

Ex-DOGE official rushed Trump?backed GHF grant despite staff warnings



Washington, July 10 (RHC)-- A top U.S. Department of State official waived nine mandatory counterterrorism and anti-fraud safeguards to rush a \$30 million award last month to a controversial Gaza aid group backed by the Trump administration and Israel, according to an internal memorandum.

Jeremy Lewin, a former Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) associate, signed off on the award despite an assessment in the memorandum that the GHF funding plan failed to meet required “minimum technical or budgetary standards”.

The June 24th action memorandum to Lewin was sent by Kenneth Jackson, also a former DOGE operative who serves as an acting deputy US Agency for International Development (USAID) administrator. The pair has overseen the agency’s dismantling and the merger of its functions into the State Department.

Lewin also overrode 58 objections that USAID staff experts wanted GHF to resolve in its application before the funds were approved, according to two sources familiar with the matter.

Lewin, who runs the State Department’s foreign aid programme, cleared the funds only five days after GHF filed its proposal on June 19, according to the June 24 “action memorandum” bearing his signature.

“Strong Admin support for this one,” Lewin wrote to USAID leaders in a June 25 email that urged disbursement of the funds by the agency “ASAP.” Lewin and Jackson have not issued comments on the matter. The documents underline the priority the Trump administration has given GHF despite the group’s lack of experience and the killing of hundreds of Palestinians near its Gaza aid distribution hubs.

GHF, which closely coordinates with the Israeli military, has acknowledged reports of violence, but claims they occurred beyond its operations area.

Lewin noted in the email that he had discussed the funds with aides to Steve Witkoff, President Donald Trump’s negotiator on Gaza, and Secretary of State Marco Rubio’s office. He acknowledged that authorising the funds would be controversial, writing, “I’m taking the bullet on this one.”

‘Inhumane and deadly’

The White House did not respond to requests for comment. Witkoff and Rubio did not reply to a question about whether they were aware of and supported the decision to waive the safeguards, according to the Reuters news agency.

The State Department said in a statement that the \$30m was approved under a legal provision allowing USAID to expedite awards in response to “emergency situations” to “meet humanitarian needs as expeditiously as possible”.

“The GHF award remains subject to rigorous oversight, including of GHF’s operations and finances,” the statement said. “As part of the award, GHF was subject to new control and reporting requirements.”

In response to a request for comment, a GHF spokesperson said, “Our model is specifically designed to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse. Every dollar we receive is safeguarded to ensure all resources — which will eventually include American taxpayer funds — reach the people of Gaza.” The spokesperson added that such requests for clarification from the US government about fund applications were routine.

Speaking about the nine conditions that were waived, the spokesperson said, “We are addressing each question as per regulations and normal procedure and will continue to do so as required.”

Gaza’s Health Ministry has said at least 743 Palestinians have been killed and more than 4,891 others injured while seeking assistance at GHF aid sites.

The GHF, which began operating in the bombarded Palestinian enclave in late May, has drawn widespread criticism amid multiple reports that its contractors, as well as Israeli forces, have opened fire on aid seekers.

Leading humanitarian and human rights groups have demanded the immediate closure of the GHF, which they accused of “forcing two million people into overcrowded, militarised zones where they face daily gunfire and mass casualties.” Amnesty International has described the group’s operations as an “inhumane and deadly militarised scheme,” while the UN insists that the model is violating humanitarian principles.

Palestinians under bombardment in Gaza, where a famine looms as Israel maintains a crippling blockade, have no choice but to seek aid from the GHF despite the risks involved.

[SOURCE: PRESS TV and NEWS AGENCIES]

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