

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 8, 2023

## VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable John Sopko  
Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction

Dear Special Inspector General Sopko:

Congress has a constitutional responsibility to conduct oversight of government programs to ensure that the use of taxpayer dollars is not subject to waste, fraud, and abuse. As part of that oversight, government must learn from its mistakes so that they are not repeated. Doing so will help ensure that tax dollars are used wisely in the future. In that light, we owe it to future generations to understand and explain wasteful reconstruction spending in Afghanistan and apply those lessons to future reconstruction efforts.

Your oversight of the U.S.-taxpayer-funded, \$146 billion reconstruction effort in Afghanistan has unearthed countless incidents of waste, fraud, and abuse.<sup>1</sup> It is important to learn exactly how the lessons of Afghanistan can be applied to current and future U.S. assistance in conflict-affected environments, particularly Ukraine. Given your oversight role, I am writing to better understand the lessons learned from conducting Afghanistan reconstruction oversight that Congress can apply to other reconstruction efforts to ensure taxpayer money is used more efficiently in future efforts.

Please address the following questions no later than May 22, 2023:

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<sup>1</sup> Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *2023 High-Risk List*, (2023) <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/spotlight/2023-High-Risk-List.pdf>; Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *Why The Afghan Security Forces Collapsed*, (Feb. 2023) <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/evaluations/SIGAR-23-16-IP.pdf>; Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, SIGAR 22-35-IP Evaluation Report, *Final Report: Theft of Funds from Afghanistan: An Assessment of Allegations Concerning President Ghani and Former Senior Afghan Officials*, (Aug. 2022) <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/evaluations/SIGAR-22-35-IP.pdf>; Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*, (Apr. 30, 2022) <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2022-04-30qr.pdf> at 33; Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *2021 High-Risk List*, (2021) <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/spotlight/2021-High-Risk-List.pdf>; Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *What We Need to Learn: Lessons from Twenty Years of Afghanistan Reconstruction*, (Aug. 2021) <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/SIGAR-21-46-LL.pdf>; Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *Private Sector Development and Economic Growth: Lessons From the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan*, (Apr. 2018) <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/SIGAR-18-38-LL.pdf>; Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *Corruption in Conflict: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan*, (Sep. 2016) <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/SIGAR-16-58-LL.pdf>.

1. What are the key challenges and obstacles to successful reconstruction in a warzone? How have you addressed these issues in Afghanistan?
2. What best practices have you developed for monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of reconstruction programs? How can these practices be applied elsewhere?
3. What strategies have you found to be most effective in promoting transparency and accountability in the use of reconstruction funds? How can these strategies be adapted for use elsewhere?
4. What lessons have you learned about the importance of working with local communities and stakeholders in reconstruction efforts? How can these lessons be applied elsewhere?
5. What lessons have the U.S. government, allied governments, and non-government observers identified for the reconstruction of Afghanistan that should be adapted for use elsewhere?

I look forward to receiving your response. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact my Committee staff at (202) 224-0642.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley  
Ranking Member  
Committee on the Budget