



**OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR
AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION**

2017 CHIEF FOIA OFFICER REPORT

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SIGAR

Office of the Special Inspector General
for Afghanistan Reconstruction

NARRATIVE

Congress created the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) in 2008 to provide independent and objective oversight of the programs and operations funded with amounts appropriated or otherwise made available for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. SIGAR promotes policies designed to provide economy, efficiency, and effectiveness and prevent waste, fraud and abuse in such programs and operations. SIGAR also keeps the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense fully informed on problems and deficiencies relating to such programs and operations and the necessity for corrective actions. Afghanistan reconstruction includes any major contract, grant, agreement, or other funding mechanism entered into by any department or agency of the U.S. government that involves the use of amounts appropriated or otherwise made available for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. SIGAR headquarter offices are located in Arlington, Virginia, with approximately 30-40 full-time staff on long-term assignments in Afghanistan, where we conduct audits, inspections, criminal, and civil investigations relating to programs and operations supported with U.S. reconstruction dollars.

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552, reflects our nation's fundamental commitment to open government. SIGAR's Office of Privacy, Records, and Disclosures (PRD) receives the agency's incoming FOIA requests and is the primary component responsible for processing them. The office consistently tracks the status of each request, routinely communicates status updates to each requester, and can be reached at sigar.pentagon.gen-coun.mbx.foia@mail.mil or (703) 545-6046. PRD may also be contacted for questions pertaining to the FOIA process and makes every effort to respond to inquiries within 24 hours.

SIGAR has taken several steps to greater utilize technology. First, all relevant records are handled electronically – this allows SIGAR to easily make necessary redactions and scrub for sensitive information with publishing software. We also ensure that records documenting the lifecycle of each request – from initial receipt to final delivery – are properly retained as required by 44 U.S.C. Chapter 31. Additionally, SIGAR has considered FOIA-specific software solutions, but decided that the size of the agency and low volume of requests made such enterprise-level products impractical.

To further ensure that an effective system is in place, basic agency-wide training emphasizing the importance of the FOIA is provided to employees. This training reinforces how the FOIA applies to all records, the requirement to reasonably search for responsive records, and the consequences of failing to comply with the law. It has been incorporated into annual records management training and is administered by our FOIA experts, who themselves consistently review the latest court decisions and DOJ's guidance.

Typically, tasked directorates/offices send responsive documents for processing within one business day and PRD consults with the Office of General Counsel (OGC) as needed within five business

THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552

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days. This is an exceptional turn-around time and is one of the several advantages of being a small agency. In addition, because our directorates/offices routinely have subject matter experts available for clarification and input as needed, we can confidently commit to transparency while redacting only what must be withheld. When responding to requests, we often invoke the law enforcement exemptions. Exemptions (b)(5), (b)(6), (b)(7)(A), and (b)(7)(C) are among the most commonly used.

CONCLUSION

We hope this narrative underlines that while SIGAR is committed to protecting sensitive information, we apply the presumption of openness. SIGAR products are proactively made available for public inspection at <https://www.sigar.mil/contact/foia> and <https://www.sigar.mil/allreports>. In advocating transparency, we have successfully implemented the President's FOIA Memorandum (March 19, 2009) and the DOJ's 2009 FOIA Guidelines.

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