



One Hundred Eighteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

January 24, 2023

The Honorable Samantha Power
Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development
Ronald Reagan Building
Washington, D.C. 20523

Dear Administrator Power:

I am writing to express my deep concern that USAID received information from my office more than eight months ago regarding credible allegations that one of its grantees is associated with designated terrorist organizations, but the agency took no action. This award must immediately be suspended pending a full and thorough review of these accusations.

In October 2021, USAID awarded \$110,000 to Helping Hand for Relief and Development (HHRD) through the Ocean Freight Reimbursement Program.¹ This award was made despite longstanding, detailed allegations that HHRD is connected to designated terrorist organizations, terror financiers, and extremist groups. In November 2019, three Members of Congress requested that the State Department review these alleged ties to terrorism in a public letter.²

HFAC staff first asked your team about this matter in May 2022 after learning of the award made to HHRD.³ USAID's response provided only limited information and failed to address the substance of the allegations against HHRD in any way.⁴ For months, HFAC staff repeatedly

¹ USA Spending.gov, Project Grant FAIN 7200AA21GR00036, https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_7200AA21GR00036_7200 (last visited Jan. 19, 2023).

² Letter from Reps. Jim Banks, Chuck Fleischmann, & Randy Weber, to Ambassador Nathan Sales, Coordinator for Counterterrorism, U.S. State Dep't (Nov. 1, 2019) (on file with authors).

³ Email from Committee Staff, H. Foreign Affairs Comm. to Bureau for Legislative and Pub. Affairs, U.S. Agency for Int'l Dev (May 5, 2022, 10:58 AM EST) (on file with H. Foreign Affairs Comm.).

⁴ Email from Bureau of Legislative and Pub. Affairs, U.S. Agency for Int'l Dev to Committee Staff, H. Foreign Affairs Comm. (Aug. 29, 2022, 09:39 EST) (on file with H. Foreign Affairs Comm.).

attempted to obtain a briefing on this matter. Since no action was taken, I had to make a public request for USAID to explain the grant in November 2022.⁵

When USAID finally briefed the Committee on January 11, 2023, it was clear that the agency had failed to take any action to investigate the allegations or suspend the award,⁶ despite having been provided detailed information by congressional staff months prior.⁷ Shockingly, one of the subject-matter experts in the briefing acknowledged that he had only been made aware of the matter the week before.⁸

USAID attempted to defend itself by claiming it had forwarded information provided by the Committee to USAID's Office of Inspector General.⁹ While this would be an appropriate step, it in no way replaces or relieves USAID of its clear responsibility to promptly examine the allegations and to determine if it has been providing taxpayer dollars to an entity linked to designated terrorist organizations. USAID's gross negligence in handling this matter and its alarming failure to take the allegations seriously are simply unacceptable.

Please *immediately* personally review this grant to HHRD. I strongly urge you to pause this grant while you complete a thorough review of the allegations, to include coordination with the intelligence community, federal law enforcement, the State Department Counterterrorism Bureau, and the Department of Homeland Security.

Please provide my Committee with the full results of this review. In the event the review results in the award's continuation, USAID must provide a detailed, evidence-based explanation of why it is confident that the awardee is not associated with terrorist organizations or extremist groups. Furthermore, please provide an update on the status of this review no later than January 31, 2023 and continuing updates thereafter.

Finally, no later than February 7, 2023, please provide the Committee with all documents and communications referring or relating to: USAID's grant to HHRD, including but not limited to: HRRD's grant application, all HHRD certifications regarding terrorism, all documents relating to USAID's review and approval process, and all documents relating to USAID's referral of the matter to USAID OIG.

I look forward to your prompt reply.

⁵ House Foreign Affairs GOP (@HouseForeignGOP), Twitter (Nov. 17, 2022, 3:15 PM), <https://twitter.com/houseforeigngop/status/1593337077055234049?s=20&t=W6ighsx1fhvIeQ6Zo0yfJg>.

⁶ U. S. Agency for Int'l Dev Briefing to H. Foreign Affairs Comm. Staff on USAID grant to Helping Hand for Relief and Dev (Jan. 11, 2023).

⁷ Email from Committee Staff, H. Foreign Affairs Comm. To Bureau for Legislative and Pub. Affairs, U.S. Agency for Int'l Dev staff (Nov. 18, 2022, 14:51 EST) (on file with House Foreign Affairs Comm.).

⁸ U. S. Agency for Int'l Dev Briefing to H. Foreign Affairs Comm. Staff on USAID grant to Helping Hand for Relief and Dev (Jan. 11, 2023).

⁹ Id.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael T. McCaul". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Michael T. McCaul
Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee

Enclosure

CC:

Rep. Gregory Meeks, Ranking Member
House Foreign Affairs Committee

Nicole Angarella, Acting Deputy Inspector General, USAID, performing the duties of the
Inspector General