

Donald Trump halts U.S. funding for World Health Organization



Washington, April 14 (RHC)-- The U.S. will suspend funding to the World Health Organization while it reviews the agency's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, President Donald Trump announced Tuesday, claiming the international health agency made mistakes that "caused so much death" as the coronavirus spread across the globe.

"Today I'm instructing my administration to halt funding of the World Health Organization while a review is conducted to assess the World Health Organization's role in severely mismanaging and covering up the spread of the coronavirus," Trump said at a White House press conference.

It's unclear exactly what mechanism Trump intends to use to withhold WHO funding, much of which is appropriated by Congress. The president typically does not have the authority to unilaterally redirect congressional funding.

One option might be for Trump to use powers granted to the president under the Impoundment Control Act of 1974. Under this statute, the president may propose to withhold congressional funds, but it requires congressional approval within 45 days. Absent this approval, the funds must be returned to their original, congressionally mandated purpose after 45 days.

Trump had first threatened last week to withhold funds from WHO, saying that WHO “pushed China’s misinformation about the virus, saying it wasn’t communicable and there was no need for travel bans.”

In response to Trump’s attacks last week, WHO’s top official urged leaders against politicizing the outbreak “if you don’t want to have many more body bags.”

“At the end of the day, the people belong to all political parties. The focus of all political parties should be to save their people, please do not politicize this virus,” Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a fiery address on April 8. He called for unity across the globe, saying the virus will exploit cracks in political parties, religious groups or between different nations to spread even more widely.

“If you want to be exploited and if you want to have many more body bags, then you do it. If you don’t want many more body bags, then you refrain from politicizing it.”

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