

Funding would be administered by USAID instead of the UN

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – U.S. Rep. Mike Coffman (R-Colorado) recently offered an amendment to the Supplemental Appropriations Bill, H.R. 2346, that would remove \$119 million in humanitarian aid for the war-ravaged Gaza Strip from under United Nations control and place it under the United States Agency for International Aid's (USAID) jurisdiction.

“The United Nations has a history of poor oversight and corruption with regard to international aid,” Coffman said. “I worry much of this money will end up in the hands of the terrorist organization Hamas.”

Currently, the \$119 million would be appropriated to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) which would dispense the money to Gaza under its own discretion. UNRWA was originally established in response to the 1948 Arab-Israeli War as a temporary program but has been repeatedly renewed by the UN General Assembly for the past fifty years.

In March, Congressman Coffman, along with other Members of Congress, asked Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to withhold \$300 million of pledged aid to the Gaza Strip.

“Giving the money to the Palestinians residing in the Gaza Strip is no different than giving the money directly to Hamas,” Coffman said in his news release. “Hamas needs to understand that they will not benefit from continually firing rockets into Israel.”

In 2004, Peter Hansen, then commissioner-general of UNRWA, remarked that, “I am sure that there are Hamas members on the UNRWA payroll, and I don't see that as a crime. Hamas, as a political organization, does not mean that every member is a militant, and we do not do political vetting and exclude people from one persuasion as against another.”

Hamas is currently the governing authority in the Gaza Strip. The group is on the U.S. State

Department's list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations and is responsible for many attacks on the state of Israel.

"American taxpayer dollars should be spent by American agencies," Coffman said. "Giving full responsibility of American aid to the UN is asking for trouble by putting American money in the hands of Hamas."