

United States Senate

November 1, 2022

The Honorable Nicole Angarella
Acting Deputy Inspector General
Office of Inspector General
U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20523

Dear Acting Deputy Inspector General Angarella:

On October 18, 2022, the Biden administration announced it will provide \$2 million to fund disaster relief efforts in Cuba following Hurricane Ian, which devastated the island before making its catastrophic landfall in Florida. As the Inspector General of the U.S. Agency for International Development (“USAID”), it is your duty to monitor all of the agency’s actions, ensure its full compliance with the law and, importantly, demand and secure accountability to U.S. taxpayers for all monies spent by the agency. I write to urge vigorous and timely oversight of the distribution of these funds and ensure every cent of American taxpayer money goes solely and directly to the courageous Cuban people, not the illegitimate communist Cuban regime.

For years, I have been vocal in my opposition to the corrupt and oppressive Castro/Diaz-Canel regimes in Cuba, and I have fought the Biden administration’s appeasement of the island’s illegitimate government with every tool at my disposal. We know how horrific the regime’s crimes and abuses are. In 2021, President Biden’s own State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices¹ stated the following about the illegitimate, communist Cuban regime:

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: unlawful or arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings, by the government; forced disappearance by the government; torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment of political dissidents, detainees, and prisoners by security forces; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrests and detentions; political prisoners; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy; reprisals against family members for offenses allegedly committed by an individual; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media

¹ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/cuba/>

including violence or threats of violence against journalists, censorship, and criminal libel laws used against persons who criticized government leadership; serious restrictions on internet freedom; severe restrictions on the right of peaceful assembly and denial of freedom of association, including refusal to recognize independent associations; severe restrictions on religious freedom; restrictions on internal and external freedom of movement; inability of citizens to change their government peacefully through free and fair elections, including serious and unreasonable restrictions on political participation; serious government corruption; a lack of investigation of and accountability for gender-based violence; trafficking in persons, including forced labor; and outlawing of independent trade unions.

Government officials, at the direction of their superiors, committed most human rights abuses. As a matter of policy, officials failed to investigate or prosecute those who committed these abuses. Impunity for the perpetrators remained widespread, as was impunity for official corruption.

While the brave Cuban people continue to demand freedom and democracy, President Biden has shown that he is happy to ease sanctions on the regime and ignore the cries of “Patria y Vida” coming from Cubans both here in America, and on the island. That is why we must ensure these millions in American taxpayer dollars will not be used to prop up this savage, illegitimate communist Cuban regime and facilitate its continued repression. It is imperative that your office guarantees rules are followed with robust oversight and all funds be distributed exclusively to benefit the Cuban people.

I respectfully request you conduct a full audit and report of the aid distributed in Cuba pursuant President Biden’s announcement within 45 days. I further request your written responses to the following:


1. Please provide the list of non-governmental international organizations this money will be channeled through.
2. Please provide the amount of funding distributed to each non-governmental international organizations, and the specific purpose, project, or program designated for those funds.
3. Did USAID officials manage and oversee the distribution of funds and operations of the non-governmental international organizations on the ground in Cuba?
 - a. If not, why not?
 - b. If so, please provide a detailed report on how USAID was personally involved in the management and oversight on the ground.

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4. How will USAID ensure this aid is distributed exclusively to, and for the sole benefit of, the Cuban people?
5. How will the USAID prevent Cuban officials in any branch of government or the Communist Party from favoring themselves or place themselves ahead of non-government workers or non-Party members?

It is imperative that not one penny from the American taxpayer go toward benefiting the murderous Cuban Communist regime. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rick Scott". The signature is stylized with a large initial "R" and a prominent "S".

Rick Scott
United States Senator

Cc: The Honorable Antony Blinken, United States Secretary of State