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# Russia Welcomes USAID Cuts, Calls Agency ‘Machine for Interfering’

By AFP

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**JAM STA ROSA / AFP**

Russia on Thursday welcomed the new U.S. administration's decision to shutter USAID as an independent agency, calling the humanitarian body a "machine for interfering" in global affairs.

U.S. President Donald Trump's close advisor Elon Musk announced Monday that the giant humanitarian agency would be "shutting down" as part of his radical drive to shrink the U.S. government.

USAID said Tuesday it was placing its staff in the United States and around the world on administrative leave, with the U.S. State Department taking over USAID's functions.

"The only thing we take a certain satisfaction from is that everything we said turned out to be true," Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in a weekly briefing,

referring to Moscow's longstanding criticism of the agency.

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Russia expelled USAID in 2012 for "meddling" in its politics. It had long accused the agency and others of setting the ground for pro-democracy uprisings in ex-Soviet states.

"It is anything but an aid, development and assistance agency," said Zakharova.

"It is a machine for interfering in internal affairs, it is a mechanism for changing regimes, political order, state structure."

The aid arm of U.S. foreign policy, USAID funded health and emergency programs as well as democracy promotion initiatives in around 120 countries, including the world's poorest regions.

It was seen as a vital source of soft power for the United States in its struggle for influence with rivals including China, but has long been lambasted by authoritarian leaders.

Musk has called USAID "a viper's nest of radical-left marxists who hate America." Trump said last week it was being run by a "bunch of radical lunatics."

The assault on the agency has drawn a swift backlash from aid groups. They say it has already forced the closure of programs including those aimed at HIV prevention and treatment.

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