

USAID Finances the Anti-War Movement. Open Letter to the Organizers of the Peace Event in Sarajevo 2014

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Dear Colleagues, dear Friends:

First of all, thank you very much for organizing the very interesting and important Peace Event in Sarajevo from June 6th to 9th, which you've called "[the biggest international peace event 2014](#)." You have put together a compelling program.

Weeks ago I purchased my flight tickets to Sarajevo. I looked forward to the meetings and discussions with colleagues. I was also grateful for the opportunity to show a film, "The Killing Floor," and to co-present a workshop about the first [Global Action Day against the Use of Drones for Surveillance & Killing](#) on October 4, 2014.

Only very recently did I notice that the donors for Peace Event Sarajevo include not only respected NGOs and foundations, but also the [French Foreign Ministry \(Ministère des Affaires Étrangères\)](#) and [USAID](#) (United States Agency for International Development).

How can this be? What do the governments of France and the United States hope to achieve by financing a peace event in Sarajevo? Have you perhaps heard this same concern from other conference participants?

After all, the U.S. is by far the most aggressive war power in the world, with [annual military spending that dwarfs that of all other countries](#) and with operations all over the planet in violation of the sovereignty of other nations and international law. Among European nations, [France is playing a particularly aggressive role](#), especially in Africa, and is working to persuade its European partners in NATO and the EU to join in more military ventures, often in the guise of "peacemaking" and "humanitarian" intervention.

Since I am a U.S. citizen, in the remainder of this letter I wish to explain more fully why I strongly object to the acceptance of a donation from USAID for a peace conference.

As you must know, USAID was founded at the height of the Cold War in 1961 and has played a controversial role in U.S. government destabilization efforts in various countries ever since, beginning with Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. The USAID website sets forth the mission of this agency:

"USAID is a U.S. Government agency that provides economic, development, and humanitarian assistance around the world [in support of the foreign policy goals](#) of the United States."

“Although technically an independent federal agency, USAID operates subject to the foreign policy [guidance of the President, Secretary of State, and the National Security Council](#).”

“Further, since 9/11, America’s foreign assistance programs have been more fully [integrated into the United States’ National Security Strategy](#).”

Over the years, many countries have expelled USAID. In 2012 [Russia expelled USAID](#) because of “attempts to influence political processes through its grants,” and Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua and Venezuela called on all the Latin American ALBA countries [to expel USAID](#).

It seems that these countries had good grounds to expel USAID. For example, in 2013 [Wikileaks exposed how USAID worked in Venezuela to destabilize its government](#). In April 2014, an investigative article by the [Associated Press exposed USAID attempts to destabilize Cuba](#) by setting up a Cuban Twitter service. Some 40,000 Cubans joined the Twitter service, unaware of the U.S. role in setting it up. They also were unaware that the U.S. government was monitoring their private Twitter communications. The U.S. had planned to subsequently intervene in Cuban social networks by sending messages to the Twitter subscribers with the aim of fomenting unrest in Cuba. Reporting on the Cuban Twitter scandal, the well-known U.S. independent news program Democracy Now asked: [“Is USAID the New CIA?”](#)

Nearer to Sarajevo, USAID has played a leading role in the U.S. “regime change” effort in the Ukraine. USAID of course supports the coup government in Kiev, which includes acknowledged fascists and has unleashed terror and death on countless Ukrainians. Over the last twenty years, USAID pumped \$1.8 billion into various Ukrainian projects, including [\\$1.25 million to subsidize the pro-Kiev media](#) in advance of the May 25th presidential election. In May 2014 [USAID brokered a U.S. government loan guarantee](#) of another billion dollars.

And here in Germany, [USAID is partnered with AFRICOM](#), the United States Africa Command in Stuttgart, which is part of the Pentagon and the central command for all U.S. military ventures in Africa, including intelligence gathering, illegal drone murders, clandestine special forces ventures, and providing training and assistance for African military forces allied with the U.S. The U.S. military activities in Africa are often conducted in close association with those of France, and the U.S. has provided France with Reaper drones for use in Africa. To summarize, USAID provides a “humanitarian” veneer for brutal neo-colonial policies in Africa. USAID is the glove on the massive U.S. military fist.

Acceptance of the USAID donation damages the reputation of Peace Event Sarajevo 2014 and of its participants, and undermines the conference’s credibility.

Acceptance of the donation also helps the nefarious USAID to spruce up its image through association with well-respected peace activists, so that USAID can continue to “talk of peace” while preparing wars.

Peace Event Sarajevo 2014 should immediately return the USAID donation.

If for some reason it is not possible to return the USAID donation, Peace Event Sarajevo organizers should at the beginning of the conference disclose to all conference participants

all details concerning the USAID donation, including how it came about, its amount, and any donor letters, contracts or correspondence.

Furthermore, Peace Event Sarajevo organizers must assure conference participants that their contact data and other personal information have not been and will not be made available to USAID for future schemes to influence social networks as was attempted by USAID in the Cuban Twitter project.

UPDATE (June 8, 2014):

The organizers of Peace Event Sarajevo recently removed USAID from the list of donors posted on their website under:

<http://www.peaceeventsarajevo2014.eu/our-partners/articles/our-donors-are.html>.

But the USAID financing is still listed on page four of this downloadable program:

http://www.peaceeventsarajevo2014.eu/tl_files/a_downloads/program_peace_event.pdf.

As far as I know, the organizers have not returned the financing from USAID, nor have they so far been open to a public discussion regarding this financing. Many participants in the Peace Event have expressed concern about the USAID and French Foreign Ministry financing, and several petitions are circulating. Two Members of the German Parliament, Heike Hänsel and Alexander Neu, have written to the organizers to express their concerns about the USAID financing.

Many conference participants were shocked upon arrival to see the ca. 200 local Bosnian volunteers for the event all wearing T-shirts with “USAID Peace Event Sarajevo 2014” printed on them. The Bosnian version of the “Peace Event” newspaper has USAID prominently displayed on the first page and other donors only in very fine print on the back page. It seems that among the population in Bosnia, USAID was promoted as virtually the only donor for Peace Event Sarajevo.

USAID is hardly a “neutral” source of financing for a peace event in Sarajevo. The continued US military presence in Bosnia is controversial here and is particularly resented by the large Bosnian Serbian minority of ca. 30%. Several Bosnians I have spoken with in the two days I have been here have complained that they feel as though under a continuing US occupation. They are also dependent on USAID as virtually the sole source available to them for cultural and other projects.

The US has a huge embassy in Sarajevo. The US military base Camp Eagle in Bosnia would provide essential military infrastructure for any US and NATO military intervention in Ukraine. [The George W. Bush Presidency is reported to have used Camp Eagle](#) for the secret extrajudicial detention of ghost prisoners, which (along with Camp Bondsteel in nearby Kosovo) has been called a smaller version of Guantanamo.

Elsa Rassbach (in Sarajevo)

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