wherewithal to get what aid—

Ms. POWER. For a certain period of time. But I mean, there are 20,000 metric tons of flour sitting in Ashdod Port right now that we have been trying to get out. That is a thousand trucks worth of flour, and that has not been resolved.

There have been important steps, I think, taken in the last few days, and indeed, I think we have more than 400 trucks got into Gaza today, which is the second time we have been able to cross the 400 truck number.

So things have improved a bit, and of course, we are trying to get food in through multiple entrance points including hoping that the government of Israel moves very quickly to open the Erez Crossing, but there are still really profound access issues.

Senator MENENDEZ. OK. Let me move to something else.

Last year I published something I called the Menendez plan, which is a framework that would address the cycle of mass migration at the southwestern border of the United States through the development of a sustainable and structural response to migration in the region.

I think all of our immigration challenges that we have at the southern border deny one fact, that there are 25 million people in the southern hemisphere presently displaced from their country of origin, refugees seeking asylum or just being displaced.

Right now they are in other countries within the hemisphere. Unless we work with those countries to assimilate those individuals, I do not care what we do at the border, but we will have 25 million feet marching northwards.

So part of what I outlined is an effort to expand humanitarian assistance and development of financing to better integrate migrants and refugees in those countries across the Americas. Capacity building, economic resilience, are paramount to that.

Can you tell me some specifics on how you will utilize the funds requested in fiscal year 2025 to address those root causes of migration and to help those countries assimilate individuals so they are not marching northward?

Ms. POWER. Well, first, this is one of these points that does not get made enough, which is just how countries who are on the path for migrants who—and we are very focused on those who come to our border, understandably, but countries like Colombia, Brazil, Peru, just how many, for example, Venezuelans have landed on their doorsteps.

They have maintained open borders. There have been regularization or integration rules put on the books in countries like Colombia that have been incredibly important allowing kids to go to school, get health benefits and the like, and there are already now proven economic benefits. A huge number of businesses in Colombia created by Venezuelans—

Senator MENENDEZ. That is what they have done. What will we do to help them?

Ms. POWER. No. No. USAID is doing a huge amount. For example, in Peru we created a program to support the government in accrediting professional degrees of migrants who have arrived so that they can come and work as doctors.

In Colombia those programs in the border region that—and the migrant centers for regularization, those are ones that have been supported with USAID funding. But a lot of these programs they have closed their registration eligibility, or they have closed down registration, so we are also working through development diplomacy to try to urge those governments to reopen registration because the vast majority of people who come to this country are those who have been unable to access regularization.

Senator MENENDEZ. My time is up.

Could I ask you to have someone from your agency come and sit with our office to discuss what you intend to do? Because we have some ideas about how we achieve those goals.

And finally, if I may, Mr. Chairman, in 2023 Azerbaijan launched a military assault on the Artsakh region. It caused 120,000 Armenians to be ethnically cleansed from what was known as their homeland. You activated a disaster assistance response team. You have approximately given \$15.6 million to Armenia to address this. This is \$130 per displaced person. It just does not work.

Do you have intentions of doing more?

Ms. POWER. Yes. I was just meeting with the Armenian president or prime minister, excuse me, in Brussels along with the European Union and Secretary Blinken on Friday, and we announced a number of new initiatives there including work with the Armenian government and financial support as they attempt to provide permanent housing to those people from Nagorno-Karabakh who have come and have just been in stopgap housing since last year.

As you know, I was at the border trying to greet those desperate families who had been forced from their homes, and this is something of personal importance to me as is supporting the Armenian government in their reform efforts, because fundamentally their ability to use also their own resources to cater to that population, to integrate that population for those who are not able to go home, will turn on them continuing to grow their economy, which they have been doing at a fierce clip over the last 2 years.

Senator MENENDEZ. If you could have somebody—when you send me somebody on the other who can address this issue, too, I would appreciate it.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. POWER. Absolutely. Thank you, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Paul.

Senator PAUL. Ms. Power, on April 26, 2023, you testified before this committee that USAID did not fund gain of function research. I would like to give you a chance to correct the record. Is it still your position that USAID did not fund gain of function research?

Ms. POWER. We have no evidence that USAID has funded gain of function research, and we certainly have not authorized gain of function research.

Senator PAUL. Well, I will help you.

Behind me we will list a paper from 2015. This is a paper produced by the Wuhan Institute of Virology and also by Dr. Baric from UNC. In this paper, if you will see, the funding aspect that is highlighted, it says USAID EPT predict funding from Eco Health Alliance.

So this paper was one where they took a virus—the SARS virus, the backbone of the SARS virus—and then took an S protein from an unknown virus they found in the wild and put them together.

Are you aware that these experiments in the study were supported by USAID Predict and grant through Eco Health Alliance?

Ms. POWER. As I said, USAID has not authorized gain of function research. This is the first I am seeing this. We will be happy to look into it and engage—

Senator PAUL. All right. This has been around since 2015. We have been over it numerous times. It has been in the public record. We have repeatedly said that, yes, USAID did fund gain of function research—here is the evidence.

But here is some comments from some different people about this study, because some will try to argue this still is not gain of function. Simon Wain-Hobson is a virologist at the Pasteur Institute in Paris.

He points out that the researchers have created with this research funded by USAID a novel virus that grows remarkably well in human cells. If the virus escaped, nobody could predict the trajectory.

Richard Ebright from Rutgers says the only impact of this work is the creation in a lab of a new nonnatural risk to humanity.

So is your position that this study was not gain of function, or that you did not fund it? Which is your position?

Ms. POWER. We have had an awful lot of back and forth and provided thousands of pages of documents on this. This article I cannot—it looks like it is from 2015.

Senator PAUL. Right.

Ms. POWER. So we will have to look into the specific claims. But again, to put on the record USAID has not and will not authorize gain of function research.

Senator PAUL. It is a big point. That is your—I know that is your position but the record will show that you did. And this was before your time.

I do not know why we cannot just admit it. It did happen, and the reason this is important is many people want to collect all these viruses from around the world. But they do not want to just collect the viruses to sort of have them and have a library of viruses.

They take the virus, and then they take an S protein from another virus, and they create a virus that does not exist in nature, that often has ramifications that could be quite different or quite serious.

I will give you the words of the authors of this paper. On the basis of these findings scientific review panels may deem similar studies building chimeric viruses based on circulating strains too risky to pursue.

So this was funded by USAID. It was funded through the Predict program. There is no question of that, and even the authors admit that it was gain of function. So we have to get beyond sort of quibbling over whether it was because we have to make sure in the future we are not doing this and that we do not fund this, going forward.

Now, the Predict program was going to be surpassed by another program going after viruses and that has been suspended. That is all good. But we have to admit the past, be truthful about the past in order to go forward because millions of people died from COVID-19.

The FBI has concluded it came from a lab in Wuhan. The Department of Energy has concluded that. Even the CIA initially—their scientific board voted six to one. Until they were overturned by higher ups at the CIA to say otherwise, they voted to say that this thing came from the lab as well.

It only comes from the lab if we are in favor of creating these things. We cannot control everything China does, but we certainly should not be funding it. So we have to be honest that this was funded.

Now, there was a warning sign to us that this was going on. There was something called the Diffuse Project in 2018 that was presented to DARPA once again by Baric and by Dr. Shi in Wuhan.

The Diffuse Project was to create a coronavirus with a furin cleavage site, which does not exist in nature but makes it incredibly more infectious in humans.

There was a briefing to 15 agencies. One of the agencies was USAID. There was a briefing about this Diffuse Project.

But nobody from USAID and nobody from all 15 agencies ever told anyone about this project. It was hidden for years and years and only revealed by a brave lieutenant colonel Marine working at DARPA who exposed this when everybody else had hidden this.

And my question is, USAID was in this briefing about a research project that had incredible danger to our country and finally was not funded.

Will you provide the names of the people from USAID who were in this meeting so they can be interviewed so we can find out why did not they tell anyone, or did they tell their superiors and nobody—and people ignored them?

Why was the public never made aware that they were trying to do dangerous research to create a virus very similar to what COVID-19 became, and how could 15 agencies show up for a briefing and no one exposed it to the public, and we only hear about it by a whistleblower? Will you provide for us the name of the persons at USAID who attended this briefing in 2018 and let us interview them to find out what happened? Why was this never revealed to the public?

Ms. POWER. So I think within the 10,000 pages of documents you have from USAID are whatever documents we have on this DARPA proposers meeting. I received the letter—we received the letter from your staff yesterday. We will certainly look at the request.

But just to give a little context, U.S. Government agencies often on good days show up for one another, go to each other's meetings. This is not something that USAID ever considered funding or was ever engaged on in some substantive way. So—

Senator PAUL. But the point is is that after hearing that somebody wanted to put a furin cleavage site in the virus, alarm bells go off, and then when you see the virus in 2020, and you say, oh, my goodness, they did what they were asking, someone should

have said, wow, I was in that hearing, and I did not think anything of it at the time.

But now I am, like, maybe I should tell somebody. Maybe I should call up the President. Maybe I should call up Anthony Fauci. Maybe somebody should be informed that we learned about this, and I did not think anything of it at the time.

You are right, it could have been inconsequential in 2018. In 2020 it becomes profoundly important. Why did not anybody from Government come forward and warn us that this could be a virus not from nature, which is not very infectious usually, and was incredibly infectious because it had been preadapted in a lab for human transmission?

Ms. POWER. Look, I just want to come back to your earlier point. All of this ended at USAID in 2020. It is before my time. We do not feel defensive about these engagements. We have appreciated digging into—

Senator PAUL. That is all we are asking is that we would like to interview the person who was at that meeting.

Ms. POWER. I understand. I understand. We will look at that request.

But what I just want to make clear is that in a collaborative spirit we also understand the stakes, the human stakes, of recent history and the risks, and you have raised flags in a manner that has required us to dig in, I think, in important ways on top of what we had been doing previously.

And so we will continue the back and forth with you and your office, and certainly do not ever want to be in a position to do anything ourselves using taxpayer resources to create risks.

Senator PAUL. Thank you. And I do appreciate the cooperation that your agency has given us.

Ms. POWER. Thank you, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Administrator, for being here today and for the work that you do every day on behalf not just of the United States but of so many people around the world.

I appreciated your opening story about the Republic of Korea and the bag of flour because I just got back from the Indo-Pacific during break where we visited the Republic of Korea. We had a chance to personally thank them for their support for what is happening in Ukraine, the effort to fight back against the autocratic and horrendous behavior of Vladimir Putin and the Russians in Ukraine.

And you talked—we also heard that they are following very closely not just in the Republic of Korea but in Japan and the Philippines and in Vietnam where we also visited what is happening with the supplemental because it does affect what happens in the Indo-Pacific, and it does affect how the PRC views the United States and our willingness to stick with our allies.

And you mentioned, I think, very clearly the importance of passing the supplemental, and you talked about what it would mean for humanitarian efforts in Gaza. But you did not talk about some of the other places around the world where they are also depending on the passage of that supplemental.

Can you talk about a couple of the other areas that you are very concerned about that if we—and what will happen if the supplemental is not passed by the House?

Ms. POWER. Well, we just had an exchange with Senator Menendez about migration. Venezuelan refugees—I mean, such a huge share of the population has tumbled into neighboring countries, leaving everything behind. Those countries, as I mentioned, had been very generous.

But those countries also depend on the humanitarian assistance that agencies like the World Food Programme, UNICEF, and others provide. It is asking double if you both ask for integration and then ask for all humanitarian needs to be borne by the communities and the countries in which those migrants land. So it would be horrific if we had to cut rations or support to agencies supporting Venezuelan refugees.

Second, Sudan—a number of people rightly have mentioned Sudan. I am looking forward to hearing from Senator Booker about his trip.

But we have been privileged to be able to provide over the last year close to a billion dollars in support. That privilege, of course, is the perverse consequence of two military men who are destroying their country and leaving their people, who were able to provide largely for themselves except in core conflict areas like Darfur over the last decades but has left those people almost entirely in certain communities dependent on humanitarian aid.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much.

I think it is safe to say, as Senator Menendez did so directly and you acknowledge, that millions of lives are on the line here and if this supplemental package does not get passed by the House people are going to die.

They are going to die in Ukraine, they are going to die in South America, they are going to die in Africa, and they are going to die all over the world, and I hope that those people who are holding up that package in the House understand what is at stake.

I want to switch to another part of Europe. I was very concerned by last week's news that the Georgian parliament, reintroduced the foreign agents law, which would tighten restrictions on civil society. That is similar to what Russia has passed.

Can you talk about what the consequences would be for U.S.-funded civil society organizations if that foreign agents law is passed in Georgia?

Ms. POWER. Well, we have seen the cut and paste version of the Russia foreign agents bill pop up in multiple places, and the effects are less accountability for corruption, a chilling effect on speech.

Certainly, Georgia, which is now on a path or seeks to be on a path to Europe and has gotten some recognition of late and an embrace of that ambition, fundamentally a foreign agents law like that has no place in Europe. The human rights and democratic principles need to be not only respected but also protected.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you. I hope that the government of Georgia will decide to support what the people of Georgia want, which is the move toward Europe and the rights that come with a full democracy.

I am out of time but I want to make just one more point about the trip that we took to the Indo-Pacific because one of the things I was very interested in was hearing from President Marcos in the Philippines, from the officials we met in Vietnam, the concern about climate change and the impact of climate change on the countries in the Indo-Pacific.

President Marcos told us that the Philippines is the most threatened country because of climate change, and they talked about the importance of the U.S. leadership on that issue.

So, I am out of time, as I said, but I hope that you will continue to support our efforts to lead on climate change. Thank you.

Ms. POWER. Maybe just one point in response, which is one of the investments that we have made that we are probably most proud of at the agency, particular our humanitarians, is in the Philippines' disaster response capabilities, and if you just go back 10 years even and look at how much, for example, the Defense Department, USAID, and other outside partners were doing in order to support humanitarian response and now look at the extent to which the Philippines has built out its own capabilities in a really impressive way, including a civ-mil partnership between the civilian agencies and the military is really impressive.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Shaheen, I appreciate you mentioning the Georgia efforts to adopt the Russian style—Putin style foreign agent. We have been very supportive of Georgia's integration into Europe and to moving in the right path.

This is certainly moving in the wrong path, and we have put them on notice. I have contacted their Ambassador to let them know of our concerns that this really could affect Georgia's movement into integration to Europe.

Senator Romney.

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Like Senator Menendez indicated I am sometimes overwhelmed by the degree of starvation, the migration, as associated with climate change, and the problems in the world are so enormous.

How do you decide where to intervene, and where to spend the money? How do you prioritize all the things? I mean, because we do not have enough money to get everybody out of poverty, to solve all the hunger problems of the world, to solve all the migration problems in the world, to solve all the awful things that are going on in the world.

We are not there. There was a time when the U.S. economy was half that of the world today. Today it is 15 percent. So we simply cannot do everything we would like to do. How do you decide where to spend the resources? What is your priority for tackling their various challenges?

Ms. POWER. Thank you, and I do not have time, I think, to do justice to the full sort of way that we do prioritization. We are also 90 percent earmarked so some of that prioritization is taken out of our hands.

But it is only really by sector so your question is still very valid in terms of what we do. Even if we have X amount for malaria and X amount for TB, where do you do it?



And there, I think, governance and where that dollar is likely to go further matters a great deal, particularly for working with state and local government.

USAID has just last year launched an Office of the Chief Economists to actually bring—we have done measurement evaluation learning about particular programs for a long time, but we are now bringing a best buy mindset, literally doing cost effectiveness studies, randomized controlled trials, for example a programmatic intervention where we hire a contractor or give a grant to an organization—how does that compare against giving cash in a particular community and seeing—there are some studies that show that through cash benchmarking that actually giving just small amounts of cash allows, for example, somebody to start a business or get the access to capital that they need locally.

So we want to make sure we do a cost effectiveness filter through the work that we do everywhere. We, of course, look at the nexus with U.S. security, pandemic prevention, lab surveillance, global health security. That is an example of investments that have really increased, although unfortunately, are down in the 2024 budget that was just passed.

That is an investment in our lives. The same with our clean energy work. Of course, it is one thing to have the Inflation Reduction Act here and be lowering emissions over time. But we know that there are many big players like South Africa, Indonesia, countries in which we work, where their emissions affect Americans just as much as ours do.

Senator ROMNEY. Yes, I actually would hope to have a more clear priority that, yes, there has to be an enormous humanitarian need, but there also has to be a very clear U.S. interest in intervening in that particular area.

And yes, we do not want to waste money and so forth, and you mentioned those things, but there has to be some prioritization. My impression is that the Chinese—for instance, their economy is about the same size as ours. Particularly if you look at purchase power parity, their economy is larger than ours on that basis.

But they are not spending anywhere near where we are in the world other than to support Chinese interests. Hopefully, we will apply the same metric to decide where we are going to be spending our funding.

Has there been work done at USAID to compare, here is what China does? And if there is I would love to see a report or some—if there is work like that that is around to say, here is how they do it.

I know they do things with that. They loan the money. We say no, we do not do that. We give them money, except we borrow the money from others to give the money away.

Which is smarter? Us borrowing to give it away, or them just loaning it? And I think we may have something to learn from a country that says they are going to make those investments where there is humanitarian need and where it is in their national interest, and two, to do it in a way that is economically the most frugal.

Ms. POWER. Yes. I mean, I think that there is a fair point there, of course, around prioritization, but the PRC does not, as you are noting, is not motivated by the humanitarian imperative that

moves so many Americans. The service impulse, the kind of compassion that we have shown—

Senator ROMNEY. The challenges—

Ms. POWER. No, no, I understand. But I am just talking specifically about humanitarian.

Senator ROMNEY. The needs of the world are so enormous—

Ms. POWER. I understand.

Senator ROMNEY [continuing]. That when you look at those needs, you have to say we have more interest, for instance, in Haiti than we might in someplace far, far away, in part because it is in our neighborhood. All right. So we are going to show priority there.

We have interest in Ukraine because we know that the old Soviet Union did some really bad things that we fought for decades, and so we want to keep that from happening again.

I mean, there are national interests that would strike me as being high in the priority. I know my time is up. So, Mr. Chairman, I will stop.

Ambassador Power, if there is something you want to say, fine, but I will pull back.

Ms. POWER. Thank you.

Just simply to say that I believe that that filter is applied. I also believe that we play a long game, and had we been narrowly transactional in the way that the Chinese are 40 years ago, many of the countries that are now huge markets for U.S. goods would not be markets for U.S. goods.

Many of the diseases that have been prevented would not have been prevented had we just gone, again, in that what matters in the here and now and what is our national security matrix on this particular day or this particular year.

We have to have the right balance between absolutely looking for that nexus, making sure that our dollars go where they are intended, looking out for things that are happening in the hemisphere that have a direct bearing, or things that relate to disease or the health of Americans for sure.

But we are also making investments now whose payoff may not be evident for some years in the future.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Van Hollen.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Administrator Power, good to see you for the second day in a row, and thanks again, to you and your entire AID team for what you do for our country around the world.

I have some questions on Gaza and some on Sudan, two areas where we are experiencing humanitarian crises.

First on Gaza, I am glad people are still at the table in Cairo on a ceasefire and release the hostages deal. It is essential that the world put pressure on Hamas to accept the deal that is on the table.

In the meantime, we also need to address, as we discussed yesterday, the humanitarian crisis being experienced by over 2 million Palestinians in Gaza.

Yesterday I asked you what changes the President and the Biden administration want to see from the Netanyahu government's approach to the war in Gaza, and you mentioned the need to lift un-

necessary restrictions on humanitarian aid, and you mentioned the need to maximize civilian protection.

As you know, under the National Security Memorandum No. 20, signed by the President the Administration must submit a report to Congress by May 8, and that report must determine whether Israel, Ukraine, and other countries using U.S. weapons in conflicts now have over the last 14 months been sufficiently facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance, whether they have been complying with international law, and whether they are using best practices to reduce civilian harm.

In that regard, I want to know whether you have seen a very troubling article written by an Israeli investigative reporter about the Netanyahu's government use of artificial intelligence systems for targeting in Gaza, one called "Lavender," the other called "Where's Daddy."

Have you seen that investigative report?

Ms. POWER. I have not, Senator.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that the report be placed in the record.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The information referred to above can be found in the "Additional Material Submitted for the Record" section at the end of this hearing document.]

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you.

So, look, if this report is true it has very troubling implications regarding targeting issues, the kind of issues we discussed yesterday.

So I ask two things. One is if you will read it—I have got a copy here—and whether you will bring it to the attention of your colleagues at the State Department. Can I get your commitment to do that?

Ms. POWER. Yes.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you.

On Sudan, and you know, I was there a number of years ago when there was hope that there would be that transition to democracy. Obviously, we have seen a complete deterioration in the situation there.

We have, you know, at least two warring parties, one of them headed by Hemeti with the Rapid Support Forces, as you well recall because you have written about these things was part of the Janjaweed and the really genocide in Darfur years ago.

Can you talk about what AID is doing to help displaced people in Sudan specifically with respect to those who are coming across the border with Chad?

Ms. POWER. I traveled last year back to Chad, all those years after the genocide in Darfur when I was last there meeting with Sudanese who had been targeted by Hemedti's Janjaweed, and the conditions in Chad are very difficult for Chadians in that area. It is extremely remote, not a lot of access to water, really afflicted by climate change.

So of the billion dollars nearly in humanitarian support USAID or the U.S. Government of which \$600 million from USAID has provided, a significant share has gone to U.N. agencies and others working in Chad.

I will say, though, that the Sudanese Armed Forces, General Burhan, has done something very problematic on top of all the other problematic things he and Hemedti have done, which is basically make it much more difficult for the U.N. to move those convoys across the border to people who haven't been able to make it to Chad, and so basically saying this is an international border—you know, we get to decide what crosses it—fine, but decide that humanitarian aid should cross and reach your people, and he has authorized now one crossing point, but it is very remote and not nearly sufficient to meet the needs because people in Darfur, again, many would like to get to Chad but have no means of making the long journey and need food and resources where they are.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Well, thank you. I look forward to following up with you and your team on that as well.

Ms. POWER. Thank you.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Ricketts.

Senator RICKETTS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

A couple of my colleagues today have talked about the supplemental and the consequences of not getting the supplemental, saying people are going to die.

I would reply to all my colleagues, both the House and the Senate, that Americans are dying today of drug overdose. The leading cause of death of young Americans in this country today is drug overdose, the biggest part of that fentanyl, 70,000. And I am talking about young Americans. I am talking 18 to 45, leading cause of death.

Since the Biden administration's open border policy, in my State, Nebraska, we have seen the impact of this. When I was Governor, law enforcement in 2019 took 46 pills laced with fentanyl off our streets. Just 2 years later that number had skyrocketed to 151,000—2021, 151,000.

For the first 2 years of the Biden administration we saw the amount of methamphetamine in our State double, fentanyl triple, cocaine up by 10 times.

So yes, we want to take care of people around the world. We need to take care of our people, and it is foolish, in my opinion, to think that we can pass the supplementals additional aid if we cannot get something done with our southern border.

To switch topics, I want to build on what Ranking Member Risch was talking about with regard to UNRWA because, again, we see a huge problem here with an organization that, as the ranking member talked about, its textbooks preach hate and killing Jews.

The schools were hiding weapons. We saw that the IDF discovered in February that Hamas had an intelligence hub right under UNRWA's headquarters in Gaza, which UNRWA denied knowing anything about. Like you did not hear the people digging? It seems incredulous to me that they could deny that.

So given the problems that UNRWA has had and not only has with this current attack by Hamas in Israel on October 7, but previously under the Trump administration they cut off funding to UNRWA because of similar type problems—so this is not a surprise.

This is an ongoing problem. So Administrator Power, my question to you is there is an investigation going on. There is an independent panel that has a final report yet to be released but its interim report found that “UNRWA has mechanisms in place to ensure its neutrality,” quote/unquote.

If those mechanisms are in place, why is this still a problem, and how confident are you in the efficiency or efficacy of these investigations and the U.N.’s ability to properly and unbiasedly investigate itself?

Ms. POWER. Well, let me say there, and just, again, USAID does not fund UNRWA, and so there are others in our Government who are more versed in the investigation and procedures.

But there are the two investigations, one, into the initial list of 12 to 15 individuals who were named in these horrific, despicable allegations, and then an outside investigation that I think is independent and of which I think we have reason to think it is independent looking at the policies and procedures of UNRWA that could have given rise to a situation whereby individuals who were plotting an attack and such horrors could be members of an international organization or employees of an international organization.

So those are the two investigations. I think the only thing I would say is that, as I said in one of the earlier exchanges but maybe just to elaborate, is UNRWA has the trucks, the staff, the infrastructure, and a large number of UNRWA employees are serving selflessly to try to address the famine conditions in certain parts of Gaza and the imminent famine conditions in other parts of Gaza.

And so I think that is just the other imperative here that we are being very sensitive to, and again, USAID, the U.S. Government, we are going to follow U.S. law. There should be no question about that.

But it is hard to imagine how humanitarian needs can be met even if access improves at the scale it needs to improve without these workers, those who are not implicated in these allegations being part of the solution.

The other thing I would say is that Hamas was the governing authority in Gaza prior to October 7. I suppose we can have some hope—I am not sure now we yet know the details of how this will transpire—but that if Hamas is dismantled that the governing structure who would be involved in decisions, for example, around school textbooks and the like, that they would go into a fundamentally different direction.

But at this point that is a long ways off, and that is with regard to some of the things that caused the Trump administration to cut off funding in the past like issues with textbooks.

Senator RICKETTS. Are there some recommended reforms that you would recommend to UNRWA? Can you think of things that maybe you have seen in your experience that UNRWA is not doing that they ought to be doing, or things, given the what has coming to light with regard to what UNRWA employees have been doing with regard to perpetrating these horrible atrocities? Can you think of some reforms?

Ms. POWER. Again, first thing I would say is that I would disaggregate UNRWA and look at UNRWA in Jordan, UNRWA in Lebanon, UNRWA in Syria, UNRWA in the West Bank, UNRWA in Gaza.

Of course, there are procedures and policies across those different areas, but I think it is really important to understand, again, how completely unusual this is compared to other international organizations or NGOs.

We do not have NGOs filled with teachers or doctors, but UNRWA has taken on a kind of quasi-state role in some of the places that I have mentioned.

I think clearly the vetting—if you have members of Hamas who are perpetrating or alleged to have perpetrated attacks or involvement in horrific terrorism of the kind that transpired on October 7 and lives on through the hostages that are still in custody, clearly, that is something that they are going to want to think very differently about.

Senator RICKETTS. One of the UNRWA employees was involved in an attack on a kibbutz that killed 97 people and resulted in 26 being taken hostage. I mean, this is very, very serious stuff for the UNRWA people.

So I know that I am out of time, but thank you, Administrator Power.

Ms. POWER. Thank you, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Administrator Power, good to see you. I want to stick with the discussion about Gaza.

Mr. Chair, I would like to enter into a record an article from *The Hill* that was from Sunday titled “Cindy McCain says Gaza on the edge of going over the cliff with famine and not being able to recover.”

Cindy is the widow of our former Senate Foreign Relations colleague John McCain, a dear friend.

I know, Administrator Power, you—

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection it will be included in record.

[EDITOR’S NOTE.—The information referred to above can be found in the “Additional Material Submitted for the Record” section at the end of this hearing document.]

Senator KAINE. Thank you.

I know you work closely with the World Food Programme and you know Cindy McCain. Do you share that concern that she expressed just 3 days ago that Gazans are on the verge of very serious risk of famine?

Ms. POWER. Yes. I mean, I think the report that was done, which drew on, really, the gold standard of how we measure these things is very clear on this matter, and WHO is already reporting deaths related to conditions stemming from malnutrition.

And to just put this in some context because it is clear that the humanitarian circumstances were not great in Gaza before October 7, but before October 7 there was almost no child malnutrition whatsoever and now close to one in three in northern Gaza.

And if you look at the severe acute malnutrition where you measure with the circumference access is very difficult for organizations that measure these things. But just from January to February, not

taking account the last 6 weeks, severe acute malnutrition doubled among under five kids.

So we are and Cindy, of course, are USAID's great collaborator, and her teams were very eager to get food in there but also very specifically to address the under five needs, which require ready to use therapeutic food so very specific kind of assistance, and we are hopeful that some of the changes that have been made and are being contemplated but need to be made urgently by Israel will allow us to flow in resources to nip what is a famine fundamentally in the bud.

Senator KAINE. I asked Secretary Austin yesterday at an Armed Services Committee hearing whether growing famine or medical catastrophe in Gaza would escalate violence in the region, and he said absolutely it would.

The activities of Hezbollah in the north, the activities of the Houthis in the Red Sea, the activities of Iranian backed militias in Iraq and Syria, possibly activities of Iran itself, will only escalate at a time when we need to be looking for deescalation, a hostage deal, a ceasefire, deescalation in the region.

So we have a compelling interest, we, the United States, the world, Israel, Gaza, Palestine, to avert this widening humanitarian catastrophe. Israel, of course, must defend itself against any who would annihilate it, including Hamas, Hamas, who carried out the attack, who celebrated it, who says they will do it again.

But this should not be a war against Gazans or Palestinians. It should be a war against Hamas, and one of the main bits of evidence about what is it is the access to humanitarian supplies, especially food and medicine.

We were getting about 500 trucks a day of supplies into Gaza before October 7. It was in the single digits or dozens for months and months and months. It took long to open the Kerem Shalom border crossing.

I do applaud President Biden in his conversations last week with Prime Minister Netanyahu subsequently. Kerem Shalom has been opened wider in terms of more supplies in. There has been a commitment to open the Erez border crossing, and we see the pace picking up.

Israel has restored water service into the north of Gaza. Israel has allowed bakeries to open again to make bread and food for Gazans. The pace of the trucks per day exceeded 300 for the first time on Sunday and got near 500 on Monday.

But it has taken way too long, way too long, to get supplies to suffering Gazans. Gazans are suffering under Hamas not—they are not all Hamas.

And so I would just like to ask you, I know as USAID you work with these NGOs, many of which were troubled, frightened, scared, backed off of their activities after the attack on the World Central Kitchen convoy.

Talk to me about what USAID can do in your remit to provide more confidence that humanitarian aid can be delivered at scale.

Ms. POWER. Uh-oh. The poster board—

The CHAIRMAN. That is the next—

Ms. POWER. Yes. No, no, I know. I know. I am just—he makes an entrance.

The CHAIRMAN. You got to get through Senator Kaine first.  
[Laughter.]

Ms. POWER. So, look, what I would say is that I traveled to the region last month, and the nature of my engagement kind of mirrors the way you have played back some of the progress that has been made lately which is saying to the IDF and to the prime minister and to the government these things are going to be done.

The situation is going to get so bad that these additional steps are going to be taken. Just take them—take them now hard as it is and understanding the domestic politics and public opinion after what Hamas did, and unfortunately, a lot of time has been lost. And the commitments are really welcome but the commitments need to be executed including an additional crossing into the north—not just the agreement to do it but the actual crossing.

And you are right that the number of trucks is up, and that is incredibly important, but I think we also need to give some context here which is you are also right that 500 trucks were entering before October 7.

But that was commercial. That was humanitarian. It was not as if every family was in need of humanitarian assistance. Now every family pretty much, I think, is in need of humanitarian assistance, and if you think of the destruction of anything that one had in their home, markets, granaries, arable land—the bulldozing of arable land—and what you describe, which is how few trucks were getting in over such a long period of time, we just have so much catch up to do.

Apart from the fact that whole towns where people lived no longer exist in the way that they did where more than half of the buildings have been destroyed or damaged or are uninhabitable in some fashion.

So this is just unlike any of the environments that I have worked in in the past or our partners have worked in where there is some kind of reliable place where people can either start to rebuild their lives or imagine that the war ends, and they can return to the lives they had and begin to grow their land again.

I mean, all of that is going to take so long. So it just underscores, again, the importance of passing the national security supplemental request so we have the resources to help, but understanding that the access issues and the protection issues where humanitarians can actually do their work safely, that those are commitments that have been made or followed through on.

Senator KAINE. Thank you. Thank you. I appreciate that.

Mr. Chair.

Ms. POWER. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Cruz.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Administrator Power, welcome. You are here today asking the committee to authorize USAID to receive and spend American taxpayer money.

In your prepared testimony you noted that USAID teams have been working day and night to send some of those resources to the Hamas controlled Gaza Strip.

How much money has USAID sent to the Gaza Strip during the Biden administration?



Ms. POWER. Just first let me say that the Hamas controlled Gaza Strip I think is not—I think the IDF would disagree at this point that that is an accurate characterization. I would—

Senator CRUZ. Who was the elected leadership in Gaza?

Ms. POWER. No. No. That is, again—

Senator CRUZ. That would be Hamas, right?

Ms. POWER. Correct. But would you say that Hamas is controlling the Gaza Strip now?

Senator CRUZ. Well, thankfully, no—

Ms. POWER. So I am—that is the whole point.

Senator CRUZ [continuing]. Because the Israelis are killing terrorists and the Biden administration is doing everything they can to try to stop the Israelis from killing the Hamas terrorists.

So my question, how much money has USAID sent to Gaza during the Biden administration?

Ms. POWER. I have not tabulated year to year what the investments have been. But we—as you know, the previous Administration cut off assistance to the West Bank and Gaza so it took a year and a half for us to begin to—

Senator CRUZ. I think it is an exceptionally bad idea to give money to people who want to kill us.

Ms. POWER. That is not USAID's approach.

Senator CRUZ. I just want to be clear. You are testifying today. You do not know how much American taxpayer money you have already spent in Gaza but you want more.

Ms. POWER. No. No, you are asking a question a specific way, and I will get you the specific numbers.

Related specifically to Gaza, our resources often go to grantees or contractors who are working in the West Bank and Gaza. So you are slicing it narrowly to Gaza. I just do not want to say something that is inaccurate.

Senator CRUZ. OK. Well, let us try this from another direction. Since Hamas's October 7 attacks the Biden administration has surged aid into the Gaza Strip. Now, you are not able to tell us how much.

Ms. POWER. No, that was not your question.

Senator CRUZ. But—well, OK, if you can tell us how much since October 7 I will take that too.

Ms. POWER. OK. We, I think, have announced between USAID and the State Department somewhere around \$100 million. But that money has not necessarily moved into Gaza if you know what I mean. I mean, this is to get money into the pipeline to get—

Senator CRUZ. So how much has moved into Gaza since October 7?

Ms. POWER. That I cannot say.

Senator CRUZ. Well, there are U.N. and American Government data bases that lists some of the aid. When you take a look at the data bases for 2023 and 2024, you find about \$40 million in grants to NGOs and U.N. agencies that are marked confidential, and you will also find that millions of dollars of that aid was actually cash. Which NGOs and U.N. agencies received that money?

Ms. POWER. Again, I would want to go through and give you the proper breakdown. But the partners that we rely on and provide the most assistance to would be the World Food Programme,

UNICEF, International Medical Corps who, for example, are running a hospital in southern Gaza seeing 600 patients a day.

The partners—if we are talking about the humanitarian assistance, which is where we have surged assistance, we are talking about trusted partners that USAID works with all over the world.

Senator CRUZ. So who are the individuals who have received cash?

Ms. POWER. The individuals would be, in the case of the World Food Programme, which in order to keep markets going so that people are not forever dependent on humanitarian assistance, or to give people the ability to make it possible for markets to exist, these are voucher assistance programs, and they go to lists of beneficiaries who are identified by the World Food Programme on the ground. So Gazans. Gazan civilians.

Senator CRUZ. Well, when you say Gazan civilians how much of the aid, cash or otherwise, do you assess that has been diverted directly to Hamas?

Ms. POWER. We do not have reports from our partners about diversion by Hamas, and I would say as well that the government of Israel is not shy about presenting to us evidence of things that it finds problematic, UNRWA being the most glaring example, and this is not something that has come to our attention in other ways as well, and they are monitoring—

Senator CRUZ. Well, I will say—

Ms. POWER. To be very clear, Senator, just if I could say one more thing. The government of Israel has eyes on everything that goes into Gaza.

There is no other way in that does not go through COGAT, and so it is really important to bear that in mind that the system that has been in place since October 7 is the most stringent and vigilant form of surveillance that I have ever seen in my—

Senator CRUZ. OK. So you say you do not have any evidence, but if you take a look—you mentioned the poster board and let us look. USAID's own inspector general says that Hamas diverts humanitarian assistance. Specifically that the entire Gaza Strip is a, quote, "high risk for potential diversion and misuse of U.S. funded assistance."

The State Department makes the very same assessment. When they restarted aid in 2021 over my objections and the objections of many others, they made an internal assessment that there was a, quote, "high risk the aid would benefit Hamas." That is the Biden State Department. That is the USAID Office of the Inspector General.

What are you doing to stop this money from going to Hamas? And to be clear, if you go online right now you can see videos of Hamas terrorists riding on top of aid trucks. And so saying, we do not have any evidence this is happening, when your own agency says there is a high risk of this happening, that is not credible.

Ms. POWER. No. No. This is an entirely appropriate fraud alert in the most complex operating environment on planet Earth, which calls on USAID, the OIG staff themselves, and our partners to be excessively vigilant and to remind partners that they have to report—

Senator CRUZ. Do you agree with the inspector general that there is a high risk of Hamas diverting the aid?

Ms. POWER. There is a high risk in any environment where you have armed elements. That risk is there, and in, again, this really, really unprecedented situation where you have such a small number of crossing points and such intense focus not only on the aid as it crosses, but also on what happens to the aid with IDF soldiers patrolling through Gaza—

Senator CRUZ. I have to say it is remarkable. You cannot tell us how much money has gone into Gaza.

Ms. POWER. No. No. You did not ask the question. That is not fair, Senator.

Senator CRUZ. You cannot tell us what has happened to stop it from going to Hamas.

Ms. POWER. You asked a totally different question at the beginning. You said how much over the duration of the Biden administration.

Senator CRUZ. I asked it both ways.

Ms. POWER. No, no. And then I answered. I said, roughly, around \$100 million, which it looks like is on your poster board saying—this looks like that is what the inspector general, the figure that he used as well.

So my point is this is exactly the right set of questions. This is our responsibility to prevent diversion, to look into any allegation. Our partners know that when something like that happens they have to report it to the OIG and to USAID, and we have a set of investigation measures and remediation measures that we have to take when that happens.

Look, what you have is severe hunger, desperate civilians. You definitely have—and again, the government of Israel itself—this is something I talked to the prime minister about—recognizes that the level of food scarcity in Gaza has made civilians act in a manner that has undermined the traditional humanitarian system, where it is very hard for trucks even to get to their destinations because civilians come and charge the trucks as you would and I would if our kids—or we might if our kids were as hungry as kids in Gaza are.

So I think the main—I do not want to call it assurance because we have to verify, then trust. But the main point I would underscore is that the IDF is omnipresent in Gaza.

The Israeli government is omnipresent in the humanitarian pipeline going to Gaza, and they retain the ability to keep track of what is happening on the ground, and they recognize that there is also a security and a huge stability risk—they appear to recognize, I hope they recognize—of allowing so little food to reach civilians who are in such dire straits.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I had mentioned earlier, Senator Booker, we thank you for your visit to Sudan and briefing many of us as to the current humanitarian crisis in that area. So we thank you for that, and you are recognized.

Senator BOOKER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for this committee, and Administrator Power, it is great to see you but even more it has just been great to work with you and your

extraordinary team who probably does not get the kind of attention and gratitude they deserve as well.

I am grateful for that you are here. Listening to some of my colleagues I share their urgency and an urgency I know you share to deal with this gruesome, awful, tragic humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

The urgencies are paramount to deal with the challenges not just with the food insecurity and the near famine like conditions, but also the medical needs, the trauma. There is no way we can ever get to the peace and strength in that region that that we urgently need or the independence and strength of the Palestinian people relies upon us addressing this crisis, and I am grateful for your focus.

But so many of the things that I am saying also could be said about what is going on in Sudan right now, and it is a crisis in terms of proportion that is perhaps the fastest growing humanitarian crisis on the planet right now at a scale and number that are even difficult to get your head around.

As you know, the conflict is causing a spiraling toward mass famine in the Darfur region, which is accelerating the refugee problem into surrounding nations.

As the chairman just said, I was in Sudan and have now talked to many leaders within the State Department as well as other aid workers who have been to that—where I have been, and all of us have the same thing.

We have seen refugee camps from Syrian refugees in Jordan to—I have been around this globe, but none of us have seen anything like the level, the scale, the ocean of human crisis that we witnessed there.

And what compounds this problem is it is not just the hunger crisis and the famine like conditions, increasing numbers. About 90 percent of the people you see are women and children and the growing numbers of people that are malnourished, facing starvation, who come but the endemic nature of the sexual violence that is also really apparent.

And so we have talked about this in private conversations, but the desperation of the aid workers I encountered who do not know where the next resources are going to come from. Their needs are less than 10 percent funded, and I am wondering if you can speak to that.

And then the other area of questioning I want to do is, you are dealing with a population that has been so traumatized and victimized and brutalized that the need is not just food and water, which is so apparent in that area that I witnessed in Adre, but I am wondering how we can begin to address some of the larger issues of trauma that are so destabilizing the Sahel in general that really put us into a crisis after Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, that had everybody that I visited in that region really concerned about how this crisis is going to further destabilize the region if we do not begin to address the full needs of the of the community of people who are suffering.

Ms. POWER. Well, I thank you, Senator, for traveling there, for also the number of Senators who have spoken while you were out of the room about your trip and you briefing on the trip and the impression you have made on your colleagues is part of what we need more of.

There is not enough focus. It is a very hard time now to get attention irrespective of the gravity of harm that you are suffering on planet Earth because the needs are so substantial, up 40 percent this year from last year, and they were up last year from the year before, and it is—the level, the pace of increase, is really staggering. There is very little good news or positive I can say, I guess, about Sudan except I think you have engaged a lot with our new Special Envoy.

Fundamentally, there has to be a political agreement. We are not going to humanitarian aid our way out of this humanitarian crisis. The guns have to fall quiet. Even a ceasefire—a protracted ceasefire would be something, would allow more access.

So I am grateful that Special Envoy Perriello is on the case, and U.N. Special Representative also now have an empowered Special Envoy Lamamra. So that is politically—I think it is, again, just a process point. It does not get us anywhere until it does.

But I think it is better than not having that senior engagement. There is also a pledging conference that the French are convening in Paris, as you probably know, on April 15.

So I mentioned that the U.S. Government has given almost a billion dollars over the last year, \$600 million of which is from USAID. But we have not seen other donors step up and do their share.

Again, everything is connected to everything else with the war in Gaza. They might be funding UNRWA in a way that we are not, and they may say when we say what about Sudan.

And so it is very, very complicated just given the level of global need, but I absolutely share your assessment and sense of urgency.

And on the psychosocial just briefly, this is the—again, the challenge, which is the sheer number of people dependent on, as you said, basic food and water or medicine to stay alive, and all programs come out of the same pot of money.

In order not to carry their trauma and become potentially destabilizing members of their own community or be susceptible to recruitment or just to suffer for the rest of their lives, we need to supplement these life saving interventions with life changing and healing psychosocial support.

We have programs like that in Sudan, but they are quite modest, again, given the access issues and the primacy of keeping people alive to get to the point where we can hopefully do some of that follow on care.

Senator BOOKER. And I just want to be respectful of my colleague from Illinois but just ask one more question. But in the town of Adre on the border of Sudan and in Chad—Chad is already one of our top 10 lowest income countries—less than 10 percent of the country is even electrified—and it is so urgent for me to let folks understand that you even have Chad folks suffering such poverty going to see if they can get aid from the places that are being set up to deal with Sudan and Sudan refugees.

It is such an interwoven a crisis that could really affect that region, and so investments in humanitarian aid are really investments in economic security, political security, and basically dollars invested in supporting these populations save tremendously more

dollars, not to mention the efforts of global competitors like Russia trying to exploit these areas.

And so I guess the one thing I will ask you and then yield to my colleague, if you could just—I am trying to get you on the record, and this implication for the world as well as for what I saw in Chad in the town of Adre is the supplemental, and a lot of people are casting the supplemental in terms of Indo-China, in terms of Israel/Gaza, in terms of Ukraine, and these are all incredibly urgent moments that capture a lot of the attention of the public.

But when it comes to the supplemental's urgency for what we see on the continent of Africa and the urgent importance of the continent of Africa, could you just speak to that, why keeping the humanitarian aid is so critical in the global context, but specifically for Africa?

The CHAIRMAN. If you could be brief we would appreciate it. We have covered it before.

Ms. POWER. I will. Just to reinforce a point I made earlier, which is that the word supplemental in the context of humanitarian assistance is a misnomer because our base humanitarian budget is down 40 percent in the 2024 bill from what it was as enacted in fiscal year 2023 and needs.

We did not have the war in Sudan a year ago. A year and a week ago, I guess, we got it. But this supplemental is not only a life and death issue for the kinds of refugees we have been able to sustain since that war began, but as you said, there are all these dogs that are not barking because of U.S. leadership, and it is very hard to do the counterfactuals and so forth.

But how many of the people who receive humanitarian assistance funded by the United States at these higher levels that we had last year, what happens when those rations get cut, when they cannot show up and get access to resources?

Where do they go? Where do the young men among them go? There are plenty of players on the scene including Boko Haram, who had a horrific spate of attacks in Chad as well as in Nigeria and elsewhere.

ISIS and its affiliates—I mean, this is a pool of individuals and who are themselves displaced but also those host communities that have nothing to begin with that we have to find ways to support to get through this crisis.

But we cannot just focus on the humanitarian without attention to the political, because the real challenge right now is wars are not ending. They keep getting added to the ledger. Funding is actually going down, not up, even as needs are going up, and even with the supplemental our funding will be down commensurate to the need.

But investment in the diplomacy and the political processes as well to put enough pressure on those players who are causing this havoc and this devastation in the first place is key.

Sorry, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Duckworth.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good morning, Administrator Power.

As someone who focuses a great deal on the Indo-Pacific, I want to applaud the agency's focus on boosting economic growth, eco-

conomic resilience, and economic connectivity between our allies and partners in the region, and I know firsthand that this economic work is important, and it is what our partners want.

The request submitted includes \$2 billion in mandatory funding over 5 years for State and USAID to support our economic strategy in the region, and I wanted to invite you to comment on how funding this request can provide real impact for countries like the Philippines and Vietnam who are on the frontlines of increasing PRC aggression.

Ms. POWER. Well, only because I have traveled not that long ago to Vietnam I would just highlight the strategic upgrade in the relationship between the United States and Vietnam, and we mentioned earlier Cindy McCain, and I often think of Senator McCain, Senator Kerry, and the work that was done to plant those seeds long ago, and now you have a comprehensive strategic partnership with Vietnam, investments in young people, in education, in their tech sector.

I just met with senior Vietnamese officials here a couple weeks ago about their interest in building a semiconductor industry that can have profound impacts for us and our supply chain resilience.

I mean, really, the sky is the limit, and the opening by the people, which is an incredible thing to experience going to Vietnam all these decades after war and being so welcomed.

One of the things USAID has done is invested in the war legacy issues including remediation of the toxins that were left by Agent Orange in the war and addressing communities who have been afflicted with disabilities and trying to support them, but just the potential for that relationship to move forward, the Philippines as well.

A major upgrade, I think, we are seeing in those dynamics, and USAID's investments are in marginalized communities, people who maybe have not been part of economic growth. But as those countries seek to move toward more inclusive economic growth, for us to be there to build their national capacities to deal with disasters, particularly in light of climate change and all the extreme weather events.

But again, I think we have come a long way, and a free and open Indo-Pacific is so entirely in the interests of the American people that it is something that we must continue to pursue.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you.

And sort of moving on from your comments about the post-war work that you are doing and the relationships that you are building, I am interested in your perspective on interagency cooperation on the ground especially across the three Ds of diplomacy, development, and defense in places where USAID's public servants are working in challenging and often hostile environments.

Those of us who have had boots on the ground appreciate the challenges of coordinating among multiple U.S. Government agencies in conflict affected areas. But despite the challenges our National Security Strategy requires the effective and efficient use of all the elements of national power including development assistance.

Can you provide examples of successful interagency cooperation particularly between USAID and the Department of Defense in recent humanitarian or developmental efforts?

Ms. POWER. Well, let me say I think we and the interagency progress every year on this and get stronger and stronger. I think the civ-mil ties among our agencies you might even find unrecognizable from the time of your service in the sense that they are much stronger.

Just some examples—the number of detailees that we have from the Defense Department at USAID. We have a senior development advisor in each of the combatant commands around the world.

And you asked for examples—the example of the large airlifts of supplies into Al Arish in the early days of the Gaza war by DOD. USAID funded supplies on DOD planes working that through, obviously, the collaboration now on creating a maritime corridor into Gaza.

I had mentioned earlier the number of natural disasters that afflict the Philippines. It is just—and growing, it appears, every year. The work that DOD has done with its counterparts in building disaster resilience and we, USAID, have done with our civilian counterparts, and I think the real testament to a 3D mindset is DOD being the one to consistently send the message of the importance of a civilian led response when a national emergency—obviously, militaries can have capabilities that need to be turned to in a difficult circumstance but making sure that the response does not get overly militarized.

Those kinds of messages coming from USAID is one thing, but coming from our Defense colleagues just makes an enormous difference.

Senator DUCKWORTH. And I think it is also critically important in places like Africa where you have some real security challenges for your personnel on the ground as well, I would expect.

Ms. POWER. Yes. I mean, absolutely the—unfortunately, between coups and conflicts the collaboration on basic questions of the security of USAID staff, U.S. personnel more broadly, but also questions around evacuations and contingency planning, all of that is required and needs to be constantly updated in light of the circumstances.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, and thank you for your continued service.

Ms. POWER. Thank you, Senator.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, Ambassador Power, let me make one comment here about the humanitarian crisis we have in Gaza. It is urgent. We have got to get aid in there. We have got to do a better job.

But I mention that because currently there is active negotiations in regards to a pause in hostilities and the release of hostages, and it appears that Hamas is being extremely difficult.

I would hope we would see more international pressure on Hamas to release the hostages so that we can move forward with closure for many Israeli families and many international families.

There are 133 individuals that are still not accounted for. We know some are deceased. We know some are alive. We do not



have—we never had international organization accountability on these individuals.

I mention that because it is just a horrific humanitarian crisis for the families of these hostages, of the hostages themselves, and if we can get that resolved, and we can get a pause, then we have a real chance to see major progress made in regards to the humanitarian crisis within Gaza.

So we recognize we all need to do more. We need to pass our supplemental so that you have the resources you need. We recognize that may not be the immediate need in Gaza, but it is still affecting all the other programs that you have, and you do not have enough resources to do your basic international and humanitarian assistance.

We have to do that. The Israelis have to be more understanding on the gates into Gaza and to allow for the distribution to take place. There has got to be more effective international presence in order to deliver that aid, which a pause in hostilities will allow us to be able to get all that done and to bring closure in regards to the hostages that Hamas took on October 7 in a horrific attack on Israel.

So I just really want to underscore the point. We are all concerned about getting humanitarian assistance in. We have to deal with that.

But let us also concentrate on Hamas that was the—the terrorist attacks on October 7, the taking of hostages, which was outrageous to start off with, including young children and including women, in many cases civilians, not soldiers, and yet they still keep from getting home these individuals and allowing for closure for families on which we have had a deceased individual. They are responsible for their safety, and they are responsible for their immediate release.

The record of the committee will remain open until end of the day tomorrow and the end of Thursday. We would ask that the members get their questions in, and we ask, Madam Administrator, if you would respond promptly to those questions.

We started this hearing by offering our thanks for what you do, and we recognize you operate in an extremely challenging environment. Every day there is new challenges that you have to confront.

I was very impressed by your comments that we direct the pots of dollars as to where you can spend them for about 90 percent of the aid.

So that makes it challenging for you to make certain adjustments, and we look forward to the fiscal year 2025 budget to give you the resources you need to meet the challenges of America.

With that, if there is nothing further from my colleagues the hearing will be adjourned.

Ms. POWER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all.

[Whereupon, at 11:57 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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## ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES OF MS. SAMANTHA POWER TO QUESTIONS  
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

## ANTI-CORRUPTION

*Question.* Corruption seriously disrupts the effectiveness of development assistance. Corrupt actors frequently redirect aid funds away from projects that benefit the majority of the population toward smaller groups of people connected to corrupt officials and aid intermediaries.

Where do you think anti-corruption activities are most important and anti-corruption programs need enhancing, and are there certain sectors where corruption is more prevalent in developing countries?

*Answer.* USAID agrees that corruption poses a serious threat to development. It undermines national security and the rule of law, stunts development, and saps governments of legitimacy, eroding faith in democracy itself. That is why tackling corruption has been elevated on USAID's agenda and why this Administration is prioritizing efforts to promote accountability for corruption around the world.

Corruption has significantly evolved in recent decades to become a globalized, networked, and pernicious problem. In response, USAID has modernized and transformed its approach by pivoting to confront transnational corruption, grand corruption, and kleptocracy. USAID's programmatic efforts are aimed at addressing contemporary corruption threats, while keeping pace with the drivers, enablers, and manifestations of corruption today, especially transnational corruption. The Agency marshals a range of capabilities during pivotal moments for anti-corruption reform and backsliding—for which flexible and timely sources of funding are critical—working to preserve or enhance development gains, and to forge new partnerships and coalitions to spur and sustain anti-corruption progress. Anti-corruption activities are particularly impactful where there are opportunities to support democratic openings, stop democratic backsliding, and preserve or enhance development gains.

Countering corruption across sectors that impedes development progress is another USAID priority. Corruption is deeply challenging in developing countries, particularly where there are significant resources and procurements involved, with substantial impacts on individuals, households, communities, and countries. For example:

- In the economic growth sector, 46 percent of companies surveyed in 2022 experienced corruption, fraud, or other economic crimes in the last 2 years.
- In the health sector, over 80 percent of people in low-income countries have experienced corruption—at an estimated loss of \$500 billion per year.
- In the environment sector, corruption facilitates poaching, the illegal timber and fisheries trade, and wildlife trafficking, generating billions in illicit income every year.
- In extractive industries, a country's national wealth is frequently subject to misuse and corruption, particularly as the energy transition creates unprecedented demand for critical minerals.

USAID is committed to countering corruption across our development and humanitarian assistance efforts.

*Question.* How is foreign malign influence exacerbating corruption in developing countries where USAID is working?

*Answer.* Foreign malign actors engage in transnational corruption as a means to achieve their policy goals, but modalities vary by the actor and the targeted country. In some places, a malign actor might exploit weaknesses in political finance systems to fund a political party or movement that is tailor-made to advance their interests. Elsewhere, a malign actor may use kickbacks and bribes to gain control over a critical sector of the economy, which it can then use as a lever of influence against the target government. In other cases, inducements and other tactics are used to influence media outlets and bias the information a population receives. The strategic use of corruption by foreign malign actors is deepening the already-pervasive challenge of corruption in many of the environments in which USAID works.

However, there are strategies showing promise. For example, USAID is supporting transparency measures that include beneficial ownership registries, asset disclosure regimes for public officials and candidates for public office, e-procurement systems, and the publication of contracts and the terms of loans to increase citizens' knowledge of the harmful impacts of transnational corruption.

USAID is committed to continue investing in research and analysis to better understand the challenge posed by foreign malign actors and develop evidence-based strategies for countering their corrupting influence.

#### OUT-COMPETE-CHINA

*Question.* This is the second year that the Administration has submitted an “Out-Compete-China” mandatory funding request, which seeks \$4 billion over 5 years to support international strategic infrastructure projects and our efforts in the Indo-Pacific.

Why is the “Out-Compete-China” mandatory funding critical for USAID’s programming as we look toward fiscal year 2025? Can you explain how this funding, if authorized by this committee, is a unique effort to address strategic competition with China?

What opportunities would this mandatory funding create for USAID to address the challenges posed by China in the Indo Pacific?

*Answer.* In response to the tremendous challenges and unprecedented opportunities we face in the Indo-Pacific, the fiscal year 2025 President’s Budget requests both mandatory and discretionary resources to out-compete China, strengthen the U.S. role in the Indo-Pacific, and advance American prosperity globally through new investments.

The PRC is the United States’ only competitor with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it. Discretionary resources alone cannot meet the need as the U.S. works to out-compete China; it is crucial to our national security that we have mandatory, reliable funding.

We have designed this mandatory package primarily as a vehicle to innovate new ways to support our allies and partners around the world by providing a viable alternative to the PRC’s predatory and coercive practices and expanded presence and offer alternatives at a scale that discretionary spending simply cannot meet. The mandatory package also provides us the ability to make longer-term investments that complement and bolster our programming funded on the discretionary side.

The mandatory proposal includes \$4 billion that will enable the United States to invest in new ways to out-compete China and focus on the following new and critical investments to:

- Create a new International Infrastructure Fund, which will out-compete China by providing a credible, reliable alternative to PRC options, while also expanding markets and opportunities for U.S. businesses. This fund will support transformative, quality, and sustainable “hard” infrastructure projects, including along strategic economic corridors.
- Make game-changing investments in the Indo-Pacific to strengthen partner economies, bolster connectivity between partner countries, and support their efforts, including through multilateral fora, in pushing back against coercive actions.

We are requesting \$2 billion over 5 years to enable the United States to make game-changing investments in the Indo-Pacific to out-compete China that will allow for new initiatives in strategic sectors that base discretionary funding alone cannot support. This funding will advance U.S. interests and leadership in the region and demonstrate our enduring commitment to our Indo-Pacific partners. We will support competitive connectivity in the Indo-Pacific, making Indo-Pacific economies more connected and resilient through transformative investments in emerging technologies, supply chains, and transportation, while also increasing opportunities for American businesses.

These mandatory funds will allow us to work with our Indo-Pacific partners to implement a robust regional approach to secure Open Radio Access Network (ORAN) digital technology and other secure, high-standards technologies that provide like-minded alternatives to the PRC’s predatory and coercive economic practices. Additionally, this funding will enable the United States to coordinate strategic investments with like-minded partners and incentivize lasting commitments from host governments that advance longer-term, deeper cooperation in countries most at risk of coercion and predatory influence. Funding would be authorized and appropriated to State and USAID (via the Economic Support Fund), with transfer authority to other agencies such as DFC, EXIM, and USTDA.

The PRC is combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological might as it pursues a sphere of influence in the Indo-Pacific, and while its ambitions span the globe, it is most acute in the Indo-Pacific. In February 2022, the Biden-Harris Administration released a new Indo-Pacific Strategy, focused on advancing a free and open, connected, prosperous, secure, and resilient Indo-Pacific.

The Indo-Pacific Strategy aims to strengthen our long-term position in and commitment to the region by building connections within and beyond the region; driving regional prosperity; bolstering regional security; and developing resilience to transnational threats.

While resourcing all elements of our Indo-Pacific Strategy is an Administration priority, funding to advance our economic strategy in the region is our top resource need.

#### DEMOCRACY AND ELECTIONS

*Question.* 2024 is poised to be a consequential year for democracy, with more than 60 countries holding national elections.

How will USAID—particularly through the newly established Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance—promote democratic and transparent elections?

*Answer.* USAID began preparing well in advance—as early as 2020 in some countries—for this pivotal year of elections. USAID is supporting election-related activities in 25 countries holding elections in 2024, involving an estimated 700 million registered voters.

USAID's elections and political processes support in 2024 spans a wide range of programming, including: strengthening election management bodies and political parties, supporting electoral reform and election observation, enhancing voter education, promoting a more resilient information environment, mitigating electoral violence, and bolstering electoral justice. USAID's electoral assistance programming emphasizes addressing barriers to the safe and meaningful political and electoral participation of women, youth, and other marginalized populations.

The newly established DRG Bureau is strategically using its resources to enhance and expand USAID's bilateral assistance for a number of crucial electoral processes in 2024 and beyond. Utilizing fiscal year (FY 2023) appropriated funds, USAID is providing approximately \$57 million to Missions through rapid response mechanisms and direct funding aimed at enhancing the integrity of electoral processes, responding to unanticipated openings or electoral events, political transitions, and increasing women's political participation and leadership. This includes the following in fiscal year 2023 resources: \$27,279,000 under the Elections and Political Processes (EPP) Fund, \$15,900,000 under the Defending Democratic Elections (DDE) Fund, \$10,000,000 under the Advancing Women's and Girls' Civic and Political Leadership Initiative, as well as approximately \$4,700,000 under our Rapid and Flexible Response (RFR) capabilities under the Democratic Elections and Political Processes (DEPP) global mechanism, implemented by the Consortium for Elections and Political Processes (CEPPS).

DRG is also leveraging its technical knowledge and engaging interagency colleagues to better link electoral assistance with diplomatic engagement for maximum impact.

For example, the DRG Bureau is collaborating with the Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor to expand and update an internal U.S. Government Interagency Elections Toolkit, which helps Missions and Posts assess and oversee elections and political processes support throughout the electoral cycle. The new toolkit resources launched this year focus on emerging issues, including countering foreign electoral interference and policy tools to promote democratic elections.

USAID's DRG Bureau has also recently played a key role in helping form and launch the Global Network for Securing Electoral Integrity (GNSEI), which is the first standing platform promoting coordination and cooperation among roughly 30 leading election integrity stakeholders.

*Question.* How will USAID bolster support for the work of democracy activists, human rights defenders, and other reformers on the ground?

*Answer.* Around the world, human rights defenders (HRDs), democracy activists, anti-corruption champions, elections observers, and other reformers on the ground are subject to frequent harassment, attacks, threats, and intimidation. USAID has a role to play in enhancing their protection.

USAID has a comprehensive approach to supporting human rights defenders by preventing violations they face; addressing their physical, digital, and mental health needs; and responding to abuses after they occur. At the second Summit for Democracy in March 2023, USAID committed to enhance the security, safety, and well-being of implementing partners (IPs) and program participants (PPs). To implement this commitment, the DRG Bureau had over 200 consultations with Missions and with 100 HRDs and their supporters to identify best practices and lessons learned.

DRG compiled all these best practices into a Risk Mitigation, Prevention, and Response Toolkit for USAID Missions and USAID staff to use when designing and implementing foreign assistance, especially in closing and closed spaces. USAID is in the process of finalizing this toolkit for dissemination.

USAID/DRG offers substantial support to HRDs and other reformers through various initiatives including:

- The Justice, Rights, and Security Rapid Response Assistance Activity (JRS-RRA) provides support to HRDs to meet urgent and unforeseen human rights, justice, and security-related needs and windows of opportunity.
- The DRG Bureau’s Human Rights Grant Program (HRGP) enables Missions to address emergent human rights challenges, including preventing and responding to human rights violations against HRDs.
- Through the Powered by the People (PxP) activity, USAID’s partners launched the BETA version of a Global Activist Help Desk, a secure, one stop shop for civic actors around the world to request a wide range of support including short and long-term grants, training, rapid response, relocation assistance, digital safety, and psychosocial support.
- For at-risk journalists and media outlets, the Media Viability Accelerator (MVA) aims to enhance media sustainability by building longer term media financial viability, and includes a Flexible Response component designed to tackle emergencies like economic crises or political instability. The International Fund for Public Interest Media (IFPIM) supports independent journalism globally with substantial funding from various sources, ensuring the continuation of trustworthy media in hostile environments.
- The Empowering the Truth Tellers (ETT) initiative strengthens investigative journalism worldwide, including by enhancing national mechanisms for journalist and activist protection and attending to investigative journalists’ physical, digital, and legal needs.
- In addition, a new global activity, Civic DEFENDERS, launching this year, will support local civil society, independent media, and human rights defenders to better prevent, mitigate, and respond to digital repression in their own contexts, particularly in closed and closing spaces.

USAID provided input into the Human Rights Defender Protection Act of 2024 draft legislation, that you and your office are leading, by incorporating language on preventing attacks against HRDs, protecting their physical security and well-being, and responding to abuses when needed. We look forward to continuing conversations about what we are doing to protect HRDs globally.

#### LOCALIZATION OF AID AND PROGRAMS

*Question.* The fiscal year 2025 budget request hardly details any specifics on the advancement of USAID’s localization of assistance efforts.

How is USAID advancing localization across programs and is this still a priority for the Agency?

Does localizing of assistance compromise the effectiveness (or outcomes) of USAID’s programs?

Answer. Localization remains one of USAID’s key priorities and cuts across the work of all the Agency’s sectors and geographies. USAID is planning to release its Localization Progress Report for Fiscal Year 2023 by the end of June. The report will provide updates on USAID’s direct local funding progress as well as lessons from the pilot of a new metric designed to track how USAID is elevating local leadership across all of its programs. Once the report is out, the Agency would be happy to have a conversation with your staff to discuss progress and priorities around this critical work moving forward.

Over the last year, USAID has undertaken a number of efforts to underpin future progress on our localization goals of shifting more funding and decisionmaking power to local actors. These include:

- Updating existing guidance and developing new tools and resources to support staff to work in more locally led ways, including through teams like Local Works, the New Partnerships Initiative, and localization working groups formed across all Agency bureaus and missions.
- Developing new and updating existing policies and associated tools to bring greater coherence to why and how to invest in the Agency’s local partners. For example, USAID’s Local Capacity Strengthening Policy has both set a new standard for approaching local capacity strengthening among our OECD-DAC partners, but

it is also being recognized for how USAID policies should be created in the first place—with strong consultations among our local partners.

- Reducing barriers to entry for local partners through increased outreach, expanded use of local languages, more flexible and tailorable pre-award assessments for local partners, and more.
- Focusing on partnering better, such as by expanding the use of mechanisms with fewer compliance burdens, taking steps to support partners' full cost recovery, and encouraging staff to reduce reporting burdens.

There is considerable agreement among those who work in development, as well as some academic literature (e.g., Honig 2018, Campbell 2018, Andrews et al, 2015, USAID 2022) that suggests that the incorporation of local priorities, local knowledge, and local accountability and feedback structures is a key contributor to more effective and successful programs. Studies of individual projects that look specifically at issues around ownership also often bear this out.

There are a range of approaches that can advance locally led development. To the extent that the question posed is about the approach of funding local partners directly, evidence does not suggest that direct local funding compromises USAID's effectiveness. For example, a study comparing international and local partners' delivery of PEPFAR programs in fiscal year 2019 and fiscal year 2020 found that while programs by local partners exceeded some targets and performed somewhat less well than international partners on other targets, the overall quality of service delivery was comparable between local and international partners.

USAID's Mission in Serbia also recently conducted an evaluation examining the development benefits of working through local partners. They highlight contextual knowledge, relationships and connections, high motivation, and sustained engagement in the local system even after the award ends as key values of direct local partnerships. Indeed, when we articulate that the outcomes of interest are not just sectoral indicators but investment in local systems, the calculus for more engagement of local partners becomes even stronger.

That said, funding a local partner directly may not always enable sustainable outcomes and development. Context matters enormously, which is why USAID defers to Missions to set their own targets for local partnerships, bearing in mind factors like the operating environments for local organizations (i.e., civic space), the capacity and appetite of local organizations to manage U.S. Government funding, Mission capacity, and a range of other contextual factors. This is also why USAID frames its localization goals not just around direct local funding, but also around the many ways we can structure our work to elevate local voices regardless of the type of implementing partner.

#### CLIMATE AND THE BUDGET

*Question.* U.S. leadership on climate action is essential to solving the climate crisis and meeting the universal goal of keeping global temperatures from increasing by 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Please explain how USAID accounts for spending on climate programs and how you may delineate budget items that have a reasonable climate action component, but not exclusively or directly serve efforts to combat or adapt to the effects of climate change?

*Answer.* The U.S. Government (USG) international climate assistance funding falls in two categories:

- "Direct" climate investments through activities supported by funds allocated specifically for one of the three pillars of our climate change assistance funding: Adaptation, Clean Energy, and Sustainable Landscapes.
- "Indirect" climate investments through activities supported by funds allocated for other primary purposes, and which deliver climate benefits. For example, a program that helps farmers who are vulnerable to climate change access and use drought-tolerant seeds would be categorized primarily as a direct food security activity, and as an indirect climate activity, as the secondary benefits are attributable to USAID's climate adaptation objectives.

The President's fiscal year 2025 request includes \$3 billion total for direct and indirect climate programs. The Department of State and USAID request direct climate adaptation, clean energy and sustainable landscapes funding as well as the planned scope of indirect adaptation, clean energy, and sustainable landscapes programming that complement the other sectoral funding requests. The direct climate programs request of \$1.36 billion is balanced along with other Administration priorities and represents programs whose first objective is to achieve climate adaptation, clean energy, and sustainable landscapes outcomes. The indirect climate request of \$1.67 bil-

lion is aligned with Administration priorities and is built into the President's fiscal year 2025 request. These Mission requests are reviewed by Washington stakeholders, including USAID and the Department of State, and represent attributable, secondary climate objectives complementing the primary objectives of other USG foreign assistance programs.

#### REGIONAL MIGRANT INTEGRATION

*Question.* More than 500,000 people crossed the dangerous Darien jungle region between Colombia and Panama in 2023, and early estimates showing an increase to more than 700,000 in 2024, our assistance and partnerships in the region.

Where can you demonstrate that increasing our investments in legal pathways and supporting migrants to integrate across the Hemisphere bring tangible results that can stem irregular migration flows to reduce pressure at the U.S. border?

What are the risks of not expanding this aspect of USAID's work?

*Answer.* There is some preliminary evidence that investing in legal labor pathways and helping migrants integrate across the hemisphere may reduce the need for irregular migration. For example, a 2023 study<sup>1</sup> comparing communities in Guatemala found that when more temporary worker visas are available, more individuals take advantage of those legal pathways rather than migrating irregularly.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the study found that families of regular migrants have a better general economic situation—lower levels of poverty and food insecurity, access to diverse food, among other development outcomes—and that more frequent and larger remittances sent by regular migrants are channeled into investments that improve quality of life and generate income and development in the migrants' communities of origin over the long term.

Helping regularize and integrate migrants across the countries where we work in the Western Hemisphere is another critical element of the USAID approach to addressing migration. Research confirms that regularized migrants are less vulnerable to exploitation due to their ability to seek help or access services that are designed to protect them. And when migrants have legal status, they can access jobs, schools and education programming where they are, reducing their need to move elsewhere to meet their needs. Further, according to an April 2024 UNHCR report, just 19 percent of migrants surveyed transiting the Darien between January and March reported having valid documentation in another country.

The risks of not expanding this work include the potential that more migrants may opt to go to the U.S. irregularly. Additionally, not expanding this work may also increase the vulnerability and possible onward migration of the 9.8 million migrants in the region who are already forcibly displaced outside of their home country and who would potentially see their access to services and legal protection inhibited.

#### RESPONSES OF MS. SAMANTHA POWER TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

##### PRESENCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT

*Question.* Do you believe that the Agency's current risk tolerance in medium- to high-threat posts is appropriately tailored? Do you believe that it should be improved, and if so, how? What will you do to bring about that improvement?

*Answer.* The Agency's core mission and role in support of U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives requires that USAID work in a wide variety of fragile, non-permissive environments (NPEs). Risks range from state failure, armed conflict, and other types of violent instability due to corruption, susceptibility to natural disaster, and political or macroeconomic disruptions, with many country contexts vulnerable to multiple risks at the same time.

Through USAID's Enterprise Risk Management Framework, USAID considers these risks as part of an interrelated portfolio and applies the Agency's Risk Appetite Statement (RAS) which provides broad based guidance on the level and type of risk the Agency is willing to accept—based on an evaluation of opportunities and threats—to achieve the Agency's mission and objectives.

<sup>1</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/attachments/4952a588-ee56-4604-a143-94360e592b93/Impact-of-regular-temporary-migration-to-Canada-and-the-U.S.-FINAL-INFORM-2023.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Specifically, the percentage of households with irregular migrants in communities with greater access to temporary worker visas was 19 percentage points lower than communities with fewer temporary worker visas: 11 percent of households in communities with more temporary worker visas compared to about 30 percent in communities with fewer temporary worker visas.

In 2022, USAID conducted a full review and revision of our Risk Appetite Statement (RAS) to ensure alignment with the Agency's organizational priorities and operating context, including in medium- to-high-threat posts. The revised document outlines eight different risk categories: Programmatic/Development Outcome, Fiduciary, Reputational, Legal, Security, Human Capital, Information Technology and Operational (each with their own varying appetite of high, medium, and low).

The RAS also defined the difference between risk appetite and risk tolerance for the workforce. While risk appetite provides a higher Agency-level statement on the levels of risk USAID deems allowable, risk tolerance is the acceptable level of variance from the risk appetite in performance relative to the achievement of objectives, which can be set at a project/activity level. This means the risk tolerance at the project/activity level in medium- to-high-threat posts can be appropriately tailorable to each context.

With regard to maintaining presence in Non-Permissive Environments (NPEs), USAID has a Medium risk appetite. USAID maintains Missions, field offices, and temporary duty presence in conflict, post-conflict, natural disaster, health emergency, or other insecure and/or high risk environments. In these instances, USAID balances the likelihood for security breaches and/or need to suddenly evacuate staff or allocate additional security resources with the NPE's impact on U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives. In addition, USAID facilitates mission critical travel in line with the U.S. Government guidelines on health, safety, and security to address major overseas disruption in Agency operations.

USAID operates with as much transparency as possible, while balancing the imperative to protect workforce members, contractors, partners, and beneficiaries who could face significant risks from association with the United States. USAID supports workforce members undertaking field visits coordinated and approved in accordance with post management policies and by Regional Security Officers (RSOs) for the purposes of: designing programs, monitoring implementation, or providing oversight, among other mission critical purposes. However, USAID harmonizes this desire with the discretion of the RSO, the likelihood of security incidents, and the availability of effective alternatives, including those that deploy technologies which reduce risks (e.g., virtual site visits).

USAID also has a Medium risk appetite with respect to support for USAID staff at hardship posts and in other difficult operating environments. USAID staff can be assigned to hardship posts with difficult operating environments to carry out the Agency's mission. Staff in these situations must continually balance these assignments with the potential for severe and unsustainable levels of stress that might arise from exposure to threats, unprecedented workloads, separations from family, and inadequate rest. To address these challenges, USAID has expanded Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services, particularly for those serving in high threat and/or high stress, complex environments. EAP services provide enhanced tools, knowledge, skills, and resources (with slight variations across hiring mechanisms in the level of services available) to help staff and their families increase stress awareness, develop resilience skills, stay healthy, and continue supporting the USAID mission. Additionally, in the event of major disruptions in overseas Agency operations, our first priority is the safety and wellbeing of USAID staff while ensuring adequate staffing at post to fulfill the Agency's mission.

USAID employs a variety of risk mitigation measures to counter the risk of diversion as standard practice when making awards to organizations implementing programs and can employ heightened risk mitigation in the form of partner vetting when appropriate.

(SBU) To assist staff in identifying the inherent security risk exposure associated with the operating context of a specific country, the Office of Security (SEC) has developed a Country Threat Matrix which scores the criticality of terrorist presence. This resource is used in conjunction with the Risk Based Assessment (RBA) process to reduce the likelihood of interference from sanctioned groups and mitigate the risk of diversion of resources.

The Center for Conflict and Violence Prevention (CVP), located in USAID's Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization (CPS), helps USAID Missions and staff overseas to design and deliver state-of-the art conflict mitigation, violence prevention, and peacebuilding interventions. The Office of Civilian-Military Cooperation (CMC) is also part of the CPS and serves as USAID's primary point of contact with the Department of Defense (DOD). The CMC also responds to the National Security Strategy demand that development be a strong and equal partner with diplomacy and defense in the collective pursuit of a world that promotes peace, security and opportunity for all.

At the Assessable Unit (AU) level, USAID bureaus and missions providing assistance overseas have controls to prevent and detect fiduciary, counterterrorism- or



sanctions-related, and security issues. In parallel, the ERM function also identifies and mitigates potential risks that may be associated with delivering aid related to a program or activity. Despite these inherent risks, USAID meets this challenge by using a variety of risk management techniques because the U.S. Government has determined that the risk of inaction, or inadequate action, outweighs the risk of providing assistance.

In conclusion, the Agency has a strong commitment to assisting those in conflict-prone states and works through its various bureaus and missions to determine the best course of action in each situation. The current RAS enables Operating Units to assess risks associated with the various components of their operating context, and tailor their approach to risk management to both mitigate risk and capitalize on opportunities with informed decisionmaking, aligned with U.S. foreign policy objectives and the specific needs of the communities in conflict zones.

*Question.* What lessons has USAID learned from its evacuations from Afghanistan, Ukraine, and Sudan that may be applied in future circumstances in which security conditions rapidly deteriorate, particularly with regard to: early warning; staff evacuations, care and support (including locally engaged staff and American Implementing Partners); and remote monitoring to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse?

*Answer.* USAID is committed to taking steps to improve the evacuation process to keep our workforce and Implementing Partners safe and strengthen our operational readiness posture globally. This work is coordinated through the Critical Coordination Structure in our Bureau for Management which provides technical support for Mission readiness planning, oversees the development of Mission Continuity Plans, and evaluates Bureau and Mission readiness. More broadly, the Department of State leads the relevant Emergency Action Committee at each post and oversees all evacuations of American personnel, including USAID staff.

The following are specific examples of how USAID responds to emerging crises and applicable lessons from such events, as well as ways USAID is adapting our approach for when future circumstances may necessitate an evacuation.

#### EARLY WARNING AND PREPAREDNESS

- In high threat posts, USAID has established or is establishing Partner Liaison Security Officers to coordinate with and support Implementing Partners through steady state and crisis events.
- Mission leaders are encouraged to advocate for specific Locally Employed Staff security requirements to be discussed and included as part of the Emergency Action Committee and continuity of operations.
- USAID's Command Center and Critical Coordination Structure (CCS) are constantly monitoring world events and U.S. Government reporting/cables to scenario plan and determine when to facilitate the coordination of key crisis support teams in Washington to respond to various crises. These pre-planning calls include key Washington stakeholders, as well as Mission leadership, and have been invaluable in some of the aforementioned country contexts.
- USAID continues to provide specialized personnel recovery and preparedness training to staff at high-risk missions that includes locally employed staff.

#### STAFF EVACUATIONS

- In high threat posts, USAID is increasing preparedness requirements, testing, and exercises to include periodic Mission assessments, specific evacuation training, enhanced contingency planning including surge staff support, and standardization of administrative processes (e.g., travel authorizations and vouchering).
- USAID continues to increase engagement and socialization of operational readiness with USAID specific requirements via readiness resources, products, and services to include Mission Continuity Plans, tabletop exercises, and emergency preparedness training to build a strong culture of readiness.
- USAID developed guidance for extraordinary duties and responsibilities staff must perform during evacuations to minimize disruption and complete actions in rapid timeframes (e.g., records destruction).
- Staff at Posts are regularly engaged in accountability drills to improve the consolidation process and ensure crisis communications channels are functional.
- USAID leaders and Mission leaders are encouraged to set transparent expectations around evacuation processes to manage the disruptive impacts on the workforce.

## CARE AND SUPPORT—LOCALLY EMPLOYED (LE) STAFF

- USAID is updating its Readiness Playbook for LE staff to expand and clearly communicate the preparedness and crisis management guidance issued in the Agency's internal operational policy.
- USAID is developing clear policy and guidance for LE staff on the support, special considerations, and potential financial offsets that can be provided during a crisis.
- Missions are fostering a culture of readiness at the community level by developing warden systems, skills banks, go bag or emergency kits, and other preparedness activities for LE staff.
- USAID's Staff Care has available culturally responsive psychosocial and emotional support services for LE staff to address mental health and promote staff welfare.
- USAID is developing standard operating procedures and agreements so Missions can establish in advance which neighboring Missions can assist them during a crisis with surge support or be an alternate location to establish interim operations should evacuation from post occur.

## CARE AND SUPPORT—U.S. IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

Although the duty of care for Implementing Partners is beyond USAID's legal purview, the Agency is committed to ensuring Implementing Partners can safely operate in disruptive environments and are provided flexibilities to operate in alternate modalities based on country context:

- USAID's Partner Liaison Security Officers liaise, communicate, and support Implementing Partners through steady state and crisis events.
- USAID is examining Agency policy based on past evacuations to develop a matrix of options for authorizing evacuation costs and allowances for Implementing Partners that aligns with USAID's fiduciary risk posture.
- USAID is ensuring all new acquisition and assistance awards include language on safety and security plans that addresses crises. For existing awards, USAID is working with the chiefs of party on known flexibilities or crisis modifiers.
- USAID's Office of Acquisition and Assistance has prepared a Crisis Playbook to enhance operational readiness. This guide consolidates lessons learned and transforms them into practical recommendations for Contracting and Agreement Officers (COs/AOs) and Washington leadership. It serves as a reference guide for preparing for and responding to an emergency or evacuation. This playbook consolidates long-term planning and award management recommendations as well as considerations and messaging for effective coordination with implementing partners.

## REMOTE MONITORING

The fluidity of evacuations and removal of staff from post require adaptive protocols to manage USG resources and taxpayer dollars:

- USAID is developing protocols under two workstreams during evacuation: (1) the first with a focus on operations and the safety and security of the workforce; and (2) a separate workstream for programming oversight, monitoring, and program pivots.
- USAID's efforts to build monitoring capacity of trusted local partners and interlocutors enables alternative oversight and information in the case of evacuated personnel and program staff.

*Question.* With at least 22 different hiring mechanisms and outdated assumptions about how specific missions, bureaus, and offices should be supported, the agency is in desperate need of a modernized strategic staffing plan that is flexible and adaptive to today's challenges.

When will I finally see USAID's comprehensive strategic staffing plan that aligns positions, skills, and resources across the agency, transparently and effectively streamlines hiring mechanisms, and reduces reliance upon program funds, costly institutional contracts, and Participating Agency Service Agreements (PASAs) to meet modern staffing needs?

*Answer.* Given the complexities you noted, we are addressing this through several significant efforts:

## STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLANNING REFORM

The Workforce Planning and Program (WPP) Division in the Office of Human Capital and Talent Management (HCTM) has been working steadily and systematically to implement a realistic, practical, and sustainable approach to workforce planning at USAID. As of April 2024, the Agency is on track to have in place a new policy, i.e. ADS, on workforce planning to establish the process for an ongoing, annual workforce planning cycle. Understanding that workforce planning is a shared responsibility between senior leaders, each operating unit, and HCTM, USAID has built a stakeholder-supported approach that actively engages all involved in an ongoing process to align the workforce, human capital management strategies, and budget to cost-effectively advance USAID's development and humanitarian assistance policy and programming priorities.

This work has included:

- Developing, piloting, and using workforce data and analysis to provide insight into the current workforce and to provide workforce data for decisionmaking.
- Engaging senior leadership in developing the workforce planning approach and their role in setting strategic direction to obtaining buy-in and support for a more holistic and collaborative workforce planning approach
- Developing a workforce planning governance structure, policy, procedures, and guidance; using senior leader direction, stakeholder input, and lessons learned from pilot projects has resulted in a more realistic, practical, and sustainable approach

In early 2024, USAID established the first-ever Agency Strategic Workforce Planning (SWFP) Council as an advisory board to set strategic direction, strengthen workforce planning at every level, and institutionalize workforce planning governance, policy, procedures and guidance. The SWFP Council is chaired by the Deputy Administrator for Management and Resources with Assistant Administrator-level representation from each Bureau and Independent Office.

The SWFP Council will contribute to developing a new Strategic Workforce Plan in 2024. This Strategic Workforce Plan will align positions, skills, and resources across the agency, with most (if not all) of the following elements:

- Direct hire position levels by FS and CS
- Region and B/IO of those staff
- Major workforce drivers
- Overseas presence
- Future look for next 3 years
- Current overseas gaps
- Changes to criteria to determine overseas presence and assignments
- Diversity initiatives

## SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES REFORM

Through the Skills and Competencies Reform initiative USAID is transforming the way we capture and utilize skills data across all talent management processes. This effort will enable the Agency to associate skills with direct hire and Personal Services Contractor (PSC) positions throughout the organization. By keeping skills data current on positions, the Agency's employees, supervisors, leaders of Missions, Bureaus and Independent Offices (B/IOs) will have up-to-date information about the skills needed for specific roles across USAID. This initiative will enable us to understand USAID's supply and demand of skills, and therefore improve alignment of workforce planning strategies, optimize the assignments process, focus upskilling and recruiting efforts, and give more precise guidance to the workforce regarding learning and development.

We have finalized a pilot of skills tagging by supervisors and employees, with the goal of having a comprehensive view of the skills makeup of our workforce and of the skills needed in the organization in late 2024. After that collection, USAID will use the insights gained to influence all aspects of the employment lifecycle, including career path development, recruitment, and training. This holistic approach will allow for data-driven decisionmaking, targeted learning opportunities, and strategic talent allocation based on organizational needs.

## WORKFORCE COMPOSITION

Our current workforce composition stems directly from a bifurcation of our appropriations, with the requirement that our career Federal employees be solely funded with Operating Expenses (OE) funds. While we recognize that there are budgetary

dynamics at play, in the past 4 years, our programming has grown by nearly 70 percent—but our operating expenses have increased at half that rate. As a result, our global workforce of over 13,000 staff includes approximately 30 percent direct hire Federal employees and 70 percent contracted staff spanning an array of staffing mechanisms: Civil Service (CS), Foreign Service (FS), Civil Service Excepted (CSE), Foreign Service Limited (FSL), U.S. Personal Services Contractor (USPSC), Third-Country National PSC (TCNPSC), Cooperating Country National PSC (CCNPSC) also referred to as Foreign Service Nationals (FSN), FSN Direct Hire, and Institutional Support Contractor (ISC), as well as fellows, interns, and other short-term staffing mechanisms.

The Agency is maximizing its use of available resources and authorities to make progress toward effectively streamlining our hiring mechanisms. For instance, we have used small increases in OE funds in fiscal year (FY) 2022 and fiscal year 2023 to add nearly 300 new career positions and created nearly 600 non-career Federal employee positions using program accounts authorized by Congress for that purpose. Of these 900 total new Federal employee positions, approximately 400 replace positions that were previously designated as contractors, helping grow the proportion of our direct-hire Federal employee workforce.

#### CRISIS OPERATIONS STAFFING

Congress included language in the fiscal year 2023 Omnibus Appropriations bill that allows USAID to use program funds for a civil service excepted (CSE) mechanism for Crisis Operations Staffing (COS). The \$86 million appropriated will fund between 300 and 350 positions—including salaries, benefits and other direct costs to support the Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), Bureau for Global Health (GH), and the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) in the Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization (CPS). The initial pilot positions are intended to replace existing program-funded contract and interagency agreement positions in these three bureau/offices. With this authority, we can use existing program funds that we would have used for Personal Service and other contractors to hire time-limited, US-based staff in the Federal excepted service, to manage crisis operations. This is not a permanent authorization and so USAID needs to request this authority every year in appropriations.

Since we received the OPM authority last spring, we have hired over 100 positions: 71 in OTI, 18 in Global Health, and 17 in BHA. Through COS, OTI has been able to hire back 81 percent of its qualified PSC staff in non-contract positions. The government benefits have also attracted more people from across the country to fill vacancies. We have received over 30,000 applications for jobs in BHA, GH and OTI. Many individuals would not have applied to the PSC jobs because of fewer benefits (e.g., no retirement contributions, no group life insurance, and limited health insurance options).

*Question.* Will the request for authority to hire under the Personal Service Agreement (PSA) mechanism result in a reduction of Personal Services Contractors (PSCs)? If not, why not?

*Answer.* The use of the PSA mechanism is anticipated to result in a significant reduction of Cooperating Country National (CCN) Personal Service Contractors (PSCs) overseas. The PSA mechanism will be piloted in select countries beginning in September 2024. After the pilots are completed and evaluated, USAID anticipates rolling out the PSA mechanism worldwide over the next 18–24 months.

*Question.* If authorized, will PSA authority be applied exclusively overseas? Are all Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs) expected to be converted from PSC to PSA? If not, where will PSA positions be prioritized?

*Answer.* If further authorized, USAID anticipates many Cooperating Country National (CCN) PSC positions will be converted from PSC to PSA over the next 24 months. USAID will pilot the PSA mechanism in select countries beginning in September 2024. After the pilot is completed, USAID anticipates rolling out the PSA mechanism on a broader basis starting in the next 18–24 months applying lessons learned from the pilots.

USAID has a limited number of Foreign Service Nationals that are employed as direct-hires. FSNs that are non-U.S. citizen direct-hire employees are appointed under the authority of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, as amended. Current FSN direct-hires remain in this status until they leave the Agency or retire.

The current authorizing statute is applicable to individuals who are providing “services abroad”; thus, the rollout of the PSA authority is limited to overseas positions.

*Question.* To date, USAID has exercised dangerously poor oversight of its partners engaged in research of pathogens of pandemic potential.

What safeguards have you put in place to ensure that the resources in the fiscal year 2025 budget request, as well as prior-year funding that has yet to be obligated, are not directed toward partners that have demonstrated poor compliance with U.S. requirements relating to research of dual-use concern, data quality, data sharing, performance standards, and fiscal controls?

*Answer.* Following the COVID-19 pandemic, USAID—and the U.S. Government as a whole—has assessed its priorities and approach to pandemic preparedness. This includes aligning resources to achieve the commitments within the National Biodefense Strategy, weighing the relative risks and impact of our programming (including biosafety and biosecurity capacity), as well as determining how to optimally allocate global health security resources.

Based on this prioritization and informed by ongoing engagement with key stakeholders, in 2023 USAID determined that investments that focus on the search for and characterization of unknown viruses, prior to spillover to humans, do not effectuate USAID's current global health security program priorities. USAID has issued guidance to GHS programs worldwide to communicate this decision.

Further, USAID does not fund dual-use research of concern (DURC) or gain of function research, and no fiscal year 2025 funds will be used for DURC or gain of function research.

In addition, prior to making any assistance award, USAID conducts a risk assessment in accordance with ADS 303.3.9, Pre-Award Risk Assessment, which includes a review of the applicant's history of performance. Typically, this is accomplished through past performance references provided by AOR/CORs of previous government projects.

USG policies, processes, and guidelines on biodefense, health security, laboratory biosafety/security, and non-proliferation objectives inform USAID decisions on funding/support in other countries.

*Question.* Does EcoHealth Alliance continue to receive funding from USAID for any purpose, whether as a prime, sub-, or sub-sub awardee? If so, where and for what purposes?

*Answer.* On May 15, 2024, the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) suspended and proposed the debarment of EcoHealth Alliance from participating in United States Federal Government procurement and nonprocurement programs. Following this action, USAID has taken the necessary steps to terminate the Agency's only active award with EcoHealth Alliance—a conservation program in Liberia titled Conservation Works. The activity supported biodiversity and conservation efforts in Liberia by establishing and improving the management of protected areas and supporting ecotourism and income generation.

USAID has notified EHA that the Agency unilaterally terminated the USAID/Liberia award with EcoHealth Alliance with an end date of August 15, 2024 and directed EHA to commence closeout procedures immediately. Since the suspension, USAID has not obligated any additional funding to EcoHealth Alliance.

*Question.* Does the term “sexual and reproductive health”, as it relates to USAID assistance, programs, and engagement in development forums, include access to “safe and legal” abortion?

*Answer.* USAID does not fund abortions. The Agency takes statutory restrictions related to abortion seriously and works to ensure compliance with all applicable laws, including the Helms and Siljander amendments.

*Question.* Can you confirm that all USAID grants and contracts, including all subgrants and subcontracts, that provide for the utilization of U.S. foreign assistance resources, regardless of account and regardless of targeted health sector, include specific prohibitions on the use of funds to perform or promote abortion, or lobby for or against the legalization of abortion overseas?

*Answer.* The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, and USAID's annual appropriations acts set forth a number of statutory restrictions related to abortion, including the Helms, Leahy, Siljander and Biden Amendments. These restrictions apply to all U.S. foreign assistance funds, including through subawards and subcontracts, across all sectors and partners, and have been in place for a number of decades. USAID implements the restrictions related to abortion through mandatory standard provisions and contract clauses included in our grants and contracts.

*Question.* Can you confirm the same for all USAID grants and contracts, including all subgrants and subcontracts, that provide for the utilization of U.S. foreign assistance resources, regardless of account, to promote human rights and gender equality?

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* Is access to “safe and legal” abortion included among the health, human rights, and/or gender equality initiatives that USAID seeks to advance through utilization of U.S. foreign assistance funding?

Answer. USAID does not fund abortions. The Agency takes statutory restrictions related to abortion seriously and works to ensure compliance with all applicable laws, including the Helms and Siljander amendments.

*Question.* What reforms are you seeking to through the Farm Bill process, in order to make U.S. food aid more efficient and effective? Please be specific.

Answer. USAID continues to be grateful for Congress’ commitment to combating global hunger, including by ensuring that the Food for Peace Act remains fit-for-purpose to address current humanitarian challenges. During this Farm Bill reauthorization process, USAID is proposing technical changes to the Food for Peace Act to make U.S. food aid more efficient and effective.

First, USAID is proposing to increase the efficiency of both emergency and non-emergency food assistance programs by shifting some U.S. commodities from Title II non-emergency programs to emergency programs. This change would maintain the same level of commodity procurements from U.S. producers while offering implementing partners more choice in designing non-emergency programs to address the root causes of hunger.

Additionally, current law requires our partners to use commodities in non-emergency food assistance programs even when other forms of assistance would be more effective or appropriate. Giving partners more choice in programming would improve the outcomes of these programs and help decrease reliance on U.S. assistance in the long term. For example, partners can address chronic food consumption gaps caused by a lack of agricultural productivity in communities by providing training and tools to farmers.

USAID is also proposing that Congress consolidate the complex accounting requirements within the Food for Peace Act. Current law not only requires that USAID partners assign costs to specific categories, but also requires USAID staff to track and validate expenditures on a real-time aggregate basis to stay within specific statutory earmarks, on top of determining that costs are allowable as reasonable and necessary expenses on an award-by-award basis, as is done for most US Government expenditures. Determining how each cost should be categorized, or how costs should be divided across categories for the current, complex accounting process is a massive burden on our staff and partners, often requiring custom-built accounting systems. We estimate that streamlining cost categories could save USAID more than 1,600 staff hours per year. This change would make Title II operate more similarly to other accounts administered by USAID, such as International Disaster Assistance, which do not have cost categories.

Under current law, one USAID partner estimated that the cost of administering this system for their organization is about \$1.3 million per year per nonemergency program. Streamlining the cost categories would reduce these administrative costs, translating to up to 20,000 additional people receiving food assistance each year or up to 10,000 additional people benefiting from livelihood activities like seeds, livestock feed, or other inputs.

*Question.* What are the current cost differentials between USAID’s existing food aid modalities, including: (1) food aid provided in the form of “market-based assistance,” such as biometrically verified electronic transfers and vouchers; (2) food aid commodities procured locally or regionally; and (3) food aid commodities procured and shipped from the United States?

Answer. Decisions on modality are largely driven by context to achieve the best efficiency and effectiveness of program options. Costs vary by the country, the size of the food basket/ration being targeted, the partner, and market conditions at the time of purchase. The Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance country teams include cost analysis in the decisionmaking process. A number of local factors affect cost-efficiency at the response level. As an example, in South Sudan, to meet half of a person’s caloric needs for 1 month through the World Food Program would cost \$18.26 using market-based transfers, \$14.22 using locally procured sorghum, and \$18.29 using Title II commodities as of November 2023. In this example, there is a particularly expensive environment for market-based transfers due to the low capacity of the banking system. Additionally, the in-kind options in this example use very large purchases due to the high number of beneficiaries, taking advantage of some economies of scale.

Other examples include:

- In Niger, a basket to meet 65 percent of a person's caloric needs for a month cost \$21.97 for Title II, \$13.09 for Local, Regional, and International Procurement (LRIP), and \$7.98 for market based transfers in November 2023.
- In Madagascar, in March 2024, to meet 50 percent of a person's caloric needs for a month cost \$12.05 with Title II, \$12.23 with LRIP, and \$7.94 using cash transfers.
- In Burkina Faso, costs are very high due to the air operation into the north and the transitional authorities not allowing the use of cash or vouchers, but to meet 100 percent of a person's caloric needs for a month cost \$64.06 using Title II and \$63.53 using LRIP in January 2024.
- In Somalia, in April 2024, to provide 80 percent of a person's caloric needs for a month cost \$25.35 for Title II and \$17.52 for either market-based transfers or food vouchers.

*Question.* What is the current cost differential between U.S.-flagged and foreign-flagged ocean transport vessels carrying U.S. food aid commodities overseas?

*Answer.* In fiscal year 2023, the average freight cost per metric ton (MT) for a US flagged vessel was \$170.53/MT for bulk vessels and \$255.81/MT for liner vessels (\$196.19/MT cumulatively). In contrast, the average cost per MT for foreign flagged vessels was \$70.34/MT for bulk vessels and \$176.71/MT for liner vessels (\$88.81/MT cumulatively). US flagged vessels were, on average, 142 percent more costly than foreign flagged vessels for bulk vessels and 45 percent more costly for liner vessels (121 percent cumulatively).

*Question.* To your knowledge, how many U.S.-flagged ocean transport vessels carrying U.S. food aid overseas remain in the U.S. commercial fleet? By whom are they owned?

*Answer.* There are currently only four U.S.-flagged dry bulk vessels eligible to participate in the food aid program: Liberty Grace, Liberty Glory, Liberty Eagle, and Schuyler Line Navigation Company's (SLNC) Severn. The three Liberty vessels are owned by the Liberty Maritime Corporation. The SLNC Severn is owned by Oldendorff Carriers GMBH co.

For non-bulk vessels, the following 13 U.S.-flagged vessels transported U.S. food aid in fiscal year (FY) 2023 and fiscal year 2024 to April: Maersk Atlanta, Maersk Chicago, Maersk Columbus, Maersk Denver, Maersk Detroit, Maersk Hartford, Maersk Idaho, Maersk Kensington, Maersk Kinloss, Maersk Pittsburgh, Missouri Express, National Glory, and President Wilson. The Maersk vessels are owned by Maersk Line Ltd, Missouri Express is owned by Hapag-Lloyd AG, National Glory is owned by National Shipping of America NSA, and President Wilson is owned by APL/CMA.

*Question.* In fiscal year 2023, how many Ocean Transportation Requests for Proposal (RFPs) were issued by USAID? fiscal year 2024, to date?

Of those RFPs, how many received bids from more than one U.S.-flagged carrier? How many received no bids from U.S.-flagged carriers?

*Answer.* Requests for Proposal (RFP) are defined as individual freight solicitations issued by USAID. There are multiple parcels to several destinations on an individual RFP.

1. RFPs issued

FY 2023. Packaged RFPs: 17. Bulk RFPs: 11.

FY 2024 to date (as of end of April 2024). Packaged RFPs: 8. Bulk RFPs: 5.

2. RFPs receiving more than one U.S. flag offer

Identifies the number of RFPs where two or more U.S. flag (P1) offers were received on a single parcel. Other parcels within the same RFP may have received only one or zero U.S. flag offers.

FY2023. Packaged: 1. Bulk: 3.

FY 2024 to date (as of end of April 2024). Packaged: 0. Bulk: 0.

2a. RFPs receiving no bids from U.S.-flagged carriers

Identifies the number of RFPs where zero U.S. flag (P1) offers were received on a single parcel.

FY 2023. Packaged: 0. Bulk: 2.

FY 2024 to date (as of end of April 2024). Packaged: 0. Bulk: 0.

*Question.* Does USAID play a role in the Vision for Adapted Crops and Soils (VACS) initiative? If so, what role does it play?

*Answer.* USAID invests significantly in crop improvement, building healthy soils, and improving agricultural practices through Feed the Future, which the objectives of the Department of State's VACS align with. As such, some of the activities and

funding announced as part of VACS are managed by USAID and implemented through its partners. Climate smart varieties of seeds and productive soils are needed to tackle the long-term challenges to resilient food systems and agriculture-led growth. As a global movement seeking to mobilize resources from multiple public and private sector sources for resilient seeds and healthy soils, VACS builds on the U.S. government's work in these areas through Feed the Future. Moving forward, USAID and the Department of State will continue to coordinate on these issues.

*Question.* According to the World Food Program, there are nearly 800 million people currently facing chronic hunger around the world. USAID is requesting a total of \$171 million in fiscal year 2025 for its global nutrition programs, an increase of \$6 million over the fiscal year 2024 enacted.

If approved, how will these additional resources be deployed?

*Answer.* USAID nutrition programming is centered on supporting governments in improving the quality, coverage, and financing for high-impact, evidence-based nutrition interventions. The fiscal year (FY) 2025 Request for global nutrition programs includes \$160 million in Global Health Programs-USAID resources, as well as \$11 million in ESF and \$500,000 in AEECA funds. If approved, the requested additional fiscal year 2025 resources will be deployed in support of nutrition programming in Afghanistan and Jordan (ESF) and Kyrgyz Republic (AEECA). Consistent with the priorities outlined in USAID's Global Malnutrition Prevention and Treatment Act of 2021 (GMPTA) implementation plan, requested GHP-USAID resources will be prioritized to bring critical, high impact nutrition services to vulnerable populations, especially children under 5, and pregnant and lactating women. This includes scaling up coverage of nutrition-specific interventions. All efforts to strengthen nutrition service delivery will be supported by collection of better nutrition data at all levels and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of programs.

*Question.* How is nutrition being elevated within Feed the Future and Food for Peace development programs?

*Answer.* Guided by USAID's Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy, USAID takes an integrated approach to nutrition under the USG Feed the Future Initiative (FTF). USAID's recent appointment of Chief Nutritionist Dr. Patrick Webb underscores USAID's steadfast commitment to elevating nutrition with Feed the Future and Food for Peace development programs.

In the USG's updated Global Food Security Strategy, as a key pathway to achieving our overarching nutrition related goal of reducing stunting, we have explicitly stated our intention to expand access to safe, affordable and healthy diets as a central aim of FTF. Globally, 11 million deaths per year are associated with poor diets, which is unacceptable. For the first time, we have set a global target for FTF of improving women's dietary diversity. Requiring ourselves to report on this key outcome reflects a renewed commitment to doing and achieving the things that really matter for nutrition and healthy diets. And we know we can achieve the impact we seek. A good example comes from our FTF programming in Uganda. At the end of 2022, we implemented a population-wide survey in our geographic target zone. We found both a significant improvement over time in both young children and women's diets. We are also making greater investment in food systems, as these systems safeguard the way that we produce, process, move and consume food. And when these systems fail, we see it directly in the poor diets of vulnerable families and communities.

Additionally, FTF programming is tackling the interrelated challenges of nutrition and climate change. A good example of this is our increasing investments in food safety and reducing food loss and waste. We need food to be safe and nutritious, and we must significantly reduce food loss and waste, particularly of nutrient-rich perishable foods that are fundamental to a diverse, nutrient-rich diet. This focus expands access to and affordability of nutritious foods. In September 2023, we announced a new \$10 million food loss and waste accelerator fund focused on supporting small businesses to address food, loss, and waste in their supply chains.

Nutrition has historically played a significant role in USAID's Resilience and Food Security Activities, as well as the resilience activities funded in part through Title II Food for Peace and targeted toward populations at frequent risk of shocks impacting food insecurity. Nutrition objectives have been integrated into the design, implementation, and monitoring of these activities, with an aim of preventing malnutrition in the most vulnerable subgroups of the target population, namely children under five and pregnant and lactating women. Activities are designed around the local nutritional context and address the contextual determinants of malnutrition, including access to safe and nutritious foods, care and feeding practices, and access to health care. These components are integrated within a larger model, ensuring



that nutrition remains central to a larger food security focus. We know that this holistic, tailored approach works to improve nutrition outcomes for the poorest of the poor. For example, recent and ongoing Resilience and Food Security Activities in Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, and Kenya demonstrate that combining intensive nutrition interventions with livelihood programming can improve key nutrition outcomes, including children’s diet quality, wasting, and stunting.

*Question.* When, if ever, will USAID make available information on contractors and subgrantees on the foreign assistance dashboard, [www.foreignassistance.gov](http://www.foreignassistance.gov)?

*Answer.* The most effective approach to enhancing publicly reported data quality for first-tier subawardees under USAID prime awards would be for enhancements to be made to the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act Subaward Reporting System (FSRS.gov) for which the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) serves as the business owner. Prime contractors and grant recipients report first-tier subcontracts and subawards in FSRS under the parameters included in their award terms (e.g., FAR 52.204–10, 2 CFR 170 Appendix A).

The Office of Management and Budget has designated FSRS as the system of record for Federal department and agency subaward reporting. USAID does have two other systems in which prime partners may directly enter data. These are the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) and the Development Information Solution (DIS). The primary purpose of the DEC is to serve as the repository of USAID’s collective development experience over the past 60 years.

Amongst other documentation, the DEC includes annual reports, assessments and evaluations.

The primary purpose of the DIS is to serve as USAID’s portfolio management platform—including the submission of performance data directly from prime partners. Subaward information is sometimes reported in documents USAID partners upload to the DEC; however, the DEC is unlikely to provide comprehensive information on first-tier subawards as there is no requirement that primes include subaward reporting in such documents. USAID would need additional time to determine if there are technical methods that could reliably extract extant subaward information from the DEC, and then would need to estimate associated cost. We would also need additional time to generate a cost estimate for a first-tier subaward reporting functionality in the DIS that includes enhanced subaward reporting. The current legal framework would not permit a separate USAID reporting requirement, additional to FSRS, for first-tier subawards.

USAID shares concerns about the quality of subaward data in FSRS as well as the need for greater data transparency and accessibility. As it relates to data quality, USAID undertook strategic efforts to improve the quality of the data in two key ways. As detailed below, we have advocated for changes to improve data through several FSRS working groups with GSA over the past several years and continue to advocate for features in the forthcoming new system in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov). More recently, USAID launched data quality improvement efforts, publishing a new FSRS Reporting Guidance one-pager to supplement FSRS instructions that specifies that primes must report subcontracts and subawards based on their obligated amount. As a result of these communications, internal review of the data and outreach to partners to remedy data quality issues, the quality of the data in FSRS has improved and reduced over-reporting above total obligation amounts.

Over time, USAID has provided input to GSA on changes to FSRS that would be beneficial for improving the accuracy of first-tier subaward data reported in FSRS. These include: (1) an automated system user warning when a subaward obligation total is not aligned with a prime award obligation total; (2) removal validation rules that would flag and address instances where the subaward date entered in FSRS is prior to the award signed date; (3) system user instructions that provide clearer guidance on how primes should enter changes in subaward obligations into the system; and (4) requiring that subaward reporting match prime award reporting at the “action” level, enabling greater transparency into subaward obligations by fiscal year and maintaining consistency in reporting level with prime awards. GSA has recently advised that it intends to address the first three changes in a future iteration of the system, which it plans will take shape as a new module in SAM.gov. GSA has indicated it does not plan to pursue the fourth change. This is based on the rationale that it would require statutory and/or regulatory changes.

Understanding the importance of strengthening first-tier subaward data for USAID’s mission and recognizing it is not the business owner of FSRS, the Agency has made a number of efforts to strengthen the reporting of its prime partners in FSRS. First, USAID issued multiple communications to our contractors and recipients to remind them of their reporting responsibilities. USAID also routinely mon-

itors and analyzes data reported in FSRs to proactively identify potential discrepancies. Based on certain reporting anomalies identified through this analysis, USAID has conducted direct outreach to multiple implementing partners to discuss further and request corrections to improve quality of the data.

More recently, in January 2024, USAID issued a series of new tools to further improve the quality of data reported in FSRs. USAID published a new guidance page on [WorkwithUSAID.gov](https://www.workwithusaid.gov), which highlights FSRs guidance documents, provides a “one-pager” with tips and best practices on entering and updating data in FSRs, and links to an Agency webinar, one of several we have offered to the partner community.

Internally, for agency staff, USAID developed a new “Subaward/Subcontract Data Quality Dashboard” in our agency Enterprise Reporting Portal for monitoring partners’ compliance with FSRs reporting. This dashboard populates with data from FSRs in a user-friendly format, empowering USAID staff to review subcontract and subaward information, drill down on potential data quality discrepancies, and follow up with implementing partners to request they make corrections in FSRs. One option the Agency could pursue, provided it receives new funding, is to make the internal Subaward/ Subcontract Data Quality Dashboard available to the public as part of the Explore USAID in Action website that presents a USAID-specific view of USAID’s information which is already published on [foreignassistance.gov](https://foreignassistance.gov). The effort to present USAID data reported in FSRs and [foreignassistance.gov](https://foreignassistance.gov) in a more user-friendly format on a USAID website would require additional one time development costs of approximately \$250,000 and ongoing annual operating costs of approximately \$100,000 that are not currently funded.

Finally, USAID’s Systems Support team has provided troubleshooting assistance to our implementing partners experiencing technical difficulties with the FSRs system itself. Many prime contractors and recipients report challenges in maintaining the accuracy of their reported data in GSA’s FSRs system, as it is a legacy system that requires significant updates by GSA to improve its functionality.

To improve quality of data, USAID plans to add a section in the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS) that the partner complied with mandatory sub-award reporting.

*Question.* What is the average Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) rate for USAID’s implementing partners working in the humanitarian space, including for international organization, international non-governmental organizations, local non-governmental organization, and contractors? Please note that this response, if deemed procurement sensitive, may be shared in a Committee Confidential manner.

*Answer.* Based on a sample of current contracts with our 15 largest implementing partners (and representing an illustrative range of countries and programs), it is typical for USAID to reimburse for overhead costs ranging between 10 percent and 30 percent. For example, for U.N. organizations, it is typical for USAID to reimburse for overhead costs ranging between 6 percent and 13 percent. The World Food Program and UNICEF, for example, are at 6 percent and 7 percent respectively.

USAID operates in 100 countries and across a very wide range of sectors—context matters for fully understanding the ranges presented here. These rates, for example, tend to be higher in war and conflict-heavy zones, and lower in more stable areas. But no matter the country, security situation, or specific local context, our processes for negotiating and overseeing these rates are always based on Federal regulations and aligned with all other US government agencies.

Organizations independently select the accounting structures and accounting methodologies best suited to recover indirect costs under Federal awards. The type and the number of indirect cost rates vary by organization. Some of the factors that can impact an organization’s indirect cost rates include but are not limited to:

- Size of Organization
- Type of Organization (e.g., nonprofit, for-profit, PIO, type of business/service provided)
- Age of Organization
- Location of Organization
- The rate structure used by the Organization
- The indirect cost base(s) used by the Organization

Because of the various factors listed above, any average, if calculated, is not meaningful without context when applied across multiple awards under differing circumstances and structures.

*Question.* You've previously stated that: "We support . . . natural gas programming in instances where it can create energy access while not delaying plans toward clean energy because again the collective carbon emissions even from developing countries, we are all part of the solution when it comes to mitigation."

Please provide a list and description of all natural gas projects that USAID has supported since January 1, 2022.

*Answer.* USAID does not centrally track specific gas projects supported by USAID. Around the world, the majority of USAID assistance typically supports the enabling environment for the provision of improved energy services rather than the direct acquisition or construction of energy technologies. A description of technical assistance supporting the gas sector is listed below, by country and/or region.

Operating Unit	Activity Name	End Year	USAID Activity Description
<b>AFRICA</b>			
Power Africa	West Africa Energy Program (WAEP)	2023	Expanded the supply of and access to affordable and reliable grid-connected electricity services in West Africa. Provided technical assistance and capacity building to power utilities and generation entities, and transaction support to achieve Power Africa's objectives. Helped partners convert existing diesel, heavy fuel oil, and coal plants to run on natural gas in the short term as they worked to introduce more renewables into their generation mix in the medium term. Through this award, USAID supported nine natural gas projects since 2022. Projects are located in Benin, Gabon, Mauritania, Cameroon, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and Sierra Leone and have the capacity to generate over 1,500 MW of power collectively, enough to power over 1.5 million homes and businesses.
Power Africa	Southern Africa Energy Program (SAEP)	2023	Increased investment in electricity supply and access in Southern Africa by strengthening the regional enabling environment and facilitating transactions. This included a regional strategy for natural gas, support to individual gas transactions, and coal-based methane projects in Botswana, Namibia, Mozambique, and South Africa. Since 2022, through this award, Power Africa supported a 145 MW natural gas project in Mozambique.
Power Africa	Nigeria Power Sector Program (NPSP)	2023	Under this activity, the Nigeria Gas Flare Commercialization Program (NGFCP) sought to mitigate gas flaring from the petroleum industry to utilize the captured gas for gas-to-power and industrial uses. Since 2022, through this same project, USAID supported two natural gas projects with capacity to generate over 1,200 MW of power, enough to power 1.2 million homes and businesses.
Power Africa	East Africa Energy Program (EAEP)	2023	The program covered nine countries in the Eastern Africa region and provided technical assistance, transactions advisory services, capacity building, and investment promotion to utilities and power generators. The program provided ongoing support to governments and IPPs to develop frameworks and strategies for fuel substitution of existing diesel and heavy-fuel-oil based generation facilities to natural gas.
Central Africa Regional	Pay Go Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) Program in the Congo	2023	This activity focused on replacing charcoal used for cooking with liquid petroleum gas (LPG).

Operating Unit	Activity Name	End Year	USAID Activity Description
Zambia	Alternatives to Charcoal	2026	The USAID Alternatives to Charcoal (A2C) Activity works to reduce dependence on charcoal for household energy in Zambia and catalyze the increased use of low emission alternative technologies and fuels through innovation and increased private sector engagement.
<b>ASIA</b>			
Central Asia	Power Central Asia	2025	Strengthen the capacity of energy sector regulatory authorities to liberalize national energy markets, develop clean and renewable energy, and establish a regional power market. Support modeling of gas supply infrastructure to facilitate gas ramping and flexibility auctions.
Vietnam	V-LEEP II	2025	Will help Vietnam continue its transition to a clean, secure and market-based energy sector by increasing the deployment of advanced energy systems, improving energy sector performance, and expanding competition in the energy sector. Strengthen the legal framework and increase the market competition for LNG trading, including setting up the standards for LNG terminals, building capacity for the policy makers and market regulators (including methane management requirements and safety specifications). V-LEEP II also supports increased system flexibility through LNG-to-power to maximize renewable integration and reduce coal in the power mix.
The Philippines	Energy Secure Philippines	2025	Improve performance of energy utilities, deploy advanced energy systems, and enhance competition in the energy sector. Advancing retail competition in the power sector may include fossil fuels (natural gas) as part of power sector planning.
Regional Dev. Mission Asia	U.S.-Asia Gas Partnership	2022	A public-private partnership involving government and industry representatives from the U.S. and Indo-Pacific countries to stimulate gas demand growth by optimizing gas network infrastructure development and developing domestic gas markets in Asia.
<b>EUROPE AND EURASIA</b>			
Bosnia and Herzegovina	USAID Energy Policy Activity	2024	Improves coordination, management, and transparency at all levels of BiH's regulatory framework, simplifies the energy policy environment, and provides targeted technical assistance. Improves the efficiency of gas sector oversight operations.
Georgia	Securing Georgia's Energy Future	2026	Enhances Georgia's energy security by increasing domestic power production, developing a modern, competitive electricity market to incentivize private investment, improving local energy system planning capacity, improving critical infrastructure cybersecurity, and advancing regional energy trade. Assists Georgia in establishing market rules that encourage alternate natural gas supply. This work complements renewables programming and is directly tied to efforts to increase renewable penetration.

Operating Unit	Activity Name	End Year	USAID Activity Description
Moldova	Moldova Energy Transition Activity	2026	Addresses core vulnerabilities of Moldova's energy sector: (1) physical and market integration, aligned with the EU's Third Energy Package; (2) increased domestic power generation; and (3) improved natural gas supply diversification. Supports EU market integration and diversification away from Gazprom.
Ukraine	Energy Security Project	2023	The project establishes competitive energy markets in electricity, gas, and district heating; improves Ukraine's energy policy and strategy; and diversifies Ukraine's energy supply. ESP will improve the legal and regulatory frameworks to comply with European Union (EU) energy legislation. The activity supports adoption of EU gas market rules and support to diversify the region's gas supply away from Gazprom. It provides gas turbines for electricity generation.
E&E Regional	U.S.-Europe Energy Bridge	2026	The activity: (1) builds partner country capacity to participate in competitive energy markets and trade with central European markets; (2) facilitates investment to diversify regional energy supplies and upgrade critical infrastructure to improve reliability and security; and (3) empowers utilities, governments, telecommunications providers, regulators, and other critical infrastructure operators to prepare for and respond to threats, such as natural disasters and cyberattacks. The activity supports adoption of EU gas market rules and support to diversify the region's gas supply away from Gazprom.
<b>MIDDLE EAST</b>			
Jordan	Energy Sector Support Activity (ESSA)	2027	ESSA is designed to improve the financial and environmental sustainability of the energy sector in support of USAID's strategic objectives related to economic growth and economic competitiveness. ESSA has four subobjectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Power sector technical and financial problems reduced</li> <li>• Regulatory system strengthened</li> <li>• Energy sector services increased</li> <li>• Energy sector opportunities optimized</li> </ul> It supports the feasibility analysis for oil to gas conversions for industrial heat applications, as well as market design/development and regulatory oversight of natural gas and downstream petroleum markets.

*Question.* In light of the ongoing constriction of operational space in Zimbabwe and the Government of Zimbabwe's harassment, detention, and deportation of US officials and contractors, how is USAID modifying its programming across all sectors to adapt to these circumstances?

*Answer.* Our bilateral assistance program in Zimbabwe is focused on democracy, human rights, and governance; health; agriculture and food security; and adaptation and environment, as well as on humanitarian assistance. USAID development and humanitarian assistance is for the benefit of the people of Zimbabwe and delivered through international and local implementing partners—not through the Government of Zimbabwe via government-to-government assistance.

USAID has in place a range of measures applicable to all sectors that are able to be continually adapted to the operational environment. These include:

- An extensive Mission Continuity Plan that includes a tool to track in-country and international travel for mission staff and TDY visits, as well as communication plans to account for all employees, including contractors.
- A Partner Liaison Security Officer (PLSO) that works closely with the Regional Security Officer and USAID implementing partners on security. PLSO support to

partners includes establishing and managing an implementing partner security incident reporting system; creating communication platforms for Chiefs of Party and security POCs; assisting to develop partner security plans and training; and holding regular meetings with partners on security issues.

- The Victims of Torture & Abuse Emergency Response (VOTAER) program that provides protection and rehabilitation services to individuals at risk of falling or who have fallen victim to organized violence, torture, and other human rights abuses and to help victims hold perpetrators to account. VOTAER provides legal, medical, and other protection, rehabilitative, and support services to victims of political violence and torture, as well domestic relocation support and referral to domestic and international protection mechanisms. While we now view this activity as a core support activity in Zimbabwe—providing comprehensive legal, medical, and other protection, rehabilitative, and support services and available to partners and civil society—it is not something that is done in all countries and contexts. This was begun in 2020 and continually supported in recognition of the risks and challenges in Zimbabwe.

USAID also continues to work with local organizations in Zimbabwe that advocate for human rights and the rule of law. Amid the ongoing crackdown on civil society and a range of other challenges, it is important that the international community continue to support the Zimbabwean people who are fighting for transparency, accountability, and the rule of law.

*Question.* Could you please inform me when my office might anticipate receiving a response from USAID regarding the plans for future Democracy, Rights, and Governance (DRG) programming in Nigeria, as outlined in my letter dated September 5, 2023, and committed to in the agency's subsequent response?

*Answer.* Your office should have received an initial response to the September 5 letter in November 2023, and you can expect a response on future programming after May 2024.

Additionally, USAID will send you the IFES Post Election Survey in Nigeria, 2023 document. This nationwide post-election survey explores the opinions and perspectives of Nigerian citizens on the 2023 Presidential and National Assembly Elections in Nigeria. Please also find attached a final copy of the review of the Independent National Electoral Commission's performance by IFES. USAID also expects to receive the final third-party evaluation of our election work, which includes an examination of political party strengthening, by approximately the end of May 2024. USAID plans to examine the findings of the requested evaluations, along with other data, to inform, adapt, and implement future programming.

*Question.* Could you share your viewpoint regarding the arrangement whereby USAID and State Department officials, displaced from Sudan, are stationed separately (with USAID personnel in Nairobi and State Department staff in Addis Ababa) under the administration of the Sudan Affairs Office?

*Answer.* Communication and collaboration between the State Department and USAID is strong and effective, and while it would be ideal to house the State Department Office of Sudan Affairs and USAID/Sudan in a single location, our teams are making the best of a difficult situation given the circumstances.

USAID's current operational platform for our work in Sudan is spread out across several locations. Nairobi, Kenya is the base of operations and includes the Mission Director and support staff as well as the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance's Disaster Assistance Response Team and Office of Transition Initiatives offices. Cairo, Egypt and Kampala, Uganda are locations where our Foreign Service National Staff self-evacuated.

USAID is undertaking a process to evaluate options for consolidating the USAID/Sudan mission presence over the next year. Key factors in this process include determining where our Sudanese staff can gain and maintain the necessary legal status to continue their employment with USAID, and where we can be best positioned to oversee our substantial foreign assistance investments in Sudan. In this process, we are consulting closely with our State colleagues and we will continue to engage with the relevant staff and committees as this process continues.

*Question.* How can USAID effectively address the growing crises in Africa, particularly in Sudan, Eastern Congo, and the Sahel, given the agency's limited resources to reduce human suffering, instability, and the erosion of democracy?

*Answer.* In Sudan, where it is safe and possible to deliver assistance, USAID continues to support programs focused on building peace, reducing the need for humanitarian assistance, protecting human rights, promoting democracy, empowering civil society, and providing psycho-social support. USAID also supports and works

through local partners in difficult crisis contexts. We have focused on scaling up life-saving activities through existing international partners' support to local Sudanese organizations and are increasing levels of assistance to local organizations, including by encouraging our implementing partners to support civil society organizations, youth groups, health care workers, and other community groups. These local groups are a vital link to Sudanese communities, helping assess and respond to urgent needs and delivering life-saving assistance such as medical supplies, water and sanitation, lifesaving nutrition, market-based assistance, shelter, and protection services including gender-based violence prevention and response to people in the most affected areas, especially Khartoum. Local groups not only enable USAID to reach otherwise inaccessible populations in need, but also provide a cost effective vehicle for assisting them.

Local organizations provide critical support for the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Sudan because of their unique capacities, local knowledge, important networks, and trust and acceptance by the communities they serve. To leverage those local capacities, USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance provided an estimated \$29 million to support nearly 40 local partner organizations in fiscal year 2023. The bulk of this funding is going to Sudanese NGO's that function as implementing partners for many international NGO's and U.N. agencies. A smaller portion goes directly to small civil society groups to meet critical humanitarian needs in their communities. We also supported more than 100 local Sudanese organizations with over \$6 million in small grants through our transition assistance and democracy and governance portfolios.

With support from USAID and other donors, USAID's partner the World Food Program reached an estimated 6.5 million people across Sudan with food assistance between April 15, 2023, and January 31, 2024, reaching approximately 728,000 people in January alone. Between April 15, 2023 and January 31, 2024, USAID partner UNICEF and other nutrition actors screened 3.7 million children aged 5 years and younger for malnutrition and admitted more than 231,000 children for treatment of severe acute malnutrition in Sudan.

USAID and the Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration are supporting the International Organization for Migration, U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF, World Health Organization, and NGO's to improve access to safe drinking water and sanitation infrastructure for crisis-affected communities across Sudan to reduce the spread of infectious diseases, such as cholera and measles. With U.S. and other donor support, UNICEF and other water, sanitation, and hygiene actors provided safe drinking water to an estimated 8.4 million people across Sudan between April 15, 2023, and January 31, 2024. To prevent the spread of cholera, U.S. Government partners are also supporting affected and at-risk populations with emergency water, sanitation, and hygiene supplies, such as chlorine for water purification, hygiene kits, and water containers. USAID partners UNICEF and the World Health Organization reached 2.2 million people in Sudan's Gedaref and Gezira states with oral cholera vaccines in November and December 2023.

USAID partner UNICEF helped 186,000 women and children access gender-based violence prevention, risk mitigation, and response interventions in 2023. Mobile clinics supported by USAID partner UNFPA provided health and gender-based violence prevention and response services to more than 73,000 internally displaced persons and host community members across 11 of Sudan's 18 states between April 15, 2023 and February 5, 2024. USAID also supports the U.N. Mine Action Service to provide critical mine risk awareness information for populations residing in or returning to conflict-affected areas potentially affected by explosive remnants of war.

In eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where fighting has displaced millions of people, USAID's humanitarian partners have been providing life-saving assistance to address critical shelter, emergency food, water, sanitation and hygiene, protection, and health needs among the most vulnerable populations. USAID is the largest provider of humanitarian assistance to DRC, and in this fiscal year to date, has committed more than \$360 million of humanitarian assistance to respond to the crisis. In 2023, 5.3 million people across DRC were reached by food assistance funded, in large part, by USAID.

USAID also supports peacebuilding and people-to-people reconciliation programs in eastern DRC. USAID's humanitarian activities address the drivers of conflict that gave rise to and continue to fuel the activities of armed groups and community militias; support progress toward an eventual transition from humanitarian assistance to development; and empower marginalized communities.

In the Sahel, USAID continues to implement activities not subject to 7008 restrictions or that have received waivers: supporting the delivery of health, food, and humanitarian assistance that saves lives and reduces human suffering. USAID deliv-

ers emergency food to countries in the Sahel, including Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Nigeria, that are facing acute food insecurity. USAID support has improved maternal and child health, and reduced infections, disease, and supported livelihoods. In Cameroon, USAID works with the Ministry of Public Health on the free distribution of antiretroviral medications through private pharmacies. In Chad, USAID's Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance partners with the International Organization for Migration to provide shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene services to more than 78,000 returnees affected by the Sudan crisis. In addition, USAID supports Chad's National Malaria Control Program to control the spread of Malaria, and supports routine vaccinations, including polio, to decrease infant and child mortality. In Mauritania, USAID's humanitarian assistance supports 110,000 Malian refugees, via the provision of an integrated assistance package, including food assistance, school meals, and specialized nutritious food to children, pregnant women, and girls for malnutrition treatment. In Mali USAID supports the provision of emergency food assistance to reach at-risk populations—including internally displaced persons and host community members—in food-insecure regions. In Nigeria, USAID funding is enabling deliveries of emergency food assistance and vital health care, among other services, to crisis and conflict-affected areas. In Niger, USAID uses a context-specific approach to help farmers and micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, particularly women and youth-owned or managed businesses, move toward livelihood development, financial prosperity and job security. Finally, in Burkina Faso, USAID programs improve skills and offer economic opportunities for marginalized youth and women, which reduces their vulnerability to recruitment and exploitation by extremist groups.

*Question.* The escalating crises and instability in Africa demand more humanitarian aid from USAID, significantly as famine risks rise.

With food being weaponized in conflicts, as seen in Ethiopia and Sudan, and U.S.-funded food aid diverted, as in Ethiopia and Somalia, how is USAID addressing increasing needs while ensuring that aid reaches those who need it most, particularly in conflict zones like Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Sahel, Somalia, and South Sudan?

*Answer.* USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) provides humanitarian assistance in Africa, and throughout the world, through independent and trusted non-governmental organizations (NGO) and public international organization (PIO) implementing partners. BHA-funded programs addressing food and other humanitarian needs are subject to BHA's established internal risk assessment process, which includes internal and external due diligence processes. For example, all of our partners are required to submit a Risk Assessment and Management Plan (RAMP) as part of their applications for funding, which are then reviewed by our technical risk management staff. The RAMP details the partner's plans for risk mitigation and includes their internal controls to prevent loss, theft, and broader fraud, waste, and abuse, including diversion of humanitarian assistance. Partners are also required to report all incidents of waste, fraud, and abuse to USAID's Office of Inspector General (OIG). In addition to partner risk mitigation measures, BHA staff conduct site visits, as security conditions allow. BHA also utilizes third-party monitoring contracts in 22 countries to monitor programs. These monitors are trained to detect and report on program irregularities to USAID. In the case of Ethiopia, BHA directed a pause in food aid programming in order to immediately halt diversion and put in place critical reforms so that food assistance reached those for whom it was intended.

In light of recent incidents of diversion in Africa, and recognizing that humanitarian crises often occur in high-risk environments, BHA is launching a new action plan to assess and mitigate diversion risks across all of our programs. We take very seriously any allegation of diversion of humanitarian aid, and we have zero tolerance for inaction in the face of fraud, waste, and abuse.

As part of this action plan, BHA has taken the following steps:

- We have stood up a working group of experts in humanitarian assistance and risk management to develop and implement a comprehensive roadmap to address diversion risks around the world.
- We are engaging our staff around the world and partners to identify the most up-to-date issues and best practices, and ensure that our oversight mechanisms adapt to how diversion attempts have evolved.
- We're reviewing the locations and levels of our third-party monitors around the world so that we are well positioned to address risks globally.
- We are reviewing field staffing levels across programs, developing new guidance for staff and partners, and creating new training for staff across the globe.



- We expanded our annual internal risk analysis process for identifying high-risk countries to include diversion risk factors. With this new process will come greater oversight on such risks.

- In coordination with the USAID OIG, we implemented a mandatory annual fraud awareness briefing for all staff. Additionally, we are coordinating with the OIG to target field-based training for humanitarian partners.

Agency leadership have also engaged with the heads of key partners on these reform initiatives. We are implementing some steps now, but others will take additional time to develop. As a whole, the action plan will put us in a much better position to ensure aid is getting to those who need it and help us continue to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

The diversion of food assistance in East Africa last year also served to highlight the need for reform and enhanced accountability to affected populations in WFP operations. BHA is prioritizing eight areas of reform with WFP, six of which are directly linked to mitigating the risk of diversion.

In 2023, WFP's Deputy Executive Director launched a high-level task force, activating the whole organization in order to put "end-to-end" assurance and internal control measures in place across all high-risk operations. This work includes clarifying accountability where necessary, strengthening systems, streamlining processes and making sure that country offices are getting the advice and support that they need.

In September 2023, WFP presented its global Assurance Framework and Reassurance Action Plan to its Executive Board, in which the U.S. Government participates through BHA. These efforts signaled WFP's recognition of the need to accelerate reforms in a number of areas including monitoring, identity management, cooperating partners, and supply chain operations.

BHA is strongly supportive of WFP's reforms efforts, and plans to closely follow implementation, including through close monitoring at the field level and field-headquarters consultations to share lessons learned across high-risk environments.

*Question.* In the Fiscal Year 2025 President's Budget Request, Somalia was the recipient of the second-largest bilateral allocation for Democracy, Rights, and Governance (DRG) funding in Africa, amounting to \$26 million, following Ethiopia's request of \$30 million.

1. Could you provide the reasons behind Somalia's consistent position as the top beneficiary of DRG funding in Africa regarding annual requests?

2. Could you specify the types of programs that USAID plans to support with this DRG allocation for Somalia?

*Answer.* Given the threat that al-Shabaab (AS) plays in Somalia and across the region and its importance to U.S. national security, Somalia remains one of the top priorities for Africa DRG programming, especially given that it encompasses our support for stabilization activities in areas previously held by AS. With the U.S. Government's broader approach to advance the Government of Somalia's active efforts to erode AS' influence, USAID has made meaningful investments to its peace and stability.

USAID plans to support DRG-funded programs that address the underlying conditions that allow violent extremism to flourish. USAID will continue to work with the federal, state, and local governments across South-Central Somalia to promote stability in communities liberated from al-Shabaab rule, rebuild trust between citizens and their government, foster reconciliation between communities, and help establish and strengthen systems of governance. Our planned programming includes efforts to promote more inclusive and responsive governance institutions at the federal, state and local levels, address long-standing grievances that drive communities toward al-Shabaab, increase citizen participation in political processes, and support broader efforts to finalize Somalia's state building process. These diverse programs are designed to reduce the influence of al-Shabaab as the largest al-Qaeda affiliate in the world, and in doing so, advance a top U.S. foreign policy priority in Somalia.

*Question.* Since the inception of the Hassan Sheikh Mohamud administration and the Federal Government of Somalia's intensified efforts to combat the terrorist group al-Shabaab, USAID has primarily directed its non-humanitarian initiatives in Somalia toward stabilization efforts in areas recently liberated from al-Shabaab's control.

1. Could you provide an overview of the accomplishments of USAID's programming in this domain thus far?

2. In light of the recent challenges encountered by Operation Black Lion, are there any considerations for modifying the current approach?

Answer. A decade ago, the federal government of Somalia was barely formed and al-Shabaab (AS) controlled vast swaths of territory, and the government's security forces consisted of disparate militia groups. There has been significant progress toward securing the country. USAID's stabilization efforts have been focused in liberated areas, and are closely coordinated across the interagency so that defense, diplomacy, and development efforts remain aligned as we work to provide for a lasting expansion of government authority. USAID has addressed fragility in the context of Somalia not just focused on degrading al-Shabaab or retaking territory, but also on how relationships—within communities, between communities, and between local, state, and federal structures—are rebalanced so they are more peaceful and stable. When communities joined forces to dislodge al-Shabaab from areas of Middle Shabelle and Galmudug, USAID was among the first donors to deliver support to these communities. As a result, the Somali state has now established authority in areas previously under al-Shabaab rule for more than a decade.

Phase 2 operations, previously known as 'Operation Black Lion,' have encountered setbacks in recent months due to infighting between federal, state and local elites, a resurgence of clan conflict, and long-standing weaknesses within security forces. With new military operations on hold for the time being, USAID plans to work on consolidating security gains from Phase 1 and addressing key grievances in order to prevent the resurgence of al-Shabaab in previously liberated communities. USAID will continue to work closely with local authorities in communities recently liberated from AS to advance inter-communal reconciliation, promote more legitimate and effective governance institutions, and strengthen conflict mitigation processes, in order to provide a more credible alternative to AS rule. In light of liberated communities' expectations for better services after years of neglect, helping manage and respond to these expectations and needs is crucial.

*Question.* South Sudan is scheduled to hold elections in 2024, yet many questions remain outstanding regarding basic preparation and political will to enact vital reforms for an inclusive and democratic process.

Please confirm that USAID will not provide support of any kind to South Sudan's anticipated electoral process.

Answer. USAID will not provide support of any kind to South Sudan's anticipated electoral process. We share your concern that the conditions, institutions, and resources for conducting credible elections through an inclusive, transparent, and democratic process in December 2024 remain elusive. We do provide training to journalists on elections related issues to help prepare and enable them to serve as a source of transparency for the population and a force for accountability of government actions. We continue to remind the government of its obligations, including making resources available to fund electoral institutions with adequate time to make the appropriate preparations.

*Question.* The budget request does not include sufficient funding to address the urgent needs of Ukraine in its fight against Russian aggression. I have made clear to the administration that it needs to incorporate funds for Ukraine into the base budget accompanied by a comprehensive strategy, instead of relying on emergency supplemental appropriations. It is uncertain whether further supplemental funds will be passed for fiscal year 2024, and it is extremely unlikely that any supplemental funds will be passed in fiscal year 2025.

How does USAID plan to address the dire needs of Ukraine in fiscal year 2025, given that the fiscal year 2025 budget request for Ukraine is much smaller compared to the supplemental funds passed in prior FYs?

Answer. The President's Budget Request for fiscal year (FY) 2025 was developed with the expectation that the National Security Supplemental would be enacted, and we are enormously appreciative of Congress' leadership and bold action in that regard. In combination with Supplemental resources, the fiscal year 2025 request includes funding levels that begin the path toward normalization of a base budget for Ukraine, as well as for other needs that stem from Russia's invasion, such as strengthening Ukraine's economy, improving food security, countering misinformation, and enhancing energy security.

Our economic assistance helps Ukraine's private sector and tax base grow, reducing reliance on humanitarian assistance and budget support. Our budget support will continue to be conditioned on policy reforms.

*Question.* Previous emergency supplemental appropriation packages for Ukraine have included funds that have been obligated for purposes unrelated to the war in Ukraine.

1. Why was funding for these non-Ukraine related purposes requested through emergency supplemental appropriations requests instead of the base budget?

2. Does USAID recognize the risks of relying on off-budget emergency supplemental appropriations to fund regular annual programming?

Answer. Putin's unjustified war continues to cause catastrophic loss of life and has undermined the security of Europe and the global economy, far beyond the borders of Ukraine itself. USAID works to support the people of Ukraine and counter Russia's political and economic aggression and malign influence throughout Europe and Eurasia (E&E).

As the Kremlin continues targeting democratic institutions and civil society in the E&E region, USAID assistance provided by the supplemental is strengthening connections between citizens and their governments, and strengthening civil society and independent media to hold governments accountable. This includes support for a Russian-language news cooperative with partners from Belarus, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine to increase trusted, engaging, and fact-based news and information for local citizens and improve the ability of the news cooperative members to become a more financially viable, innovative, and competitive alternative news base to Kremlin-supported news sites, which spread propaganda and hate speech, and manipulate news and information about the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The generous support of Congress through several Ukraine supplemental appropriations acts—and their broad authorization to utilize humanitarian assistance funding to meet the global needs stemming from Russia's war against Ukraine—was instrumental to USAID's ability to reach people with lifesaving, multi-sectoral humanitarian assistance. In addition to the humanitarian assistance, some of the funds from the Additional Ukraine Supplemental Appropriations Act (AUSAA) were allocated to bolster Ukraine's global agricultural exports, thereby improving both global food security and Ukraine's economic situation through increased export revenue.

USAID is also focused on building E&E partners' capacities to blunt the Kremlin's ability to use energy as a weapon for political goals. Thanks to Congress' bipartisan support, USAID assistance enabled Moldova to secure natural gas supply from European and other regional suppliers to meet all of the natural gas demand for the Right Bank of the Nistru River (the territory controlled by the Moldovan government in Chisinau, excluding the breakaway separatist region of Transnistria) since December 2022. Additionally, USAID was able to help Moldova secure a share of the first shipment of U.S. Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) through the Alexandroupolis Floating Storage and Regasification Unit (FSRU) Terminal in April this year.

In combination with the Supplemental resources generously provided by Congress, the President's Budget Request for fiscal year 2025 includes funding levels that begin the path toward normalization of a base budget for Ukraine, as well as for other needs that stem from Russia's invasion, such as food security, countering information manipulation, supporting transition initiatives, and strengthening energy security. USAID recognizes the risk of relying on emergency supplementals, hence the request to normalize base budgets that would fulfill other needs related to the war in Ukraine.

*Question.* Requested funding for programs in Georgia across multiple accounts has been reduced compared to prior years.

What is the rationale for this reduction in the request?

Answer. The President's Budget Request for fiscal year 2025 reflects shifting needs across the region.

*Question.* Has USAID observed an increase or decrease in the effectiveness of Georgia programming in recent years?

Answer. USAID programming is flexible in many respects to adapt to new opportunities or challenges and USAID actively monitors its programs to determine that investments are yielding intended outcomes. USAID's investments in Georgia have helped to build critical public support toward integration with the West. Georgians overwhelmingly hold positive views of the U.S. and do not see their future with Russia. USAID programming has remained effective in Georgia, including by helping civil society build capacity and by strengthening inclusive economic growth and economic linkages with the West.

*Question.* Does USAID believe that assistance to Georgia should be conditioned on the fulfillment of certain standards or benchmarks? Why or why not?

Answer. The beneficiaries of most of USAID assistance in Georgia are predominantly non-governmental, private sector, and sub-national actors. Conditioning such assistance on benchmarks reached by the government of Georgia would potentially allow the ruling party to deprive mostly non-governmental, sub-national, and pri-

vate sector actors of U.S. support that is used, for example, to advance greater government transparency and build westward trade linkages. Our development assistance remains a critical tool for supporting the people of Georgia as they seek Western integration and to hold their government accountable.

*Question.* The war in Ukraine initially dealt a blow to Russia's regional credibility and opened up a window of opportunity for the U.S. to increase bilateral ties and influence with countries in the South Caucasus and Central Asia over which Russia has historically exerted influence.

How is this budget request designed to take advantage of this window of opportunity to increase U.S. ties with partners in the South Caucasus and Central Asia?

*Answer.* In response to Russia's brutal war and diminished standing, USAID is adapting its bilateral and regional assistance to the South Caucasus and Central Asia to mitigate and weaken Russia's malign influence in political and economic spheres in the region.

Recognizing this window of opportunity, USAID is prioritizing support for Armenia as the government proceeds to institute democratic reforms and pursue closer ties with the U.S. and European Union (EU). Fiscal year (FY) 2025 funding will help strengthen Armenia's food and energy security, reducing the country's structural reliance on Russian exports to meet its basic needs and depriving the Kremlin of a critical tool which it could leverage to derail Armenia's democratic transition. USAID programming will also support initiatives to counter corruption and support independent media, consolidating recent democratic gains that Armenia has made since the 2018 Velvet Revolution, as well as bolster regional connectivity.

In Georgia, fiscal year 2025 funding will continue to work to strengthen Georgia's resilience to external malign influence, civil society, independent media, human rights, accountable governance, and diversify Georgia's economy away from Russia. USAID will continue to build on prior development progress and leverage public sentiment, with approximately 80 percent of the population seeking to join the EU, to anchor the country's future in the West politically and economically.

In addition, USAID is increasing its support for the development of the 'Middle Corridor,' an economically transformative corridor running from Central Asia through Azerbaijan and Georgia to Europe. USAID support for the Middle Corridor will provide businesses in Central Asia and the South Caucasus an alternative to Russian trade routes in transporting goods to Western Europe, reducing the Kremlin's economic influence over both regions and depriving it of additional transit revenue that could be used to support its military operations in Ukraine.

In Central Asia, following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the five Central Asian countries (C5) (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) are exhibiting a greater openness to diversifying their political and economic partnerships, both through closer cooperation with each other and through closer engagement with the United States and the West. Simultaneously, with half of the region's population under the age of 30, the C5 governments are under intense pressure to ensure widespread economic prosperity and rethink their prevailing economic systems that favor large, state-owned enterprises focused on resource extraction. USAID is adapting to this time-limited window of opportunity to expand our partnerships and provide critical development assistance to Central Asia in ways that help strengthen independence, sovereignty, and prosperity.

Demonstrating our commitment to greater partnership, I traveled to the region and convened a 'C5+1' Ministerial at which the governments signed memoranda of understanding with commitments to key reforms to standardize and digitize customs, and to support the clean energy transition. Our regional development assistance is an engine of the C5+1 platform, focused on increasing trade connectivity (including through support to the Middle Corridor mentioned above), facilitating transboundary energy sharing between the C5, promoting regional water security, and advancing collective efforts to counter violent extremism and combat trafficking in persons. At the same time, our bilateral missions across the region are supporting market-based economic development for small and medium enterprises, increasing the region's human capital through US-modeled education curricula and modernized healthcare systems, promoting civil society and a free media as an integral part of the C5's development process, and amplifying political reforms—especially in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, where the countries' respective leaders are undertaking gradual political modernization and other reforms. Through this development assistance, the United States is demonstrating that we are a reliable partner and building on an already-strong foundation in the region to advance shared national interests with the C5.

*Question.* While direct bilateral and regional engagement with these countries is important, how is USAID also ensuring that assistance to Ukraine supports an image of the U.S. as a credible partner in the eyes of these nations?

*Answer.* The passage of the National Security Supplemental package for Ukraine reinforces the image of the U.S. as a credible, steadfast partner, narrowing opportunities for China and Russia to expand their regional influence. For example, USAID's Ukraine programming places special emphasis on the strategic sectors of democracy, energy, and trade, all with an eye toward deepening Ukraine's interconnections to European markets and institutions. Those same themes are essential in our work in the South Caucasus. In Armenia, for example, USAID is focused on consolidating democratic gains and diversifying the country's economy and energy supplies away from Russia to make both sectors more resilient to malign influence.

In Central Asia, USAID promotes the creation of a safe, vibrant information space and improves access to quality news content espousing diverse viewpoints. For instance, USAID supported a January 2024 forum in Uzbekistan where activists, bloggers, public organizations, and high-ranking government officials responsible for information policy developed recommendations to improve digital information space in Uzbekistan and promote TV channels from friendly neighboring countries. In similar ways across the region, USAID programming is actively expanding the suite of media available to Central Asians. As a result, we are strengthening the capacity, independence, and reach of local media to reduce the reliance on Russian media that uses Kremlin news sources and propaganda to actively malign the U.S. Government's role in Ukraine and throughout the region.

#### COUNTERING RUSSIA IN AFRICA

*Question.* Please describe USAID's plans for the new programs to counter Russian influence in Africa in detail and explain which accounts will fund these efforts.

*Answer.* The fiscal year 2025 request includes \$25.0 million in Economic Support Fund resources for the Counter Russian Malign Actors in Africa (CRMMA) fund. The CRMMA will provide additional, flexible support to counter disinformation, build resistance to Kremlin-linked disinformation, strengthen institutional resilience, revitalize civil society, and improve electoral systems and processes across Africa.

Our programs will strengthen the capacity of journalists and civil society to identify, track, and respond to information manipulation, limit the spread of information manipulation to multiple distribution networks both offline and online, and improve digital and media literacy and security.

New activities across the continent include the following:

- Supporting regional networks of organizations working on information manipulation (e.g. fact checking organizations, journalists, influencers, technologists) to collaborate and share content and research.
- Providing local organizations with the tools, knowledge, models, and resources to track and respond to information manipulation.
- Promoting peace, tolerance, good governance, and human rights as well as combating information manipulation through a range of media channels, including social media and community radio at regional, national, and local levels.
- Engaging youth at risk of being mobilized by false information through truthful and interactive content on radio and social media.
- Expanding relationships with radio stations to develop information products and programming to inform citizens on the issues and how they can get involved.
- Building local resilience to information manipulation by partnering with community leaders to strengthen communications and relations with municipal authorities.

#### COUNTERING PRC INFLUENCE IN EUROPE

*Question.* Please describe USAID's plans for the programs to counter PRC influence in Europe in detail and explain which accounts will fund these efforts. Please describe the different purposes for which funds from different accounts will be used. Will CPIF funds be used in Europe?

*Answer.* USAID's Bureau for Europe and Eurasia (E&E) helps enable our partner countries to make informed decisions regarding the People's Republic of China (PRC), understand the risks, and build the tools to mitigate these risks. We focus on building long-term resilience and the ability to respond to evolving and increasing foreign influence by the PRC. Our programming strengthens democratic govern-

ance and rule of law, resilience in the information space, independence and security of energy and infrastructure, and our partners' economic prosperity.

E&E's programming addresses information manipulation in the E&E region by supporting our partner countries to identify and address narratives from the PRC, the Kremlin, and Iran that aim to build support for authoritarian values and governance models, while weakening democratic governments. Our programming also fosters economic environments that enable competition and fair and transparent investment environments, which in turn incentivizes trade and gives way to more opportunities and reduced dependence on predatory PRC loans and high risk PRC-funded digital infrastructure or services. To support these on-going, cross-cutting efforts, E&E's programming is primarily funded by Assistance to Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia, but the region also receives targeted Countering PRC Influence Fund funding from economic support fund and development assistance funding accounts.

*Question.* This budget request is once again very heavy on climate and gender programming. It says far less about China and strategic competition—which should be the top priority around which we determine our resourcing.

In your view, how does a focus on climate and gender advance U.S. interests with respect to China and the threats it poses to the United States and our allies and partners?

Answer. The security challenges around the Indo-Pacific region are inextricable from development challenges like food insecurity, global health security and the potential for new pandemics, economic fragility, weakening democratic systems—and increasingly, the grave security threat posed by climate change. As Secretary of Defense Austin said, “no nation can find lasting security without addressing the climate crisis.” Climate change fuels conflict, creates competition for resources, exacerbates food scarcity, disrupts economic stability and growth, and drives the displacement of tens of millions of people each year, which in turn has the potential to make people more vulnerable to exploitation and radicalization. USAID's work responds to the severe, high-priority concerns voiced by our allies and partners about climate change and its impacts. In order to address the priorities of our partner countries and reduce dependency on the PRC, USAID has worked to build new climate-finance partnerships to accelerate the flow of capital into climate change-related investments in partner countries, support climate-aligned infrastructure projects, and design activities promoting greater climate adaptation and mitigation.

Our work on gender equality is a clear distinguishing factor between the United States and the People's Republic of China. USAID's focus on women's economic empowerment and the role of women in the economy writ-large, for example, contrasts significantly with the PRC's economic development model. McKinsey estimates that women's economic contributions could add up to \$28 trillion to global GDP and \$484 billion to South Asia's GDP, if full gender parity in the workforce was reached. Yet an analysis of the thousands of Belt and Road Initiative projects across the world shows that empowering women economically is not part of the PRC development playbook. An analysis of the Chinese Development Finance Database collected by the AidData team at the College of William and Mary found only 91 women's development projects out of the entire data base of nearly 21,000 projects. These projects were mostly very small-scale, with a combined value of only \$9 million, a tiny fraction of the over \$1 trillion in commitments recorded in the data base. A 2021 publication by the Chinese Ministry of Commerce suggests that there have only been 60 projects since 2013 that empower women. The United States government and USAID, conversely, invest in women's economic empowerment and make the explicit case that supporting women in this regard enables more prosperity in our partner countries.

Undertaking development work that accounts for women's rights and opportunities reflects our commitment to be responsive to the needs and priorities of local actors and communities—a commitment that stands in clear contrast to the PRC, and which creates a stronger foundation for U.S. partnerships and influence in the countries where we work. It also reflects a large body of evidence that ties gender equality to better development outcomes, such as improved food security and stronger economic growth. The visible difference—between the commitment of the U.S. to listen to partners and advance mutual interests, including on issues like women's economic empowerment, and the PRC's motivations of deepening trade and resource dependency with emerging economies—plays a major role in helping nurture relationships, deepening and expanding networks, and building goodwill toward the United States.

Importantly, our work on issues such as addressing climate change and the challenges women face in their lives builds dignity—not by approaching development as

a transaction, or as a means to an end—but by seeking to improve people’s lives in ways that they can see and feel. This affirmative approach to international development and to advancing our nation’s broader national security goals continues to distinguish the United States in critical ways from the PRC.

*Question.* I agree that infrastructure is an important priority in the Indo-Pacific and globally, but it depends on how we do it.

How does the \$2 billion in mandatory funding requested for the Infrastructure Investment Fund and the \$2 billion requested for the Indo-Pacific Strategy align with USAID’s existing workstreams focused on competing with PRC investments in “hard” infrastructure? Why does this need to be mandatory?

*Answer.* In response to the tremendous challenges and unprecedented opportunities we face in the Indo-Pacific, the fiscal year 2025 President’s Budget requests both mandatory and discretionary resources to out-compete China, strengthen the U.S. role in the Indo-Pacific, and advance American prosperity globally through new investments, including for infrastructure. Discretionary resources alone cannot meet this need. We have designed this mandatory package primarily as a vehicle to innovate new ways to support our allies and partners around the world by providing a viable alternative to the PRC’s predatory and coercive practices and expanded presence, and offer alternatives at a scale that discretionary spending simply cannot meet. This mandatory funding would align with the existing infrastructure-adjacent work that USAID already implements, including the Countering PRC Influence Fund, DFC transaction support, support for MCC threshold programs, and economic growth and resilience-related programming.

The mandatory package also provides us the ability to make longer-term investments that complement and bolster our programming funded on the discretionary side. Mandatory funding is needed to enable us to make strategic programmatic investments over a longer time horizon. The mandatory proposal includes \$4 billion that will enable the United States to invest in new ways to out-compete China and focus on the following new and critical investments to:

- Create a new International Infrastructure Fund, which will out-compete China by providing a credible, reliable alternative to PRC options, while also expanding markets and opportunities for U.S. businesses. This fund will support transformative, quality, and sustainable “hard” infrastructure projects, including along strategic economic corridors.
- Make game-changing investments in the Indo-Pacific to strengthen partner economies, bolster connectivity between partner countries, and support their efforts, including through multilateral fora, in pushing back against coercive actions.

*Question.* Can you provide some specifics on what the “new and innovative funding streams” not currently funded through discretionary resources would look like?

*Answer.* We are requesting \$2 billion over 5 years to enable the United States to make significant investments in the Indo-Pacific to out-compete China. These investments will allow for new initiatives in strategic sectors that base discretionary funding alone cannot support. This funding will advance U.S. interests and leadership in the region and demonstrate our enduring commitment to our Indo-Pacific partners. We will support competitive connectivity in the Indo-Pacific, making Indo-Pacific economies more connected and resilient through transformative investments in emerging technologies, supply chains, and transportation, while also increasing opportunities for American businesses. These mandatory funds will allow us to work with our Indo-Pacific partners to implement a robust regional approach to secure Open Radio Access Network (ORAN) digital technology and other secure, high-standards technologies that provide like-minded alternatives to the PRC’s predatory and coercive economic practices. Additionally, this funding will enable the United States to coordinate strategic investments with like-minded partners and incentivize lasting commitments from host governments that advance longer-term, deeper cooperation in countries most at risk of coercion and predatory influence. Funding would be authorized and appropriated to State and USAID (via the Economic Support Fund), with transfer authority to other agencies such as DFC, EXIM, and USTDA. In the Philippines, USAID’s efforts to counter the negative influences of the PRC include a focus on the deployment of Open Radio Network Access (ORAN) so the Philippines and other countries in the region have competitive options for mobile and internet technologies that are secure and transparent. We are preparing to conduct ORAN trials in partnership with the private sector in the near future to ultimately crowd in technology from the U.S. and like minded partners like Japan.

*Question.* How does USAID measure success in competing with PRC “hard” infrastructure investments?

Answer. USAID has been able to achieve success competing with the PRC and other non-transparent actors in the infrastructure realm through programs, including Transaction Advisory Funds and legal support facilities, that increase open, transparent and private sector led procurement that deliver alternatives to the PRC’s infrastructure offer to our partner countries. For example, these programs, including USAID’s technical advisory services, successfully prevented PRC efforts to control the Port of Manzanillo in the Dominican Republic. USAID measures the results of our programs that support infrastructure deals that engage US-based or like minded partner companies and financing options through our Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning processes. These processes systematically collect and analyze information to support evidence-based decisionmaking, and generate learning to inform the adaptation of an activity based on evidence.

*Question.* What portion of the \$2 billion requested mandatory funding for “programming aligned with the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment” will be going to USAID?

Answer. This funding would be jointly managed by the State Department and USAID to support time-sensitive project design and provide advisory and delivery support to advance strategic infrastructure projects around the globe. The exact dollar amount of this split would be determined at a later point.

*Question.* Are there specific projects, priorities, or initiatives that USAID expects to fund with this mandatory spending? In other words, please provide a list of things that you believe USAID cannot do today on infrastructure unless Congress approves mandatory spending.

Answer. The International Infrastructure Fund mandatory request focuses on later-stage support for larger “hard” infrastructure projects that we cannot undertake within our current programming. These could build on support from the PGI Fund to catalyze greater investment in PGI-aligned strategic infrastructure projects. Mandatory funding is designed to support new and innovative ways to provide alternatives to PRC options, especially in international infrastructure and in the Indo-Pacific region. Through transfers to U.S. Government agencies such as USAID, MCC, USTDA, DFC, and EXIM, the mandatory Infrastructure Fund will support hard, strategic infrastructure projects, which could include investment in: critical mineral mining and processing; fiber, mobile, and wireless networks; subsea cables, landing stations, and data centers; ports, roads, and railroads; and water and sanitation infrastructure.

*Question.* Please provide a list of all USAID projects affiliated with or branded as Project for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGI) projects. Please provide the location, dollar figure, and a description of each such project.

Answer. USAID engages in several ways to align, attribute, and directly fund projects and activities that support priority, identified Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGI) economic corridors.

ECONOMIC CORRIDORS—The following projects are aligned with and directly support the development of key economic corridors under PGI.

Lobito Corridor—Angola

- Building Infrastructure Capacity (\$1 million). USAID will assist the Angolan Ministry of Transportation to develop their planned Public-Private Partnership Unit for transportation infrastructure. The support will enable the Ministry to replicate the successful and transparent Lobito Rail concession for additional rail and port investments.

- Legal Equity and Equality for Angolan Women Farmers (LEE-AWF) (\$5.5 million). USAID will support agricultural development along the Lobito Corridor in Angola, focusing on linking female smallholder farmers to value chains that will use access to the rail line as a critical component of sustainability.

- Digital Money Is Better (\$4.875 million). USAID launched a digital money project with Africell, a U.S.-owned telecoms company, which will provide an equivalent in-kind contribution to the partnership on top of their existing mobile network.

Luzon Corridor—Philippines

- Energy Security and Independence Program (\$3 million). Subject to congressional notification, USAID will work with the Philippine government to regain control of transmission development that is currently heavily controlled by the PRC and develop a nuclear energy policy framework to support U.S.-Philippines civil nu-



clear cooperation. These efforts will be funded through CPIF, and will be carried out through USAID's ongoing Energy Secure Philippines Activity.

- Regulatory Reform Support Program for National Development (RESPOND). In March 2024, USAID's RESPOND activity signed an MoU with Clark International Airport Corporation (CIAC) to provide technical assistance to the CIAC in implementing programs and pursuing policies that seek to improve regulatory quality in the Philippines that can contribute to the Three-Year Food Logistics Agenda.

#### OTHER GLOBAL PGI ACTIVITIES

Additionally, the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 653(a) report transmitted to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and others in the summer of 2023 included funding for a PGI Fund. State and USAID identified \$30 million to support implementation of identified PGI economic corridors. This money will be obligated to two long-standing USAID managed mechanisms: the Architecture & Engineering IDIQ (managed by USAID's Bureau for Resilience, Environment, and Food Security) and Trade Central Asia (managed by USAID's Central Asia Regional Mission). Pending resolution of existing congressional holds, we anticipate that these PGI activities will be used for quick release technical advisory support to remove discrete barriers to strategic infrastructure investments.

Prosper Africa will use fiscal year 2023 funds to support PGI activities in Africa. Support will include project advisory services in the "Lobito Corridor countries" across sectors, such as agriculture, critical minerals, and information and communication technology. This work will enable other investments by the U.S. Government to mobilize private capital, including by the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) and Export-Import Bank (Ex-im).

Similar to Prosper Africa, Power Africa's fiscal year 2023 funds will support PGI activities across Sub-Saharan Africa. Funds will accelerate the development of generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure by facilitating specific projects to reach financial close and commissioning. Specific support will include project advisory and investor matchmaking services to the private sector, as well as training for and planning and policy development with African governments to improve the enabling environment for private sector energy investment. Work will also facilitate, and leverage investments and technical assistance provided by Power Africa inter-agency partners as well as bilateral and multilateral development partners.

As a final note, USAID and the Department of State plan to attribute nearly \$3.8 billion to the Partnership for Infrastructure and Investment in fiscal year 2023. These attributions will contribute to the United States goal of mobilizing \$200 billion for the PGI by 2027 through grants, Federal financing, and private sector investments under the broad sector pillars of PGI (gender, climate, digital, health and health security, and agriculture). These attributions reflect USAID programming that would have existed regardless of whether PGI was established or not, with much of this programming being planned prior to the development of PGI. This funding enables the United States to help meet the objective set out at the G7 Summit in 2022 to mobilize, with G7 partners and other like-minded partners, \$600 billion in global infrastructure investments by 2027.

*Question.* One of PGI's four pillars is gender. According to USAID, what qualifies as a gender-related infrastructure project?

*Answer.* Under the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGI), the United States and its G7 partners identified four core pillars: digital connectivity, climate and climate security, health and health security, and gender. The G7 has committed to mobilizing \$600 billion in financing by 2027 to achieve the goals of PGI. The United States will meet \$200 billion of this by using grants and Federal financing to mobilize private sector investment.

PGI builds on the long-standing U.S. approach to inclusive development ensuring that infrastructure investments support economic growth for all people, including women and girls. This approach stands in direct contrast to the one taken by the People's Republic of China and other strategic competitors. In practice, this means seeking to include gender as a design consideration, e.g., by designing projects to allow women and girls to benefit similarly to men and boys; combat gender-based violence risks; promote women's leadership and employment; address infrastructure challenges that disproportionately affect women's time use, ability to engage in productive work, or health and safety; and/or promote women's entrepreneurship in competition for and awarding of contracts. Examples of projects that can be pursued with a gender-alignment lens include but are not limited to the following:

- Expanding mobile and internet access, including digital infrastructure projects that account for large gaps in access for women in many regions of the world (over

a billion women in low- and middle-income countries do not have access to mobile internet).

- Expanding and improving water and sanitation infrastructure, as the majority of the burden for water collection around the world falls on women and girls, who spend 200 million hours every day collecting water. Reducing this time burden enables women and girls to participate in schooling, agriculture activities, work, and entrepreneurship, delivering clear economic benefits.
- Care infrastructure, which is essential to advance women's economic security and that of their families.

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RESPONSES OF MS. SAMANTHA POWER TO QUESTIONS  
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TIM SCOTT

*Question.* Instability is rising around the world, leading to new conflicts and the risk for mass atrocities. According to the 2024 annual report from the Early Warning Project at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 30 countries are at risk for mass killings this year, half of which are in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The President's fiscal year 2025 budget for USAID requests additional funding for Development Assistance above fiscal year 2023 enacted levels to support atrocity prevention programming in key focus countries. Could you please provide a more detailed explanation on how these resources would be allocated, if provided?

*Answer.* These funds would support analysis and resulting recommendations in countries at risk for atrocity events, especially countries not at imminent/immediate risk in which USAID would have time to pivot programming. For example, if analysis points to human rights defenders as a particularly vulnerable group, funds could be used to shore up protections of these individuals and their work.

USAID works to detect, prevent, and respond to atrocities in four main ways.

*Recognize and communicate:* Information and analysis about mass atrocities

- This includes supporting early warning systems and both supporting and conducting research and analysis to determine localities at the most risk and the context-specific factors relevant to each situation as well as their trendlines.

*Prevent:* Mitigating risks and bolstering resilience

- A number of USAID focus areas are utilized to prevent atrocities, including (1) activities to prevent armed conflict outbreak, (2) activities that promote human rights, rule of law, and democratic governance, (3) activities that strengthen civil society and independent media, especially their ability to call attention to risk factors and warning signs, and (4) activities that build capacity and legitimacy of weak states.

*Respond:* Limit consequences of atrocities

- While atrocities are ongoing there are several approaches USAID takes to limit and mitigate their impact, such as (1) supporting mitigation or resolution of armed conflict, (2) providing and improving protection and support services for targeted groups in survivor-centered and trauma-informed ways, (3) dissuading potential perpetrators, including through legal accountability, and (4) monitoring, documenting, and supporting advocacy to increase information about ongoing atrocities and to debunk atrocity related disinformation.

*Support recovery:* Dealing with the aftermath of mass atrocities

- In addition to the focus areas above that prevent the recurrence of mass atrocities, USAID works to: (1) support justice and accountability, (2) support psychological well-being, recovery, and reconciliation, (3) support political transition, and (4) support economic recovery, including through strengthened resilience to socio-economic shocks.

*Question.* Conflict prevention is an interagency task. How is USAID coordinating between various Federal partners to implement conflict prevention and stabilization programming in the field?

*Answer.* USAID coordinates with other Federal partners using the principles of the Global Fragility Act of 2019 and the related U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability (SPCPS). SPCPS aims to use an integrated, whole-of-government approach to conflict prevention and stabilization that is evidence-based, innovative, long-term, and locally driven. In four partner countries (Haiti, Libya, Mozambique, Papua New Guinea) and one region (Coastal West Africa—Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Togo) USAID worked with the Department of State, Department of Defense, and other departments and agencies in the field to develop 10-year country or regional plans that aim to leverage the full range of U.S. Government (USG) tools across new and existing diplomatic, defense, and development ef-

forts while also deepening partnerships with like-minded countries, multilaterals, and civil society. USAID Missions also work with the full Country Team at Embassies to address conflict prevention and stabilization through Integrated Country Strategies, Country Development Cooperation Strategies, and other strategies. In addition, USAID coordinates with the interagency to implement the Administration's Women, Peace and Security Action Plan and to identify and address atrocity risk factors, early and late warning signs, and options for USG programming in countries at high risk for atrocities.

As an example, USAID's Peace Action for Rapid and Transformative Nigerian Early Response (PARTNER) activity (2021–2026) helps Nigerian communities, government, security, and civil society actors to collaborate more effectively with each other and the USG interagency in order to increase the effectiveness, local ownership, and sustainability of an inclusive early warning early response system to prevent violent conflict in Nigeria.

*Question.* In December, Secretary Blinken issued an atrocities determination on the conflict in Sudan, but he stopped short of designating the crisis in Darfur as a genocide. Several of my colleagues and I disagree with this assessment. How is USAID monitoring the ongoing atrocities in Darfur? What tools and technologies are being used to monitor the situation in real time?

*Answer.* Secretary Blinken's determination of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing committed against the Sudanese people is a necessary step toward accountability for survivors and victims of this and previous conflicts in Sudan. The Secretary's Atrocity Determination does not prevent further such determinations in the future about other international crimes, including genocide. USAID and other parts of the interagency continue to monitor the crisis through a variety of means. One such example that has provided tremendous insight into the ongoing atrocities is the Sudan Conflict Observatory, which uses commercial satellite imagery and open-source data analysis to report on the ongoing horrors in Darfur and across Sudan. Additionally, we regularly receive reports from trusted partners that are still able to report on the events on the ground due to continued and heroic local presence. The United States has imposed costs on individuals and entities escalating the conflict and committing atrocities, and we will continue to increase pressure on Sudanese and external actors who stand in the way of good faith negotiation.

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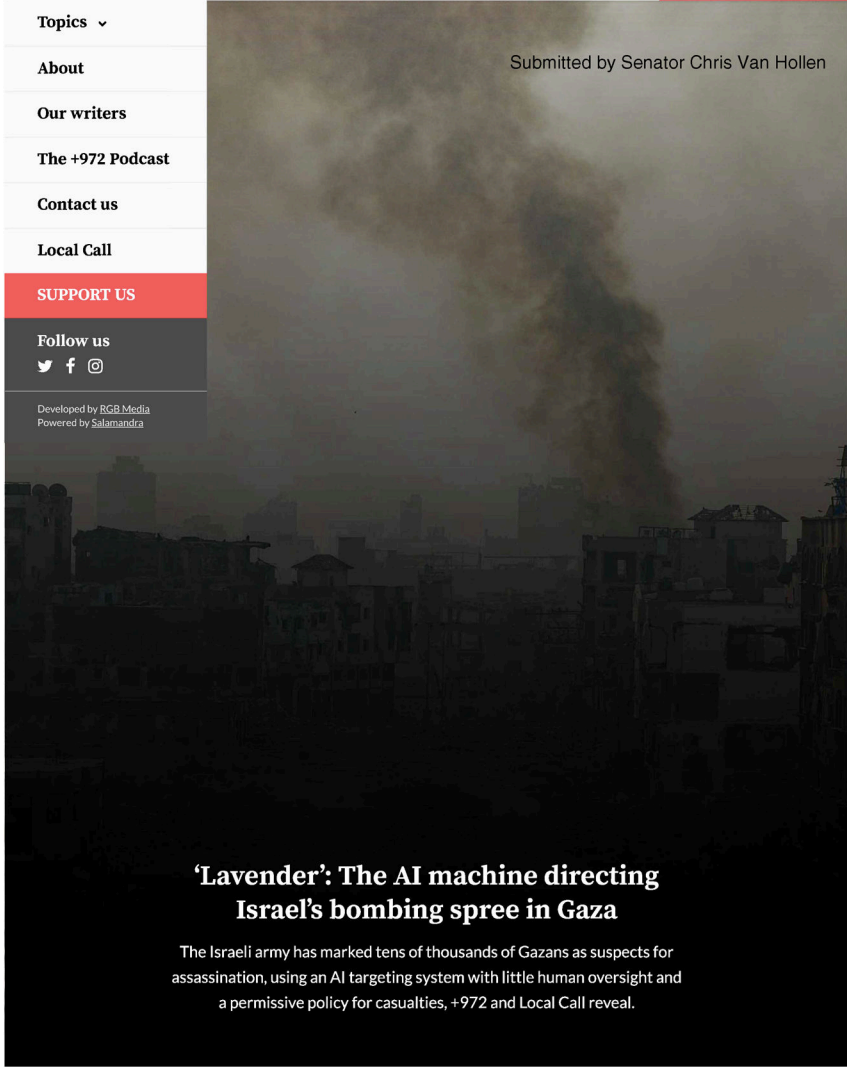
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## 'Lavender': The AI machine directing Israel's bombing spree in Gaza

The Israeli army has marked tens of thousands of Gazans as suspects for assassination, using an AI targeting system with little human oversight and a permissive policy for casualties, +972 and Local Call reveal.

Smoke rises after Israeli airstrikes in Beit Lahia, in the northern Gaza Strip, December 28, 2023. (Yonatan Sindel/Flash90)



By Yuval Abraham | April 3, 2024



In partnership with **LOCAL CALL** שיחה מקומית In 2021, a [book](#) titled “The Human-Machine Team: How to Create Synergy Between Human and Artificial Intelligence That Will Revolutionize Our World” was released in English under the pen name “Brigadier General Y.S.” In it, the author — a man who we confirmed to be the current commander of the elite Israeli intelligence unit 8200 — makes the case for designing a special machine that could rapidly process massive amounts of data to generate thousands of potential “targets” for military strikes in the heat of a war. Such technology, he writes, would resolve what he described as a “human bottleneck for both locating the new targets and decision-making to approve the targets.”

Such a machine, it turns out, actually exists. A new investigation by +972 Magazine and Local Call reveals that the Israeli army has developed an artificial intelligence-based program known as “Lavender,” unveiled here for the first time. According to six Israeli intelligence officers, who have all served in the army during the current war on the Gaza Strip and had first-hand involvement with the use of AI to generate targets for assassination, Lavender has played a central role in the unprecedented bombing of Palestinians, especially during the early stages of the war. In fact, according to the sources, its influence on the military’s operations was such that they essentially treated the outputs of the AI machine “as if it were a human decision.”

Formally, the Lavender system is designed to mark all suspected operatives in the military wings of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), including low-ranking ones, as potential bombing targets. The sources told +972 and Local Call that, during the first weeks of the war, the army almost completely relied on Lavender, which clocked as many as 37,000 Palestinians as suspected militants — and their homes — for possible air strikes.

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During the early stages of the war, the army gave sweeping approval for officers to adopt Lavender’s kill lists, with no requirement to thoroughly check why the machine made those choices or to

examine the raw intelligence data on which they were based. One source stated that human personnel often served only as a “rubber stamp” for the machine’s decisions, adding that, normally, they would personally devote only about “20 seconds” to each target before authorizing a bombing — just to make sure the Lavender-marked target is male. This was despite knowing that the system makes what are regarded as “errors” in approximately 10 percent of cases, and is known to occasionally mark individuals who have merely a loose connection to militant groups, or no connection at all.

Moreover, the Israeli army systematically attacked the targeted individuals while they were in their homes — usually at night while their whole families were present — rather than during the course of military activity. According to the sources, this was because, from what they regarded as an intelligence standpoint, it was easier to locate the individuals in their private houses. Additional automated systems, including one called “Where’s Daddy?” also revealed here for the first time, were used specifically to track the targeted individuals and carry out bombings when they had entered their family’s residences.



Men transport the wounded and try to put out a fire after an Israeli airstrike on a house in the Shaboura refugee camp in the city of Rafah, southern Gaza Strip, November 17, 2023. (Abd Rahim Khatib/Flash90)

The result, as the sources testified, is that thousands of Palestinians — most of them women and children or people who were not involved in the fighting — were wiped out by Israeli airstrikes, especially during the first weeks of the war, because of the AI program's decisions.

"We were not interested in killing [Hamas] operatives only when they were in a military building or engaged in a military activity," A., an intelligence officer, told +972 and Local Call. "On the contrary, the IDF bombed them in homes without hesitation, as a first option. It's much easier to bomb a family's home. The system is built to look for them in these situations."

The Lavender machine joins another AI system, "The Gospel," about which information was revealed in a [previous investigation](#) by +972 and Local Call in November 2023, as well as in the Israeli military's own [publications](#). A fundamental difference between the two systems is in the definition of the target: whereas The Gospel marks buildings

and structures that the army claims militants operate from, Lavender marks people — and puts them on a kill list.

In addition, according to the sources, when it came to targeting alleged junior militants marked by Lavender, the army preferred to only use unguided missiles, commonly known as “dumb” bombs (in contrast to “smart” precision bombs), which can destroy entire buildings on top of their occupants and cause significant casualties. “You don’t want to waste expensive bombs on unimportant people — it’s very expensive for the country and there’s a shortage [of those bombs],” said C., one of the intelligence officers. Another source said that they had personally authorized the bombing of “hundreds” of private homes of alleged junior operatives marked by Lavender, with many of these attacks killing civilians and entire families as “collateral damage.”

In an unprecedented move, according to two of the sources, the army also decided during the first weeks of the war that, for every junior Hamas operative that Lavender marked, it was permissible to kill up to 15 or 20 civilians; in the past, the military did not authorize any “collateral damage” during assassinations of low-ranking militants. The sources added that, in the event that the target was a senior Hamas official with the rank of battalion or brigade commander, the army on several occasions authorized the killing of more than 100 civilians in the assassination of a single commander.





Men wait to receive the bodies of their relatives who were killed in an Israeli airstrike, at Al-Najar Hospital in Rafah, southern Gaza Strip, October 24, 2023. (Abed Rahim Khatib/Flash90)

The following investigation is organized according to the six chronological stages of the Israeli army's highly automated target production in the early weeks of the Gaza war. First, we explain the Lavender machine itself, which marked tens of thousands of Palestinians using AI. Second, we reveal the "Where's Daddy?" system, which tracked these targets and signaled to the army when they entered their family homes. Third, we describe how "dumb" bombs were chosen to strike these homes.

Fourth, we explain how the army loosened the permitted number of civilians who could be killed during the bombing of a target. Fifth, we note how automated software inaccurately calculated the amount of non-combatants in each household. And sixth, we show how on several occasions, when a home was struck, usually at night, the individual target was sometimes not inside at all, because military officers did not verify the information in real time.

#### **STEP 1: GENERATING TARGETS**

**‘Once you go automatic, target generation goes crazy’**

In the Israeli army, the term “human target” referred in the past to a senior military operative who, according to the rules of the military’s International Law Department, can be killed in their private home even if there are civilians around. Intelligence sources told +972 and Local Call that during Israel’s previous wars, since this was an “especially brutal” way to kill someone — often by killing an entire family alongside the target — such human targets were marked very carefully and only senior military commanders were bombed in their homes, to maintain the principle of proportionality under international law.

But after October 7 — when Hamas-led militants launched a deadly assault on southern Israeli communities, killing around 1,200 people and abducting 240 — the army, the sources said, took a dramatically different approach. Under “Operation Iron Swords,” the army decided to designate all operatives of Hamas’ military wing as human targets, regardless of their rank or military importance. And that changed everything.

The new policy also posed a technical problem for Israeli intelligence. In previous wars, in order to authorize the assassination of a single human target, an officer had to go through a complex and lengthy “incrimination” process: cross-check evidence that the person was indeed a senior member of Hamas’ military wing, find out where he lived, his contact information, and finally know when he was home in real time. When the list of targets numbered only a few dozen senior operatives, intelligence personnel could individually handle the work involved in incriminating and locating them.



People try to rescue survivors and pull bodies from the rubble after Israeli airstrikes hit buildings near Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah, central Gaza, October 22, 2023. (Mohammed Zaanoun/Activestills)

However, once the list was expanded to include tens of thousands of lower-ranking operatives, the Israeli army figured it had to rely on automated software and artificial intelligence. The result, the sources testify, was that the role of human personnel in incriminating Palestinians as military operatives was pushed aside, and AI did most of the work instead. According to four of the sources who spoke to +972 and Local Call, Lavender — which was developed to create human targets in the current war — has marked some 37,000 Palestinians as suspected “ Hamas militants,” most of them junior, for assassination (the IDF Spokesperson denied the existence of such a kill list in a statement to +972 and Local Call).

“We didn’t know who the junior operatives were, because Israel didn’t track them routinely [before the war],” explained senior officer B. to +972 and Local Call, illuminating the reason behind the development of this particular target machine for the current war. “They wanted to allow us to attack [the junior operatives] automatically. That’s the Holy Grail. Once you go automatic, target generation goes crazy.”

The sources said that the approval to automatically adopt Lavender's kill lists, which had previously been used only as an auxiliary tool, was granted about two weeks into the war, after intelligence personnel "manually" checked the accuracy of a random sample of several hundred targets selected by the AI system. When that sample found that Lavender's results had reached 90 percent accuracy in identifying an individual's affiliation with Hamas, the army authorized the sweeping use of the system. From that moment, sources said that if Lavender decided an individual was a militant in Hamas, they were essentially asked to treat that as an order, with no requirement to independently check why the machine made that choice or to examine the raw intelligence data on which it is based.

"At 5 a.m., [the air force] would come and bomb all the houses that we had marked," B. said. "We took out thousands of people. We didn't go through them one by one — we put everything into automated systems, and as soon as one of [the marked individuals] was at home, he immediately became a target. We bombed him and his house."

"It was very surprising for me that we were asked to bomb a house to kill a ground soldier, whose importance in the fighting was so low," said one source about the use of AI to mark alleged low-ranking militants. "I nicknamed those targets 'garbage targets.' Still, I found them more ethical than the targets that we [bombed just for 'deterrence'](#) — highrises that are evacuated and toppled just to cause destruction."

The deadly results of this loosening of restrictions in the early stage of the war were staggering. According to data from the Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza, on which the Israeli army has [relied almost exclusively](#) since the beginning of the war, Israel killed some 15,000 Palestinians — almost half of the death toll so far — in the [first six weeks](#) of the war, up until a week-long ceasefire was agreed on Nov. 24.



destruction is seen in Al-Rimal popular district of Gaza City after it was targeted by airstrikes carried out by Israeli forces, October 10, 2023. (Mohammed Zaoun/Activestills)

#### **‘The more information and variety, the better’**

The Lavender software analyzes information collected on most of the 2.3 million residents of the Gaza Strip through a system of mass surveillance, then assesses and ranks the likelihood that each particular person is active in the military wing of Hamas or PIJ. According to sources, the machine gives almost every single person in Gaza a rating from 1 to 100, expressing how likely it is that they are a militant.

Lavender learns to identify characteristics of known Hamas and PIJ operatives, whose information was fed to the machine as training data, and then to locate these same characteristics — also called “features” — among the general population, the sources explained. An individual found to have several different incriminating features will reach a high rating, and thus automatically becomes a potential target for assassination.

In "The Human-Machine Team," the book referenced at the beginning of this article, the current commander of Unit 8200 advocates for such a system without referencing Lavender by name. (The commander himself also isn't named, but five sources in 8200 confirmed that the commander is the author, as [reported](#) also by Haaretz.) Describing human personnel as a "bottleneck" that limits the army's capacity during a military operation, the commander laments: "We [humans] cannot process so much information. It doesn't matter how many people you have tasked to produce targets during the war — you still cannot produce enough targets per day."

The solution to this problem, he says, is artificial intelligence. The book offers a short guide to building a "target machine," similar in description to Lavender, based on AI and machine-learning algorithms. Included in this guide are several examples of the "hundreds and thousands" of features that can increase an individual's rating, such as being in a Whatsapp group with a known militant, changing cell phone every few months, and changing addresses frequently.

"The more information, and the more variety, the better," the commander writes. "Visual information, cellular information, social media connections, battlefield information, phone contacts, photos." While humans select these features at first, the commander continues, over time the machine will come to identify features on its own. This, he says, can enable militaries to create "tens of thousands of targets," while the actual decision as to whether or not to attack them will remain a human one.

The book isn't the only time a senior Israeli commander hinted at the existence of human target machines like Lavender. +972 and Local Call have obtained footage of a private lecture given by the commander of Unit 8200's secretive Data Science and AI center, "Col. Yoav," at Tel Aviv University's AI week in 2023, which was [reported on](#) at the time in the Israeli media.

In the lecture, the commander speaks about a new, sophisticated target machine used by the Israeli army that detects "dangerous people" based on their likeness to existing lists of known militants on which it was trained. "Using the system, we managed to identify Hamas missile squad commanders," "Col. Yoav" said in the lecture, referring to Israel's May 2021 military operation in Gaza, when the machine was used for the first time.

### How Does it Work?

**Step 2: Build Features**

PU Learning

Original Group

First/Second Circle

IDF Intelligence Directorate  
from a lecture presentation by the commander of IDF Unit 8200's Data Science and AI center at Tel Aviv University in 2023, obtained by +972 and Local Call.

### How Does it Work?

**Step 3: Ranking**

PU Learning

GT GT GT GT 0.91 0.75 0.66 1.00

IDF Intelligence Directorate  
from a lecture presentation by the commander of IDF Unit 8200's Data Science and AI center at Tel Aviv University in 2023, obtained by +972 and Local Call.

The lecture presentation slides, also obtained by +972 and Local Call, contain illustrations of how the machine works: it is fed data about existing Hamas operatives, it learns to notice their features, and then it rates other Palestinians based on how similar they are to the militants.

"We rank the results and determine the threshold [at which to attack a target]," Col. Yoav" said in the lecture, emphasizing that "eventually, people of flesh and blood take the decisions. In the defense realm, ethically speaking, we put a lot of emphasis on this. These tools are meant to help [intelligence officers] break their barriers."

In practice, however, sources who have used Lavender in recent months say human agency and precision were substituted by mass target creation and lethality.

**'There was no "zero-error" policy'**

B., a senior officer who used Lavender, echoed to +972 and Local Call that in the current war, officers were not required to independently review the AI system's assessments, in order to save time and enable the mass production of human targets without hindrances.

"Everything was statistical, everything was neat — it was very dry," B. said. He noted that this lack of supervision was permitted despite internal checks showing that Lavender's calculations were considered accurate only 90 percent of the time; in other words, it was known in advance that 10 percent of the human targets slated for assassination were not members of the Hamas military wing at all.

For example, sources explained that the Lavender machine sometimes mistakenly flagged individuals who had communication patterns similar to known Hamas or PIJ operatives — including police and civil defense workers, militants' relatives, residents who happened to have a name and nickname identical to that of an operative, and Gazans who used a device that once belonged to a Hamas operative.

"How close does a person have to be to Hamas to be [considered by an AI machine to be] affiliated with the organization?" said one source critical of Lavender's inaccuracy. "It's a vague boundary. Is a person who doesn't receive a salary from Hamas, but helps them with all sorts of things, a Hamas operative? Is someone who was in Hamas in the past, but is no longer there today, a Hamas operative? Each of these features — characteristics that a machine would flag as suspicious — is inaccurate."





Men at the site of an Israeli airstrike in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, February 24, 2024. (Abed Rahim Khatib/Flash90)

Similar problems exist with the ability of target machines to assess the phone used by an individual marked for assassination. "In war, Palestinians change phones all the time," said the source. "People lose contact with their families, give their phone to a friend or a wife, maybe lose it. There is no way to rely 100 percent on the automatic mechanism that determines which [phone] number belongs to whom."

According to the sources, the army knew that the minimal human supervision in place would not discover these faults. "There was no 'zero-error' policy. Mistakes were treated statistically," said a source who used Lavender. "Because of the scope and magnitude, the protocol was that even if you don't know for sure that the machine is right, you know that statistically it's fine. So you go for it."

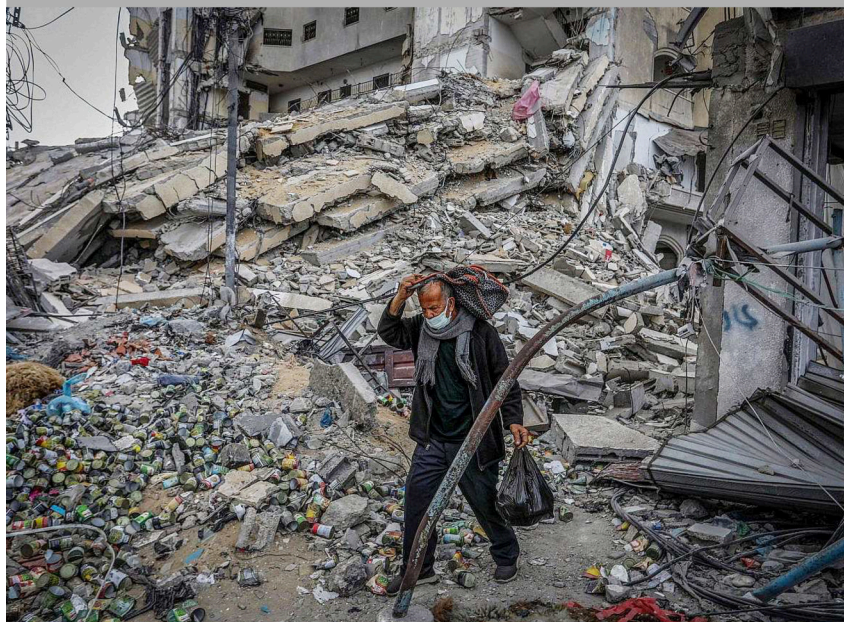
"It has proven itself," said B., the senior source. "There's something about the statistical approach that sets you to a certain norm and standard. There has been an illogical amount of [bombings] in this

operation. This is unparalleled, in my memory. And I have much more trust in a statistical mechanism than a soldier who lost a friend two days ago. Everyone there, including me, lost people on October 7. The machine did it coldly. And that made it easier.”

Another intelligence source, who defended the reliance on the Lavender-generated kill lists of Palestinian suspects, argued that it was worth investing an intelligence officer’s time only to verify the information if the target was a senior commander in Hamas. “But when it comes to a junior militant, you don’t want to invest manpower and time in it,” he said. “In war, there is no time to incriminate every target. So you’re willing to take the margin of error of using artificial intelligence, risking collateral damage and civilians dying, and risking attacking by mistake, and to live with it.”

B. said that the reason for this automation was a constant push to generate more targets for assassination. “In a day without targets [whose feature rating was sufficient to authorize a strike], we attacked at a lower threshold. We were constantly being pressured: ‘Bring us more targets.’ They really shouted at us. We finished [killing] our targets very quickly.”

He explained that when lowering the rating threshold of Lavender, it would mark more people as targets for strikes. “At its peak, the system managed to generate 37,000 people as potential human targets,” said B. “But the numbers changed all the time, because it depends on where you set the bar of what a Hamas operative is. There were times when a Hamas operative was defined more broadly, and then the machine started bringing us all kinds of civil defense personnel, police officers, on whom it would be a shame to waste bombs. They help the Hamas government, but they don’t really endanger soldiers.”



Men at the site of a building destroyed by an Israeli airstrike in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, March 18, 2024. (Abed Rahim Khatib/Flash90)

One source who worked with the military data science team that trained Lavender said that data collected from employees of the Hamas-run Internal Security Ministry, whom he does not consider to be militants, was also fed into the machine. "I was bothered by the fact that when Lavender was trained, they used the term 'Hamas operative' loosely, and included people who were civil defense workers in the training dataset," he said.

The source added that even if one believes these people deserve to be killed, training the system based on their communication profiles made Lavender more likely to select civilians by mistake when its algorithms were applied to the general population. "Since it's an automatic system that isn't operated manually by humans, the meaning of this decision is dramatic: it means you're including many people with a civilian communication profile as potential targets."

**'We only checked that the target was a man'**

The Israeli military flatly rejects these claims. In a statement to +972 and Local Call, the IDF Spokesperson denied using artificial

intelligence to incriminate targets, saying these are merely "auxiliary tools that assist officers in the process of incrimination." The statement went on: "In any case, an independent examination by an [intelligence] analyst is required, which verifies that the identified targets are legitimate targets for attack, in accordance with the conditions set forth in IDF directives and international law."

However, sources said that the only human supervision protocol in place before bombing the houses of suspected "junior" militants marked by Lavender was to conduct a single check: ensuring that the AI-selected target is male rather than female. The assumption in the army was that if the target was a woman, the machine had likely made a mistake, because there are no women among the ranks of the military wings of Hamas and PIJ.

"A human being had to [verify the target] for just a few seconds," B. said, explaining that this became the protocol after realizing the Lavender system was "getting it right" most of the time. "At first, we did checks to ensure that the machine didn't get confused. But at some point we relied on the automatic system, and we only checked that [the target] was a man — that was enough. It doesn't take a long time to tell if someone has a male or a female voice."

To conduct the male/female check, B. claimed that in the current war, "I would invest 20 seconds for each target at this stage, and do dozens of them every day. I had zero added value as a human, apart from being a stamp of approval. It saved a lot of time. If [the operative] came up in the automated mechanism, and I checked that he was a man, there would be permission to bomb him, subject to an examination of collateral damage."



Men emerge from the rubble of houses destroyed in Israeli airstrikes in the city of Rafah, southern Gaza Strip, November 20, 2023. (Abed Rahim Khatib/Flash90)

In practice, sources said this meant that for civilian men marked in error by Lavender, there was no supervising mechanism in place to detect the mistake. According to B., a common error occurred "if the [ Hamas ] target gave [ his phone ] to his son, his older brother, or just a random man. That person will be bombed in his house with his family. This happened often. These were most of the mistakes caused by Lavender," B. said.

#### **STEP 2: LINKING TARGETS TO FAMILY HOMES**

#### **'Most of the people you killed were women and children'**

The next stage in the Israeli army's assassination procedure is identifying where to attack the targets that Lavender generates.

In a statement to +972 and Local Call, the IDF Spokesperson claimed in response to this article that " Hamas places its operatives and military assets in the heart of the civilian population, systematically uses the civilian population as human shields, and conducts fighting from within civilian structures, including sensitive sites such as

hospitals, mosques, schools and UN facilities. The IDF is bound by and acts according to international law, directing its attacks only at military targets and military operatives.”

The six sources we spoke to echoed this to some degree, saying that Hamas’ extensive [tunnel system](#) deliberately passes under hospitals and schools; that Hamas militants use ambulances to get around; and that countless military assets have been situated near civilian buildings. The sources argued that many Israeli strikes kill civilians as a result of these tactics by Hamas — a characterization that human rights groups [warn](#) evades Israel’s onus for inflicting the casualties.

However, in contrast to the Israeli army’s official statements, the sources explained that a major reason for the unprecedented death toll from Israel’s current bombardment is the fact that the army has systematically attacked targets in their private homes, alongside their families — in part because it was easier from an intelligence standpoint to mark family houses using automated systems.

Indeed, several sources emphasized that, as opposed to numerous cases of Hamas operatives engaging in military activity from civilian areas, in the case of systematic assassination strikes, the army routinely made the active choice to bomb suspected militants when inside civilian households from which no military activity took place. This choice, they said, was a reflection of the way Israel’s system of mass surveillance in Gaza is designed.



People rush to bring the wounded, including many children, to Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City as Israeli forces continue pounding the Gaza Strip, October 11, 2023. (Mohammed Zaanoun/Activestills)

The sources told +972 and Local Call that since everyone in Gaza had a private house with which they could be associated, the army's surveillance systems could easily and automatically "link" individuals to family houses. In order to identify the moment operatives enter their houses in real time, various additional automatic softwares have been developed. These programs track thousands of individuals simultaneously, identify when they are at home, and send an automatic alert to the targeting officer, who then marks the house for bombing. One of several of these tracking softwares, revealed here for the first time, is called "Where's Daddy?"

"You put hundreds [of targets] into the system and wait to see who you can kill," said one source with knowledge of the system. "It's called broad hunting: you copy-paste from the lists that the target system produces."

Evidence of this policy is also clear from the data: during the first month of the war, more than half of the fatalities — 6,120 people —

belonged to 1,340 families, many of which were completely wiped out while inside their homes, according to [UN figures](#). The proportion of entire [families](#) bombed in their houses in the current war is much higher [than in the 2014 Israeli operation](#) in Gaza (which was previously Israel's deadliest war on the Strip), further suggesting the prominence of this policy.

Another source said that each time the pace of assassinations waned, more targets were added to systems like Where's Daddy? to locate individuals that entered their homes and could therefore be bombed. He said that the decision of who to put into the tracking systems could be made by relatively low-ranking officers in the military hierarchy.

"One day, totally of my own accord, I added something like 1,200 new targets to the [tracking] system, because the number of attacks [we were conducting] decreased," the source said. "That made sense to me. In retrospect, it seems like a serious decision I made. And such decisions were not made at high levels."

The sources said that in the first two weeks of the war, "several thousand" targets were initially inputted into locating programs like Where's Daddy?. These included all the members of Hamas' elite special forces unit the Nukhba, all of Hamas' anti-tank operatives, and anyone who entered Israel on October 7. But before long, the kill list was drastically expanded.

"In the end it was everyone [marked by Lavender]," one source explained. "Tens of thousands. This happened a few weeks later, when the [Israeli] brigades entered Gaza, and there were already fewer uninvolved people [i.e. civilians] in the northern areas." According to this source, even some minors were marked by Lavender as targets for bombing. "Normally, operatives are over the age of 17, but that was not a condition."





d Palestinians are treated on the floor due to overcrowding at Al-Shifa Hospital, Gaza City, central Gaza Strip, October 18, 2023. (Mohammed Zaanoun/Activestills)

Lavender and systems like Where's Daddy? were thus combined with deadly effect, killing entire families, sources said. By adding a name from the Lavender-generated lists to the Where's Daddy? home tracking system, A. explained, the marked person would be placed under ongoing surveillance, and could be attacked as soon as they set foot in their home, collapsing the house on everyone inside.

"Let's say you calculate [that there is one] Hamas [operative] plus 10 [civilians in the house]," A. said. "Usually, these 10 will be women and children. So absurdly, it turns out that most of the people you killed were women and children."

### **STEP 3: CHOOSING A WEAPON**

#### **'We usually carried out the attacks with "dumb bombs"'**

Once Lavender has marked a target for assassination, army personnel have verified that they are male, and tracking software has located the target in their home, the next stage is picking the munition with which to bomb them.

In December 2023, [CNN reported](#) that according to U.S. intelligence estimates, about 45 percent of the munitions used by the Israeli air force in Gaza were "dumb" bombs, which are known to cause more collateral damage than guided bombs. In response to the CNN report, an army spokesperson quoted in the article said: "As a military committed to international law and a moral code of conduct, we are devoting vast resources to minimizing harm to the civilians that Hamas has forced into the role of human shields. Our war is against Hamas, not against the people of Gaza."

Three intelligence sources, however, told +972 and Local Call that junior operatives marked by Lavender were assassinated only with dumb bombs, in the interest of saving more expensive armaments. The implication, one source explained, was that the army would not strike a junior target if they lived in a high-rise building, because the army did not want to spend a more precise and expensive "floor bomb" (with more limited collateral effect) to kill him. But if a junior target lived in a building with only a few floors, the army was authorized to kill him and everyone in the building with a dumb bomb.



People at the site of a building destroyed by an Israeli airstrike in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, March 18, 2024. (Abed Rahim Khatib/Flash90)

"It was like that with all the junior targets," testified C., who used various automated programs in the current war. "The only question was, is it possible to attack the building in terms of collateral damage? Because we usually carried out the attacks with dumb bombs, and that meant literally destroying the whole house on top of its occupants. But even if an attack is averted, you don't care — you immediately move on to the next target. Because of the system, the targets never end. You have another 36,000 waiting."

#### **STEP 4: AUTHORIZING CIVILIAN CASUALTIES**

##### **'We attacked almost without considering collateral damage'**

One source said that when attacking junior operatives, including those marked by AI systems like Lavender, the number of civilians they were allowed to kill alongside each target was fixed during the initial weeks of the war at up to 20. Another source claimed the fixed number was up to 15. These "collateral damage degrees," as the military calls them, were applied broadly to all suspected junior

militants, the sources said, regardless of their rank, military importance, and age, and with no specific case-by-case examination to weigh the military advantage of assassinating them against the expected harm to civilians.

According to A., who was an officer in a target operation room in the current war, the army's international law department has never before given such "sweeping approval" for such a high collateral damage degree. "It's not just that you can kill any person who is a Hamas soldier, which is clearly permitted and legitimate in terms of international law," A. said. "But they directly tell you: 'You are allowed to kill them along with many civilians.'"

"Every person who wore a Hamas uniform in the past year or two could be bombed with 20 [civilians killed as] collateral damage, even without special permission," A. continued. "In practice, the principle of proportionality did not exist."

According to A., this was the policy for most of the time that he served. Only later did the military lower the collateral damage degree. "In this calculation, it could also be 20 children for a junior operative ... It really wasn't like that in the past," A. explained. Asked about the security rationale behind this policy, A. replied: "Lethality."



People wait to receive the bodies of their relatives who were killed in Israeli airstrikes, at Al-Najjar Hospital in Rafah, southern Gaza Strip, November 7, 2023. (Abed Rahim Khatib/Flash90)

The predetermined and fixed collateral damage degree helped accelerate the mass creation of targets using the Lavender machine, sources said, because it saved time. B. claimed that the number of civilians they were permitted to kill in the first week of the war per suspected junior militant marked by AI was fifteen, but that this number "went up and down" over time.

"At first we attacked almost without considering collateral damage," B. said of the first week after October 7. "In practice, you didn't really count people [in each house that is bombed], because you couldn't really tell if they're at home or not. After a week, restrictions on collateral damage began. The number dropped [from 15] to five, which made it really difficult for us to attack, because if the whole family was home, we couldn't bomb it. Then they raised the number again."

**'We knew we would kill over 100 civilians'**

Sources told +972 and Local Call that now, partly due to American pressure, the Israeli army is no longer mass-generating junior human targets for bombing in civilian homes. The fact that most homes in the Gaza Strip were already destroyed or damaged, and almost the entire population has been displaced, also impaired the army's ability to rely on intelligence databases and automated house-locating programs.

E. claimed that the massive bombardment of junior militants took place only in the first week or two of the war, and then was stopped mainly so as not to waste bombs. "There is a munitions economy," E. said. "They were always afraid that there would be [a war] in the northern arena [with Hezbollah in Lebanon]. They don't attack these kinds of [junior] people at all anymore."

However, airstrikes against senior ranking Hamas commanders are still ongoing, and sources said that for these attacks, the military is authorizing the killing of "hundreds" of civilians per target — an official policy for which there is no historical precedent in Israel, or even in recent U.S. military operations.

"In the bombing of the commander of the Shuja'iya Battalion, we knew that we would kill over 100 civilians," B. recalled of a Dec. 2 bombing that the IDF Spokesperson [said](#) was aimed at assassinating Wisam Farhat. "For me, psychologically, it was unusual. Over 100 civilians — it crosses some red line."



Fire and smoke rises during Israeli airstrikes in the Gaza Strip, October 9, 2023. (Asia Mohammed/Flash90)

Amjad Al-Sheikh, a young Palestinian from Gaza, said many of his family members were killed in that bombing. A resident of Shuja'iya, east of Gaza City, he was at a local supermarket that day when he heard five blasts that shattered the glass windows.

"I ran to my family's house, but there were no buildings there anymore," Al-Sheikh told +972 and Local Call. "The street was filled with screams and smoke. Entire residential blocks turned to mountains of rubble and deep pits. People began to search in the cement, using their hands, and so did I, looking for signs of my family's house."

Al-Sheikh's wife and baby daughter survived — protected from the rubble by a closet that fell on top of them — but he found 11 other members of his family, among them his sisters, brothers, and their young children, dead under the rubble. [According to](#) the human rights group B'Tselem, the bombing that day destroyed dozens of

buildings, killed dozens of people, and buried hundreds under the ruins of their homes.

**‘Entire families were killed’**

Intelligence sources told +972 and Local Call they took part in even deadlier strikes. In order to assassinate Ayman Nofal, the commander of Hamas’ Central Gaza Brigade, a source said the army authorized the killing of approximately 300 civilians, [destroying several buildings](#) in airstrikes on Al-Bureij refugee camp on Oct. 17, based on an imprecise pinpointing of Nofal. Satellite footage and [videos](#) from the scene show the destruction of several large multi-storey apartment buildings.

“Between 16 to 18 houses were wiped out in the attack,” Amro Al-Khatib, a resident of the camp, told +972 and Local Call. “We couldn’t tell one apartment from the other — they all got mixed up in the rubble, and we found human body parts everywhere.”

In the aftermath, Al-Khatib recalled around 50 dead bodies being pulled out of the rubble, and around 200 people wounded, many of them gravely. But that was just the first day. The camp’s residents spent five days pulling the dead and injured out, he said.





Men digging with bare hands find a dead body in the rubble after an Israeli airstrike which killed dozens of Palestinians in the middle of Al-Maghazi refugee camp, central Gaza Strip, November 5, 2023. (Mohammed Zaanoun/Al Jazeera)

Nael Al-Bahisi, a paramedic, was one of the first on the scene. He counted between 50-70 casualties on that first day. "At a certain moment, we understood the target of the strike was Hamas commander Ayman Nofal," he told +972 and Local Call. "They killed him, and also many people who didn't know he was there. Entire families with children were killed."

Another intelligence source told +972 and Local Call that the army [destroyed a high-rise building](#) in Rafah in mid-December, killing "dozens of civilians," in order [to try to kill](#) Mohammed Shabaneh, the commander of Hamas' Rafah Brigade (it is not clear whether or not he was killed in the attack). Often, the source said, the senior commanders hide in tunnels that pass under civilian buildings, and therefore the choice to assassinate them with an airstrike necessarily kills civilians.

"Most of those injured were children," said Wael Al-Sir, 55, who witnessed the large-scale strike believed by some Gazans to have

been the assassination attempt. He told +972 and Local Call that the bombing on Dec. 20 destroyed an “entire residential block” and killed at least 10 children.

“There was a completely permissive policy regarding the casualties of [bombing] operations — so permissive that in my opinion it had an element of revenge,” D., an intelligence source, claimed. “The core of this was the assassinations of senior [ Hamas and PIJ commanders] for whom they were willing to kill hundreds of civilians. We had a calculation: how many for a brigade commander, how many for a battalion commander, and so on.”

“There were regulations, but they were just very lenient,” said E., another intelligence source. “We’ve killed people with collateral damage in the high double-digits, if not low triple-digits. These are things that haven’t happened before.”



Residents inspect their homes and try to rescue their relatives from under the rubble after an Israeli airstrike in the city of Rafah, southern Gaza Strip, October 22, 2023. (Abed Rahim Khatib/Flash90)

Such a high rate of “collateral damage” is exceptional not only compared to what the Israeli army previously deemed acceptable,

but also compared to the wars waged by the United States in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan.

General Peter Gersten, Deputy Commander for Operations and Intelligence in the operation to fight ISIS in Iraq and Syria, [told](#) a U.S. defense magazine in 2021 that an attack with collateral damage of 15 civilians deviated from procedure; to carry it out, he had to obtain special permission from the head of the U.S. Central Command, General Lloyd Austin, who is now Secretary of Defense.

"With Osama Bin Laden, you'd have an NCV [Non-combatant Casualty Value] of 30, but if you had a low-level commander, his NCV was typically zero," Gersten said. "We ran zero for the longest time."

**'We were told: "Whatever you can, bomb"'**

All the sources interviewed for this investigation said that Hamas' massacres on October 7 and kidnapping of hostages greatly influenced the army's fire policy and collateral damage degrees. "At first, the atmosphere was painful and vindictive," said B., who was drafted into the army immediately after October 7, and served in a target operation room. "The rules were very lenient. They took down four buildings when they knew the target was in one of them. It was crazy.

"There was a dissonance: on the one hand, people here were frustrated that we were not attacking enough," B. continued. "On the other hand, you see at the end of the day that another thousand Gazans have died, most of them civilians."

"There was hysteria in the professional ranks," said D., who was also drafted immediately after October 7. "They had no idea how to react at all. The only thing they knew to do was to just start bombing like madmen to try to dismantle Hamas' capabilities."



Minister Yoav Gallant speaks with Israeli soldiers at a staging area not far from the Gaza fence, October 19, 2023. (Chaim Goldberg/Flash90)

D. stressed that they were not explicitly told that the army's goal was "revenge," but expressed that "as soon as every target connected to Hamas becomes legitimate, and with almost any collateral damage being approved, it is clear to you that thousands of people are going to be killed. Even if officially every target is connected to Hamas, when the policy is so permissive, it loses all meaning."

A. also used the word "revenge" to describe the atmosphere inside the army after October 7. "No one thought about what to do afterward, when the war is over, or how it will be possible to live in Gaza and what they will do with it," A. said. "We were told: now we have to fuck up Hamas, no matter what the cost. Whatever you can, you bomb."

B., the senior intelligence source, said that in retrospect, he believes this "disproportionate" policy of killing Palestinians in Gaza also endangers Israelis, and that this was one of the reasons he decided to be interviewed.

"In the short term, we are safer, because we hurt Hamas. But I think we're less secure in the long run. I see how all the bereaved families in Gaza — which is nearly everyone — will raise the motivation for [people to join] Hamas 10 years down the line. And it will be much easier for [Hamas] to recruit them."

In a statement to +972 and Local Call, the Israeli army denied much of what the sources told us, claiming that "each target is examined individually, while an individual assessment is made of the military advantage and collateral damage expected from the attack ... The IDF does not carry out attacks when the collateral damage expected from the attack is excessive in relation to the military advantage."

#### **STEP 5: CALCULATING COLLATERAL DAMAGE**

##### **'The model was not connected to reality'**

According to the intelligence sources, the Israeli army's calculation of the number of civilians expected to be killed in each house alongside a target — a procedure examined in a [previous investigation](#) by +972 and Local Call — was conducted with the help of automatic and inaccurate tools. In previous wars, intelligence personnel would spend a lot of time verifying how many people were in a house that was set to be bombed, with the number of civilians liable to be killed listed as part of a "target file." After October 7, however, this thorough verification was largely abandoned in favor of automation.

In October, The New York Times [reported](#) on a system operated from a special base in southern Israel, which collects information from mobile phones in the Gaza Strip and provided the military with a live estimate of the number of Palestinians who fled the northern Gaza Strip southward. Brig. General Udi Ben Muha told the Times that "It's not a 100 percent perfect system — but it gives you the information you need to make a decision." The system operates according to colors: red marks areas where there are many people, and green and yellow mark areas that have been relatively cleared of residents.



People walk on a main road after fleeing from their homes in Gaza City to the southern part of Gaza, November 10, 2023. (Alia Mohammed/Flash90)

The sources who spoke to +972 and Local Call described a similar system for calculating collateral damage, which was used to decide whether to bomb a building in Gaza. They said that the software calculated the number of civilians residing in each home before the war — by assessing the size of the building and reviewing its list of residents — and then reduced those numbers by the proportion of residents who supposedly evacuated the neighborhood.

To illustrate, if the army estimated that half of a neighborhood's residents had left, the program would count a house that usually had 10 residents as a house containing five people. To save time, the sources said, the army did not surveil the homes to check how many people were actually living there, as it did in previous operations, to find out if the program's estimate was indeed accurate.

"This model was not connected to reality," claimed one source.

"There was no connection between those who were in the home now, during the war, and those who were listed as living there prior to the

war. [On one occasion] we bombed a house without knowing that there were several families inside, hiding together.”

The source said that although the army knew that such errors could occur, this imprecise model was adopted nonetheless, because it was faster. As such, the source said, “the collateral damage calculation was completely automatic and statistical” — even producing figures that were not whole numbers.

#### **STEP 6: BOMBING A FAMILY HOME**

##### **‘You killed a family for no reason’**

The sources who spoke to +972 and Local Call explained that there was sometimes a substantial gap between the moment that tracking systems like Where’s Daddy? alerted an officer that a target had entered their house, and the bombing itself — leading to the killing of whole families even without hitting the army’s target. “It happened to me many times that we attacked a house, but the person wasn’t even home,” one source said. “The result is that you killed a family for no reason.”

Three intelligence sources told +972 and Local Call that they had witnessed an incident in which the Israeli army bombed a family’s private home, and it later turned out that the intended target of the assassination was not even inside the house, since no further verification was conducted in real time.



Relatives receive the bodies of relatives who were killed in Israeli airstrikes, Al-Najar Hospital, southern Gaza Strip, November 6, 2023. (Abed Rahim Khan/Flash90)

"Sometimes [the target] was at home earlier, and then at night he went to sleep somewhere else, say underground, and you didn't know about it," one of the sources said. "There are times when you double-check the location, and there are times when you just say, 'Okay, he was in the house in the last few hours, so you can just bomb.'"

Another source described a similar incident that affected him and made him want to be interviewed for this investigation. "We understood that the target was home at 8 p.m. In the end, the air force bombed the house at 3 a.m. Then we found out [in that span of time] he had managed to move himself to another house with his family. There were two other families with children in the building we bombed."

In previous wars in Gaza, after the assassination of human targets, Israeli intelligence would carry out bomb damage assessment (BDA) procedures — a routine post-strike check to see if the senior



commander was killed and how many civilians were killed along with him. As revealed in a [previous +972 and Local Call investigation](#), this involved listening in to phone calls of relatives who lost their loved ones. In the current war, however, at least in relation to junior militants marked using AI, sources say this procedure was abolished in order to save time. The sources said they did not know how many civilians were actually killed in each strike, and for the low-ranking suspected Hamas and PIJ operatives marked by AI, they did not even know whether the target himself was killed.

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"You don't know exactly how many you killed, and who you killed," an intelligence source [told Local Call](#) for a previous investigation published in January. "Only when it's senior Hamas operatives do you follow the BDA procedure. In the rest of the cases, you don't care. You get a report from the air force about whether the building was blown up, and that's it. You have no idea how much collateral damage there was; you immediately move on to the next target. The emphasis was to create as many targets as possible, as quickly as possible."

But while the Israeli military may move on from each strike without dwelling on the number of casualties, Amjad Al-Sheikh, the Shuja'iya resident who lost 11 of his family members in the Dec. 2 bombardment, said that he and his neighbors are still searching for corpses.

"Until now, there are bodies under the rubble," he said. "Fourteen residential buildings were bombed with their residents inside. Some of my relatives and neighbors are still buried."

Gaza | October 2023 war | Israeli army | Local Call | Israeli airstrikes | intelligence | Israeli Air Force | civilian casualties



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INTERNATIONAL

### Cindy McCain says Gaza on 'the edge' of going 'over the cliff with famine and not being able to recover'

BY SARAH FORTINSKY - 04/07/24 11:04 AM ET

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Evan Vucci, Associated Press file  
*Cindy McCain, the executive director of the World Food Programme and wife of the late Arizona Republican Sen. John McCain, speaks at the Tempe Center for the Arts, Sept. 28, 2023, in, Tempe, Ariz.*

World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Director **Cindy McCain** sounded the alarm on the humanitarian situation in Gaza, saying people in the territory are on the brink of famine.

"We're literally on the brink of going over the edge — over the cliff — with famine and not being able to recover from it," McCain said in an interview on CNN's "State of the Union" with Jake Tapper.

The remarks come as the situation in Gaza continues to grow more dire. Last month, the WFP [published a report](#) saying famine "is imminent in the northern part of the Gaza Strip."

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report, published last month, found about half the population in Gaza, about 1.1 million people, have exhausted all of their food supplies and are facing "catastrophic hunger" and starvation.

On Sunday, McCain stressed the importance of the border crossings, saying the WFP has food for 1.1 million people for three months amassed on the border and just needs to be let into the Gaza Strip.

McCain was unable to say specifically whether reports that Israel was withdrawing some troops from southern Gaza would make it easier to deliver aid to people who need it.

**TAGS** CINDY MCCAIN FAMINE GAZA WFP