



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

**2018 CHIEF FOIA OFFICER REPORT**

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## NARRATIVE

Congress created the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) in 2008 to provide independent and objective oversight of funds made available for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. SIGAR conducts audits, inspections, civil, and criminal investigations of programs supported with U.S. reconstruction dollars, and approximately 40 full-time staff are on long-term assignments in 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 of deficiencies and the necessities for corrective action.

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C § 552, reflects SIGAR's commitment to an open government. Especially as an IG, SIGAR benefits when its findings and inquiries are made public. A well-established FOIA program builds public trust and confidence in SIGAR and demonstrates the importance of its programs. Moreover, the FOIA can help fulfill SIGAR's mission by revealing costs or problems that may not have been articulated, and by providing the agency with unique insight into the public's interest in our activities.

To ensure that the agency has an effective FOIA program, we have incorporated an overview of the FOIA into our annual records management training for all employees. Specifically, the FOIA training underlines the importance and purpose of the law, every employee's obligation and requirement to comply, and where and how to submit a request. The training is administered by the Public Information Manager, a FOIA expert who consistently reviews the latest court decisions and DOJ's guidance.

A major improvement was made in FY2017. There existed a records retention issue with full-time staff in Kabul who were separating from the agency. SIGAR's headquarters in Arlington, VA, was unable to properly assess whether some of these records were being properly retained, and that issue has since been rectified. We are now able to guarantee that any FOIA involving such records will be appropriately retrieved and reviewed.

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

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We are also happy to report receiving 36% more requests in FY2017 (38) than in FY2016 (28). This demonstrates the public's increasing interest in our activities, and although we currently feel that FOIA-specific, enterprise-level solutions are unnecessary, we will continue monitoring the practicality of such solutions.

Being that we are a small agency and necessarily obtain copies of documents from other agencies, FOIA requests can often involve lengthy consultations. In addition, because our teams regularly conduct forensic reviews and criminal investigations, the law enforcement exemptions may be invoked. These factors can make it challenging to ensure that requests are settled promptly, but we make every effort to work in a spirit of cooperation with requesters by keeping them informed and remaining available.

## CONCLUSION

We hope this narrative underlines that while SIGAR is committed to applying the presumption of openness. Many of our products are available for public inspection at [www.sigar.mil/contact/foia](http://www.sigar.mil/contact/foia) and [www.sigar.mil/allreports](http://www.sigar.mil/allreports), and we actively work to ensure that products of potential public interest are proactively made available.