



## **USAID admits to Venezuela regime change fraud**

*This transcript may not be 100% accurate due to audio quality or other factors.*

**Anya Parampil (AP):** Hi, everyone, I'm on your Anya Parampil, and this is Red Lines.

A new report published by the USAID Office of Inspector General sheds light on how the organization operates in Venezuela. And in case anyone doubted, it confirms that it has often been more concerned with achieving U.S. foreign policy goals of regime change than providing actual humanitarian assistance. The report specifically investigated USAID's attempted shipment of humanitarian aid into Venezuela on February 23rd, 2019, just weeks after the Trump administration recognized unknown opposition lawmaker Juan Guido as president of the country. The Grayzone was in Venezuela at the time documenting how the aid stunt was actually a Trojan horse, an attempted invasion of Venezuela under the guise of a humanitarian pretext. While corporate media blasted Venezuela's government for refusing to let U.S. Trucks through its border. Even Senator Bernie Sanders offered a tacit endorsement of Trump's attempted invasion, calling on President Nicolas Maduro to allow a flagrant violation of Venezuela's sovereignty and let the U.S. infiltrate his country. But mistakes like this are totally understandable. I mean, why should a self-identified socialist like Bernie trust the word of a socialist government over Mike Pompeo's?

But now USAID itself has admitted that the stunt on the Columbia-Venezuela border was not aimed at improving the lives of Venezuelans, but at undermining the country's elected government and boosting the legitimacy of Guaido's coup. The internal audit found, quote, "Senior USAID officials stated that the agency's humanitarian programs were subject to foreign policy guidance from the National Security Council and State Department. This guidance may include strategic and tactical decisions that impact USAID ability to adhere to humanitarian principles and mitigate operational risks."

The inspector general revealed, quote, "in January and February 2019, the U.S. government identified USAID humanitarian assistance for Venezuelans as also serving as a key tool to elevate support to the Venezuela interim government and increase pressure on the Maduro regime."

The investigation not only exposed USAID mission in Venezuela to be less than charitable, it also expressed concern that it failed to impose fraud controls in order to appease the State

Department and a White House national security team led by this strange maniac, John Bolton, who even Trump said was likely to cause World Wars 3, 4 & 5. It stated that USAID partners in Colombia, quote, "did not assess the risks of fraud or develop risk mitigation strategies with anti fraud control activities because USAID guidelines did not require it and that USAID lacked a process for documenting directives from the office of the administrator on humanitarian programs that deviated from humanitarian principles and exceeded risk tolerance levels in order to implement National Security Council and State Department foreign policy guidance."

USAID's ability to implement proper fraud controls were further restricted by the organization's refusal to collaborate on the distribution of aid with the United Nations, even though they, quote, "had infrastructure in Venezuela to deliver humanitarian commodities because the interim government was concerned that the United Nations supported the Maduro regime."

The investigation concluded that preoccupation with legitimizing Guaido's phony government, quote, "reduced implementers ability to safeguard federal funds through control activities designed to prevent and detect known fraud vulnerabilities."

[And there would have been good reason to be concerned with the possibility of fraud when dealing with Venezuela's opposition. An investigation by the PANAM Post in the summer of 2019 found that Guido's allies spent some of the funds appropriated for the February 23rd aid stunt on lavish shopping sprees, drugs and of course, prostitutes. Who could have ever imagined this guy was up to no good? Oh, and who can forget that a Colombian narco gang responsible for murders and kidnappings played the role of Guaido's de facto uber drivers illegally smuggling him over the border? Clearly, these criminals were concerned with helping the Venezuelan people.

This new audit revealed USAID was more concerned with propping up Guaido and his free spending henchmen than looking out for the U.S. taxpayer. It also presented specific examples of USAID basing decisions on cynical U.S. policy objectives rather than the humanitarian needs of the Venezuelan people. It documented how the Office for the Administrator, quote, "issued a letter to the senior deputy assistant administrator for the Bureau of Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, emphasizing support to the interim government as a high priority for the U.S. government and directing the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance and Food for Peace to prepositioned humanitarian commodities outside of Venezuela." According to the inspector general: "That decision was", quote, "not driven by technical expertise or fully aligned with the Office of Inspector General, USAID and humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence and being based on needs assessments."

What's more, the report reveals that the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance and Food for Peace, quote, "spent approximately 2 million dollars to purchase and

transport 368 metric tons of humanitarian commodities to the Columbia-Venezuela border and Curacao from Feb. 2019 through April 2019. But "that not all of these humanitarian commodities were prepositioned based on needs assessments. For example, the transport of commodities included ready to use supplemental food that USAID had already determined was unnecessary because the nutritional status of Venezuelan children did not warrant its use at the time." The leftover aid was apparently distributed to people in need inside of Colombia, as well as eventually to Somalia. On top of that, the report revealed that the "Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance and Food for Peace, transported approximately 115 metric tons of commodities from the United States to the Colombia-Venezuela border through the Department of Defense in February and March of 2019." But, quote, "officials stated using military aircraft was not justified by operational needs as commercial transportation was available and less expensive."

The Department of Defense's unnecessary involvement makes it even more clear that the February 23rd incident was not a humanitarian mission, but a clear act of military aggression against the Venezuelan state. Who could be surprised, considering Trump's Venezuela envoy, Elliott Abrams, had previously stashed weapons shipments to the Nicaraguan Contras on humanitarian aid flights during his time as assistant Secretary of State?

And here was another dead giveaway that the supposed aid mission to Venezuela had nothing to do with humanitarian aid. It was run by USAID, a front for the CIA that has spent tens of millions on training and backing the Venezuelan opposition. It has done the same in Nicaragua, backing the elements responsible for the violent 2018 coup attempt in the country. USAID was even responsible for spreading polio throughout Pakistan when it ran cover for a fake CIA vaccination program designed to gather intelligence on Osama bin Laden's location. The list of USAID operations that harmed civilians in the global south is practically endless. Anyone even remotely familiar with this history should not have been surprised by the report by USAID's inspector general. Then, of course, there's the ultimate regime change stunt dressed up as a humanitarian aid mission, the Syrian White Helmets, which USAID funded to the tune of 30 million dollars or more.

So here's one recommendation the report didn't make, but which should be obvious. If the U.S. wants to actually aid the people of Venezuela, it could start by lifting the sanctions that are preventing them from having an economy leading to the deaths of tens of thousands. And while you're at it, why not just shut down USAID altogether?

**END**