



SIGAR

Testimony

Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives

U.S. Lessons Learned in Afghanistan

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January 15, 2020

Chairman Engel, Ranking Member McCaul, Members of the Committee:

It is a pleasure and an honor to testify before you today. This is the 22nd time I have presented testimony to Congress since I was appointed the Special Inspector General nearly eight years ago. SIGAR was created by the Congress in 2008 to combat waste, fraud and abuse in the U.S. reconstruction effort in Afghanistan. We are the only one of the 73 independent federal inspectors general that is not housed within a larger government agency. We have the authority to oversee any federal agency that has played a role in the Afghanistan reconstruction effort.

So far we have published nearly 600 audits, inspections, and other reports. SIGAR's law enforcement agents have conducted more than 1,000 criminal and civil investigations that have led to more than 130 convictions of individuals who have committed crimes. Combined, SIGAR's audit, investigative, and other work has resulted in cost savings to the taxpayer of over \$3 billion.

Although I have testified numerous times before Congress, today is the first time that I have been asked to directly address SIGAR's unique Lessons Learned Program and what we have learned from it and the rest of our work. In light of recent attention, I am particularly pleased to have this opportunity to discuss some of our significant findings about the reconstruction efforts in what has become our nation's longest war. But before I talk about what our Lessons Learned Program does, I want to clear up any misconceptions by defining what it does *not* do.

The Genesis and Purpose of the Lessons Learned Program

As with everything produced by SIGAR, the Lessons Learned Program's mandate is limited to the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Our Lessons Learned program is not and never was intended to be a new version of the Pentagon Papers, or to turn snappy one-liners and quotes into headlines or sound bites. We do not make broad assessments of U.S. diplomatic and military strategies or warfighting; nor are we producing an oral history of the United States' involvement in Afghanistan. More important, our Lessons Learned Program does not address the broader policy debate of whether or not our country should be in Afghanistan.

Our Lessons Learned Program produces unclassified, publically available, balanced, and thoroughly researched appraisals of various aspects of U.S. reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. Unlike recent press reporting, it also makes actionable recommendations for the Congress and executive branch agencies and, where appropriate, offers matters for consideration for the Afghan government and our coalition allies.

Some may criticize us for using "dense bureaucratic prose" in our Lessons Learned reports, but we are not trying to win a Pulitzer Prize. Rather, we are focused on conducting original research and analysis aimed at providing an independent and objective examination of U.S. reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, and to make practical recommendations to Congress and the executive branch agencies.

Put simply, we are striving to distill something of lasting and useful significance from our 18 years of engagement in Afghanistan. Considering the over 2,300 American service members who have died there and the \$133 billion (and counting) taxpayer dollars spent on reconstruction alone, it would be a dereliction of duty not to try to learn from this experience. With our unique interagency jurisdiction, Congress gave SIGAR an extraordinary opportunity to do this work.

Moreover, the need is urgent: in Afghanistan, most military, embassy, and civilian personnel rotate out of country after a year or less. This means that new people are constantly arriving, all with the best of intentions, but with little or no knowledge of what their predecessors were doing, the problems they faced, or what worked and what didn't work. SIGAR's Lessons Learned Program is a unique source of institutional memory to help address this "annual lobotomy."

Given this reality, it is understandably difficult for individual agencies to see the forest for the trees—and even if they could, such efforts have a way of sinking into obscurity. For example, shortly after I became the Inspector General, my staff uncovered a USAID-commissioned lessons learned study from 1988 entitled "A Retrospective Review of U.S. Assistance to Afghanistan: 1950 to 1979." Many of the report's lessons were still relevant and could have made a real impact if they had been taken into account in the early 2000s. Unfortunately, we could not find anyone at USAID or the Department of State who was even aware of the report's existence, let alone its findings.

The genesis of our Lessons Learned Program occurred almost as soon as I was appointed Inspector General in 2012. Early in my tenure, it became apparent that the problems we were finding in our audits and inspections—whether it was poorly constructed infrastructure, rampant corruption, inadequately trained Afghan soldiers, or a growing narcotics economy—elicited the same basic response from members of Congress, agency officials, and policymakers alike. "What does it mean?" they would ask me. "What can we learn from this?"

In an attempt to answer these questions, and to make our audits and other reports more relevant to policymakers in Washington and our military and civilian staff in Afghanistan, I asked my staff in 2013 to develop a series of guiding queries aimed at helping Congress and the Administration improve reconstruction operations. These questions—SIGAR's first attempt to develop lessons from the U.S. reconstruction effort—were incorporated by Congress in the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2015 as a requirement for initiating infrastructure projects in areas of Afghanistan inaccessible to U.S. government personnel. They continue to inform our work:

- Does the project or program clearly contribute to our national interests or strategic objectives?
- Does the recipient country want it or need it?

- Has the project been coordinated with other U.S. agencies, with the recipient government, and with other international donors?
- Do security conditions permit effective implementation and oversight?
- Does the project have adequate safeguards to detect, deter, and mitigate corruption?
- Does the recipient government have the financial resources, technical capacity, and political will to sustain the project?
- Have implementing agencies established meaningful, measurable metrics for determining successful project outcomes?

These questions were useful, and they remain relevant. But the agencies named in our reports complained that we were too critical. Our reports failed to put their efforts in context, they said, and therefore we were not acknowledging their successes. Accordingly, on March 25, 2013, I sent letters to the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, asking them to each provide me with a list of their agency's ten most successful Afghanistan reconstruction projects and programs, as well as a list of the ten least successful, along with a detailed explanation of how these projects and programs were evaluated and the specific criteria used for each.

The answers we received from the agencies were informative, but—as you can see from Appendix I—they failed to list or discuss each agency's 10 most and 10 least successful projects or programs. As my letter of July 5, 2013 noted, this failure limited our understanding of how government agencies evaluated and perceived both success and failure, which was critical for formulating lessons learned from past reconstruction projects and programs.

It is perhaps understandable that agencies would want to show their programs in the best possible light—and it is certainly understandable that the private firms, nongovernmental organizations, and multilateral institutions that implemented those programs would want to demonstrate success. Yet a recurring challenge to any accurate assessment has been the pervasive tendency to overstate positive results, with little, if any, evidence to back up those claims.

Unfortunately, many of the claims that State, USAID, and others have made over time simply do not stand up to scrutiny. For example, in a 2014 agency newsletter, the then-USAID administrator stated that “today, 3 million girls and 5 million boys are enrolled in school—compared to just 900,000 when the Taliban ruled Afghanistan.” But when SIGAR subsequently conducted an audit of U.S. efforts to support primary and secondary education in Afghanistan, we found that USAID was receiving its enrollment data from the Afghan government and had taken few, if any, steps to attempt to verify the data's accuracy, even though independent third parties and even the Afghan Ministry of Education had called the numbers into question. And because USAID education support programs lacked effective metrics, it could not show how U.S. taxpayer dollars had contributed to the increased enrollment it claimed.

In that same agency newsletter, the then-USAID administrator said that since the fall of the Taliban, “child mortality has been cut [in Afghanistan] by 60 percent, maternal mortality has declined by 80 percent, and access to health services has been increased by 90 percent. As a result, Afghanistan has experienced the largest increase in life expectancy and the largest decreases in maternal and child deaths of any country in the world.” However, when SIGAR issued an audit of Afghanistan’s health sector in 2017, we found that while USAID publicly reported a 22-year increase in Afghan life expectancy from 2002 to 2010, USAID did not disclose that the baseline it used for comparison came from a World Health Organization (WHO) report that could only make an estimate because of limited data. A later WHO report showed only a 6-year increase in Afghan life expectancy for males and an 8-year increase for females between 2002 and 2010—a far cry from the 22 years that USAID claimed. As for the maternal mortality claims, SIGAR’s audit found that USAID’s 2002 baseline data was from a survey that was conducted in only four of Afghanistan’s then-360 districts.

Likewise, a SIGAR audit into U.S. government programs to assist women in Afghanistan found that “although the Department of Defense, Department of State, and USAID reported gains and improvements in the status of Afghan women . . . SIGAR found that there was no comprehensive assessment available to confirm that these gains were the direct result of specific U.S. efforts.” And while State and USAID collectively reported spending \$850 million on 17 projects that were designed in whole or in part to support Afghan women, they could not tell our auditors how much of that money actually went to programs that supported Afghan women.

Another SIGAR audit looked into the more than \$1 billion that the United States had spent supporting rule-of-law programs in Afghanistan. Shockingly, we found that the U.S. actually seemed to be moving backwards as time went along. Our audit found that while the 2009 U.S. rule-of-law strategy for Afghanistan contained 27 specific performance measures, the 2013 strategy contained no performance measures at all. If you have no metrics for success, how can you tell if you’re succeeding?

While honesty and transparency are always important, when government agencies overstate the positive and overlook flaws in their methodologies or accountability mechanisms, it has real public policy implications. The American people and their elected representatives eventually start asking why, if things are going so well, are we still there? Why do we continue to spend so much money? While it may not be as headline-worthy, in the long run, honesty gives a development undertaking a far better chance at success: People can understand it will take time, patience, and continued effort to make a real difference. If there was no SIGAR, one may wonder how many of these discrepancies would have ever come to light.

In some ways, I would argue that the agencies’ reluctance to list their successes and failures is understandable. As the old saying goes, success has many parents, but failure is an orphan. Nowhere is this more true than in Afghanistan, where success is fleeting and failure is common. That is all the more reason why it is crucial to be honest with ourselves and to recognize that not

everything is successful. In other words, for honest analysis, failure may be an orphan, but it also can be a great teacher.

It was in response to this refusal by the agencies to be candid about their successes and failures, and at the suggestion of a number of prominent officials, including Ambassador Ryan Crocker and General John Allen, that SIGAR formally launched its Lessons Learned Program in 2014, with the blessing of the National Security Council staff. The Lessons Learned Program's mandate is to:

- Show what has and has not worked over the course of the U.S. reconstruction experience in Afghanistan
- Offer detailed and actionable recommendations to policymakers and executive agencies that are relevant to current and future reconstruction efforts
- Present unbiased, fact-based, and accessible reports to the public and key stakeholders
- Respond to the needs of U.S. implementing agencies, both in terms of accurately capturing their efforts and providing timely and actionable guidance for future efforts
- Share our findings with policymakers, senior executive branch officials, members of the Congress, and their staffs
- Provide subject matter expertise to SIGAR senior leaders and other SIGAR directorates
- Share our findings in conferences and workshops convened by U.S. government agencies, foreign governments, international organizations, NGOs, think tanks, and academic institutions

By doing so, SIGAR's Lessons Learned Program also fulfills our statutory obligation, set forth in the very first section of our authorizing statute, "to provide . . . recommendations on policies designed to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness [of reconstruction programs in Afghanistan] and to prevent and detect waste, fraud, and abuse in such programs and operations." SIGAR is also required to inform the Secretaries of State and Defense about "problems and deficiencies relating to the administration of such programs and operations and the necessity for and progress on corrective action."¹ In addition, the Inspector General Act authorizes SIGAR "to make such investigations and reports . . . as are, in the judgment of the Inspector General, necessary or desirable."²

How SIGAR's Lessons Learned Program Works

The Lessons Learned team is composed of subject-matter experts with considerable experience working and living in Afghanistan, as well as a staff of experienced research analysts. Our

¹ National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2008, Pub. Law No. 112-181 (Jan. 28, 2008), § 1229(a)(2). A similar mandate that applies to all inspectors general is contained in Section 2 of the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended. See 5 U.S.C. App. 3, § 2

² Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, § 6(a)(2), 5 U.S.C. App. § 6(a)(2).

analysts come from a variety of backgrounds: some have served in the U.S. military, while others have worked at State, USAID, in the intelligence community, with other federal agencies, or with implementing partners or policy research groups.

As the program was starting in 2014, our Lessons Learned team consulted with a range of experts and current and former U.S. officials to determine what topics we should first explore. We decided to focus on two areas of the reconstruction effort that had the largest price tags: building the Afghan security forces (now more than \$70 billion) and counternarcotics (now about \$9 billion). We also chose to examine a crosscutting problem that SIGAR already had plenty of experience in uncovering, and which senior officials consistently urged us to tackle: corruption and its corrosive effects on the entire U.S. mission. The fourth topic was private sector development and economic growth—because we know that a stronger Afghan economy is necessary to lasting peace and stability, and without it, U.S. reconstruction efforts are largely unsustainable.

The topics of other reports have sometimes flowed logically from previous reports. For instance, our 2019 investigation of the tangled military chain of command, *Divided Responsibility*, had its origin in what we had learned two years earlier in our report on reconstructing the Afghan security and national defense forces. Other report topics come from brainstorming sessions with groups of subject matter experts and information my staff and I glean from our frequent trips to Afghanistan. For example, our latest lessons learned report, on reintegration of enemy combatants, as well as our soon-to-be-released report on elections, were specifically suggested by the prior Resolute Support commander and the outgoing U.S. Ambassador in Afghanistan.

SIGAR's lessons learned reports are not drawn from merely anecdotal evidence or based solely on our personal areas of expertise. Our Lessons Learned Program staff has access to the largest single source of information and expertise on Afghanistan reconstruction—namely, the information and expertise provided by other SIGAR departments: our Audits and Inspections Directorate, Investigations Directorate, the Office of Special Projects, and our Research and Analysis Directorate (RAD). For example, RAD is responsible for compiling the quarterly reports we are required by law to submit to Congress. It serves as our in-house think tank, collecting and analyzing vital data on a quarterly basis to keep Congress and the American public current on reconstruction in Afghanistan. To date, SIGAR has produced 45 publicly available quarterly reports, which provide detailed descriptions of all reconstruction-related obligations, expenditures, and revenues, as well as an overview of the reconstruction effort as a whole. SIGAR's quarterly reports constitute the largest and most detailed collection of data and analysis on reconstruction activities in Afghanistan, and are viewed by experts both in and out of government as the go-to source for information on reconstruction. SIGAR's quarterly reports were the first to question the accuracy of various claims of progress in Afghanistan, ranging from the accuracy of Afghan troop numbers to the number of children actually attending school to the state of the Afghan economy.

Our Audits and Inspections Directorate is another extraordinary source of information and assistance to our Lessons Learned Program. Since 2009, SIGAR has issued 358 audits, inspections and other reports, and has more auditors, inspectors, and engineers on the ground in Afghanistan than USAID OIG, State OIG, and DOD OIG combined. In a unique innovation, SIGAR also has a cooperative agreement to work with an independent Afghan oversight organization, giving SIGAR an unparalleled ability to go “outside the wire” to places where travel is unsafe for U.S. government employees. SIGAR’s auditors and inspectors determine whether infrastructure projects have been properly constructed, used, and maintained, and also conduct forensic reviews of reconstruction funds managed by State, DOD, and USAID to identify anomalies that may indicate fraud.

Our Investigations Directorate conducts criminal and civil investigations of waste, fraud, and abuse relating to programs and operations supported with U.S. funds. SIGAR has full federal law enforcement authority, and pursues criminal prosecutions, civil actions, forfeitures, monetary recoveries, and suspension and debarments. SIGAR has more investigators on the ground in Afghanistan than any other oversight agency. Our investigators regularly work with other law enforcement organizations, including other IG offices, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the FBI, and others. Major investigations conducted by the Investigations Directorate include contract fraud, diversion of U.S. government loans, money laundering, and corruption. A very significant part of this work has been focused on fuel, the “liquid gold” of Afghanistan. The Investigations Directorate has provided valuable information to our Lessons Learned Program analysts, a prime example being the *Corruption in Conflict* report.

Lastly, our Office of Special Projects examines emerging issues and delivers prompt, actionable reports to federal agencies and Congress. This office was created in response to requests by agencies operating in Afghanistan for actionable insights and information on important issues that could be produced more quickly than a formal audit. Special Projects reports cover a wide range of programs and activities to fulfill SIGAR’s legislative mandate to protect taxpayers and have proven useful to the Lessons Learned Program. For example, its examination of programs run by DOD’s now-defunct Task Force for Business and Stability Operations was a major impetus for the Lessons Learned Program report on *Private Sector Development and Economic Growth*.

While the documentary evidence in our lessons learned reports tells a story, it cannot substitute for the experience, knowledge, and wisdom of people who participated in the Afghanistan reconstruction effort. For that reason, our analysts have conducted well over 600 interviews at last count—with experts in academia and research institutions; current and former civilian and military officials in our own government, the Afghan government, and other donor country governments; implementing partners and contractors; and members of civil society. Interviewees have ranged from ambassadors to airmen. These interviews provide valuable insights into the rationale behind decisions, debates within and between agencies, and frustrations that spanned the years. The information we glean from them is used to guide us in our inquiry, and we strive

to cross-reference interviewees' claims with the documentary evidence, or if that is not possible, with other interviews.

Our choice of which interviews or quotes to use is based on our analysts' judgment of whether it captures an observation or insight that is more broadly representative and consistent with the weight of evidence from various sources—not whether it is simply a colorful expression of opinion. Lessons Learned Program analysts must adhere to strict professional guidelines regarding the sourcing of their findings, in accordance with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation (commonly referred to as “the Blue Book.”)³

While some of our interviewees do not mind being quoted, others have a well-founded fear of retribution from political or tribal enemies, employers, governments, or international donors who are paying their salaries. These persons often request that we not reveal their names. Honoring those requests for confidentiality is a bedrock principle at SIGAR, for three reasons. First, it is required by law—specifically, by the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended.⁴ Second, there are obvious humanitarian and security concerns. Finally, without the ability to shield our sources, we simply would not be able to do our work. In fact, at our last tally, more than 80 percent of those interviewed for the Lessons Learned Program reports requested their names not be disclosed.

Another important part of the quality control process used by SIGAR's Lessons Learned Program is an external peer review. For each of our reports, we seek and receive feedback on the draft report from a group of subject matter experts, who often have significant experience working in Afghanistan. These experts are drawn from universities, think tanks, and the private sector, and often include retired senior military officers and diplomats. Each group of experts is tailored to a particular topic, and they provide thoughtful, detailed comments.

Over the course of producing any one report, Lessons Learned Program analysts also routinely engage with officials at USAID, State, DOD, and other agencies to familiarize them with the team's preliminary findings, lessons, and recommendations. Our analysts also solicit formal and informal feedback to improve our understanding of the key issues and recommendations, as viewed by each agency. The agencies are then given an opportunity to formally review and comment on the final draft of every report, after which the team usually meets with agency representatives to discuss their feedback firsthand. Our purpose here is not to avoid all points of conflict with the agencies we write about, but to make sure we are presenting issues fairly and in context. Although Lessons Learned Program teams incorporate agencies' comments where

³ The Blue Book standards can be found at <https://www.ignet.gov/content/quality-standards>.

⁴ Section 7(b) of the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, prohibits SIGAR from disclosing the identity of a source who provides information to SIGAR. Section 8M(b)(2)(B) of the Act prohibits SIGAR from disclosing the identity of anyone who reports waste, fraud, and abuse.

appropriate, the analysis, conclusions, and recommendations of our reports remain SIGAR's own.

When our reports are published, our next job is vitally important: getting the word out. We have no intention of producing reports that would suffer the same fate as that well-informed, but sadly unread, 1988 USAID report our staff discovered in Kabul. Until our findings and recommendations circulate widely to relevant decision-makers and result in action and change, we know we are not producing lessons learned; we are merely recording lessons observed. Each of our reports is the subject of a major launch event, usually at a research institution or think tank, designed to draw attention to reach policymakers, practitioners, and the public. Our reports are also posted online, both as a downloadable PDF and in a user-friendly interactive format.

Our analysts follow up by providing lectures and briefings to civilian and military reconstruction practitioners, researchers, and students at schools and training institutions worldwide. Our reports have become course material at the U.S. Army War College; our analysts have lectured or led workshops at the Foreign Service Institute, Davidson College, the National Defense University, Yale, and Princeton. A more extensive discussion of our ongoing outreach program and the successful use of the reports by U.S. agencies is found in the next section.

What We Have Accomplished: Seven Lessons Learned Reports

To date, the Lessons Learned Program has published seven reports. Two more reports—one on elections in Afghanistan and another on the monitoring and evaluation of U.S. government contracts there—will be published in the early part of 2020. After those, we expect to issue a report on women's empowerment in Afghanistan and another on policing and corrections later in 2020 or early 2021 at the latest. Following are brief summaries of our published reports, the full versions of which can be found on SIGAR's website.⁵

- *Corruption in Conflict: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan*, published in September 2016, examined how the U.S. government understood the risks of corruption in Afghanistan, how the U.S. response to corruption evolved, and the effectiveness of that response. We found that corruption substantially undermined the U.S. mission in Afghanistan from the very beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom. We concluded that failure to effectively address the problem means U.S. reconstruction programs will at best continue to be subverted by systemic corruption and, at worst, will fail. The lesson is that anticorruption efforts need to be at the center of planning and policymaking for contingencies. The U.S. government should not exacerbate corruption by flooding a weak economy with too much money too quickly, with too little oversight. U.S. agencies should know whom they are doing business with, and avoid empowering highly corrupt actors. Strong monitoring and evaluation systems must be in place for assistance, and the

⁵ <https://www.sigar.mil/lessonslearned/>

U.S. government should maintain consistent pressure on the host government for critical reforms.

- *Reconstructing the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan*, published in September 2017, examined how the U.S. government—primarily the DOD, State, and the Department of Justice—developed and executed security sector assistance in Afghanistan from 2002 to 2016. Our analysis revealed that the U.S. government was ill-prepared to help build an Afghan army and police force capable of protecting Afghanistan from internal or external threats and preventing the country from becoming a terrorist safe haven. U.S. personnel also struggled to implement a dual strategy of attempting to rapidly improve security while simultaneously developing self-sufficient Afghan military and police capabilities, all on short, politically-driven timelines. We found that the U.S. government lacked a comprehensive approach and coordinating body to successfully implement the whole-of-government programs necessary to develop a capable and self-sustaining ANDSF. Ultimately, the United States—after expending over \$70 billion—designed a force that was not able to provide nationwide security, especially as the force faced a larger threat than anticipated after the drawdown of coalition military forces. The report identifies lessons to inform U.S. policies and actions for future security sector assistance missions, and provides recommendations to improve performance of security sector assistance programs.
- *Private Sector Development and Economic Growth: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan*, published in April 2018, examined efforts by the U.S. government to stimulate and build the Afghan economy after the initial defeat of the Taliban in 2001. While Afghanistan achieved significant early success in telecommunications, transportation, and construction, and in laying the foundations of a modern economic system, the goal of establishing long-term, broad-based, and sustainable economic growth has proved elusive. The primary reason, the report concluded, was persistent uncertainty, created by ongoing physical insecurity and political instability, which discouraged investment and other economic activity and undermined efforts to reduce pervasive corruption. Other reasons were the inadequate understanding and mitigation of relationships among corrupt strongmen and other power holders, and the inability to help Afghanistan to develop the physical and institutional infrastructure that would allow it to be regionally competitive in trade and agriculture. Two of the report's major recommendations are that future economic development assistance, in Afghanistan or elsewhere, should be based on a deeper understanding of the economy and society, and that needed governance institutions be allowed to proceed at an appropriate pace.
- *Stabilization: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan*, published in May 2018, detailed how USAID, State and DOD tried to support and legitimize the Afghan government in contested districts from 2002 through 2017. Our analysis revealed the U.S. government greatly overestimated its ability to build and reform government institutions

in Afghanistan as part of its stabilization strategy. We found that the stabilization strategy and the programs used to achieve it were not properly tailored to the Afghan context, and successes in stabilizing Afghan districts rarely lasted longer than the physical presence of coalition troops and civilians. As a result, by the time all prioritized districts had transitioned from coalition to Afghan control in 2014, the services and protection provided by Afghan forces and civil servants often could not compete with a resurgent Taliban as it filled the void in newly vacated territory.

- *Counternarcotics: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan*, published in June 2018, examined how U.S. agencies tried to deter farmers and traffickers from participating in the cultivation and trade of opium, build Afghan government counterdrug capacity, and develop the country's licit economy. We found that no counterdrug program led to lasting reductions in poppy cultivation or opium production—and, without a stable security environment, there was little possibility of success. The U.S. government failed to develop and implement counternarcotics strategies that outlined or effectively directed U.S. agencies toward shared goals. Eradication efforts ultimately had no lasting impact on opium cultivation, and alienated rural populations. Even though U.S. strategies said eradication and development aid should target the same areas on the ground, we found—by using new geospatial imagery—that frequently this did not happen. Development programs failed to provide farmers with sustainable alternatives to poppy. Two positive takeaways are that (1) some provinces and districts saw temporary reductions in poppy cultivation, and (2) U.S. support and mentorship helped stand up well-trained, capable Afghan counterdrug units that became trusted partners. We concluded, however, that until there is greater security in Afghanistan, it will be nearly impossible to bring about lasting reductions in poppy cultivation and drug production. In the meantime, the United States should aim to cut off drug money going to insurgent groups, promote licit livelihood options for rural communities, and fight drug-related government corruption.
- *Divided Responsibility: Lessons from U.S. Security Sector Assistance Efforts in Afghanistan*, published in June 2019, highlighted the difficulty of coordinating security sector assistance during active combat and under the umbrella of a 39-member NATO coalition when no specific DOD organization or military service was assigned ultimate responsibility for U.S. efforts. The report explored the problems created by this balkanized command structure in the training of Afghan army and police units, strategic-level advising at the ministries of defense and interior, procuring military equipment, and running U.S.-based training programs for the Afghan military. Its findings are relevant for ongoing efforts in Afghanistan, as well as for future efforts to rebuild security forces in states emerging from protracted conflict.
- *Reintegration of Ex-Combatants: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan*, published in September 2019, examined the five main post-2001 efforts to reintegrate former combatants into Afghan society, and assessed their effectiveness. We found that

these efforts did not help any significant number of former fighters to reintegrate, did not weaken the insurgency, and did not reduce violence. We concluded that as long as the Taliban insurgency is ongoing, the United States should not support a program to reintegrate former fighters. However, the United States should consider supporting a reintegration effort if certain conditions are in place: (a) the Afghan government and the Taliban sign a peace agreement that provides a framework for reintegration of ex-combatants; (b) a significant reduction in overall violence occurs; and (c) a strong monitoring and evaluation system is established for reintegration efforts. If U.S. agencies support a reintegration program, policymakers and practitioners should anticipate and plan for serious challenges to implementation—including ongoing insecurity, political instability, corruption, determining who is eligible, and the difficulty of monitoring and evaluation. Broader development assistance that stimulates the private sector and creates jobs can also help ex-combatants to reintegrate into society.

Impacts of the Lessons Learned Program

To date, SIGAR's Lessons Learned Program has offered nearly 120 recommendations to executive branch agencies and the Congress. To the best of our knowledge, 13 of those have been implemented, and at least 20 are in progress. In evaluating these numbers, it is important to note that some recommendations can only be implemented as part of *future* contingency operations; and some recommendations rely on outcomes that have not yet happened, such as an intra-Afghan peace deal. Going forward, SIGAR plans to work closely with agencies to get periodic updates to the status of its lessons learned recommendations.

Congress has already taken action on some of these recommendations. For example, Section 1279 of the 2018 National Defense Authorization Act calls for the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development to develop an anti-corruption strategy for reconstruction efforts. This amendment is in keeping with a recommendation in *Corruption in Conflict: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan*.

Additionally, the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act includes amendments related to two recommendations from our 2017 report entitled *Reconstructing the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan*. Section 1201 of the Act required that during the development and planning of a program to build the capacity of the national security forces of a foreign country, the Secretary of Defense and Secretary of State jointly consider political, social, economic, diplomatic, and historical factors of the foreign country that may impact the effectiveness of the program. Section 1211 required the incorporation of lessons learned from prior security cooperation programs and activities of DOD that were carried out any time on or after September 11, 2001 into future operations.

The Lessons Learned Program has also had significant institutional impact. Staff from the *Reconstructing the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces* report participated in the Quadrennial Review of Security Sector Assistance in 2018, and the report was cited by the NATO Stability Police Center of Excellence in its Joint Analysis Report. SIGAR Lessons Learned Program staff contributed to—and were explicitly recognized as experts in—the 2018 Stabilization Assistance Review, the first interagency policy document outlining how the U.S. government will conduct stabilization missions. The acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau for Conflict and Stabilization Operations later instructed his entire bureau to read the report. During Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s testimony before the United States Senate, Senator Todd Young asked him to respond in writing indicating which of the report’s recommendations he would implement.

Each of our reports has led to briefings or requests for information from members of Congress. The lead analyst for the *Reconstructing the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces* report testified before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform in 2017. At the request of the chairman of the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, our analysts compiled a list of potential oversight areas relating to the train, advise, and assist mission in Afghanistan and to appropriations for the Afghan Security Forces Fund. In September 2018, after publication of the *Counternarcotics* report, the Senate Drug Caucus wrote a letter to SIGAR requesting an inquiry into the U.S. government’s current counternarcotics efforts, including the extent to which a whole-of-government approach exists, the effectiveness of U.S. and Afghan law enforcement efforts, the impact of the drug lab bombing campaign, and the extent to which money laundering and corruption undermine counterdrug efforts.

Prior to the publication of *Reconstructing the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces*, SIGAR Lessons Learned Program staff participated in a multiday session convened by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph Dunford, on reconstruction-related activities in Afghanistan. They also participated in a failure analysis session led by the Secretary of Defense and run by the Joint Chiefs of Staff; this session was used to help develop the president’s South Asia Strategy in 2017.

In addition, Lessons Learned Program staff have given briefings on *Reconstructing the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces* to the Commander of U.S. Central Command, the Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, National Security Council staff, the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander for Europe, the Acting Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Commander of the Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan, and multiple U.S. general officers in Afghanistan. Our analysts have given briefings on the *Stabilization* report to the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Stability and Humanitarian Affairs, DOD’s Strategic Multi-Layer Assessment Group, the U.S. Army’s 95th Civil Affairs Brigade, senior officials responsible for stabilization in Syria at the U.S. State Department’s Bureau for Near Eastern Affairs, and high-ranking officials at USAID.

At the request of the State Department’s Bureau for Conflict and Stabilization Operations, SIGAR analysts drafted a memo on the business case for deploying civilians alongside the U.S. military on stabilization missions. The Deputy Assistant Administrator for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Affairs at USAID said the report is already affecting stabilization efforts and planning in Syria and elsewhere. Lessons Learned Program staff who worked on the *Reintegration of Ex-Combatants* report have heard informally from contacts at USAID and State that the report has been well received and is seen as a resource for future policies or programs related to reintegration.

Our reports have also assisted NATO and other coalition partners. Following the publication of the *Divided Responsibility* report, NATO hosted an all-day event on the topic of the report at its headquarters in Brussels. The team lead from the *Reintegration of Ex-Combatants* report also briefed officials at the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development on the report in November 2019.

SIGAR Lessons Learned Program staff who worked on the *Private Sector Development and Economic Growth* report participated in a closed-door roundtable with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani’s senior economic advisor focusing on recent reforms in Afghanistan’s economic governance.

Following the publication of the *Stabilization* report, Lessons Learned Program staff briefed the senior United Nations Development Programme official responsible for stabilization efforts in Iraq, and answered requests for briefings from Germany’s Foreign Office, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

Although not a complete list of our staff’s activities, suffice it to say that the Lessons Learned Program has created for itself a reputation as a reliable source of expertise and analysis on our nation’s longest war—the first step in the process of learning from our successes and failures.

Key Lessons from SIGAR’s Ten Years of Work

Now the question becomes: after all this, what enduring lessons have we learned? Here are a few overarching conclusions from our Lessons Learned Program and SIGAR’s other work:

- **Successful reconstruction is incompatible with continuing insecurity.** To have successful reconstruction in any given area, the fighting in that area must be largely contained. When that happens, U.S. agencies should be prepared to move quickly, in partnership with the host nation, to take advantage of the narrow window of opportunity before an insurgency can emerge or reconstitute itself. This holds true at both the national and local levels. In general, U.S. agencies should consider carrying out reconstruction

activities in more secure areas first, and limit reconstruction in insecure areas to carefully tailored, small-scale efforts and humanitarian relief.

- **Unchecked corruption in Afghanistan undermined U.S. strategic goals—and we helped to foster that corruption.** The U.S. government’s persistent belief that throwing more money at a problem automatically leads to better results created a feedback loop in which the success of reconstruction efforts was measured by the amount of money spent—which in turn created requests for more money. The United States also inadvertently aided the Taliban’s resurgence by forming alliances of convenience with warlords who had been pushed out of power by the Taliban. The coalition paid warlords to provide security and, in many cases, to run provincial and district administrations, on the assumption that the United States would eventually hold those warlords to account when they committed acts of corruption or brutality. That accounting rarely took place—and the abuses committed by coalition-aligned warlords drove many Afghans into the arms of the resurgent Taliban. The insecurity that resulted has harmed virtually every U.S. and coalition initiative in Afghanistan to this day—discouraging trade, investment, and other economic activity and making it harder to build the government institutions needed to support the private sector. In the future, we need to recognize the vital importance of addressing corruption from the outset. This means taking into account the amount of assistance a host country can absorb; being careful not to flood a small, weak economy with too much money, too fast; and ensuring that U.S. agencies can more effectively monitor assistance. It would also mean limiting U.S. alliances with malign powerbrokers, holding highly corrupt actors to account, and incorporating anticorruption objectives into security and stability goals.
- **After the Taliban’s initial defeat, there was no clear reconstruction strategy and no single military service, agency, or nation in charge of reconstruction.** Between 2001 and 2006, the reconstruction effort was woefully underfunded and understaffed in Afghanistan. Then, as the Taliban became resurgent, the U.S. overcorrected and poured billions of dollars into a weak economy that was unable to absorb it. Some studies suggest that the generally accepted amount of foreign aid a country’s economy can absorb at any given time is 15 to 45 percent of the country’s gross domestic product, or GDP. In Afghanistan’s weak economy, the percentage would be on the low end of that scale. Yet by 2004, U.S. aid to Afghanistan exceeded the 45 percent threshold. In 2007 and 2010, it totaled more than 100 percent. This massive influx of dollars distorted the Afghan economy, fueled corruption, bought a lot of real estate in Dubai and the United States, and built the many “poppy palaces” you can see today in Kabul. Another example of unintended consequences were efforts to rebuild the Afghan police—a job that neither State nor DOD was fully prepared to do. State lacked the in-house expertise and was unable to safely operate in insecure environments like Afghanistan; the U.S. military could operate in an insecure environment, but had limited expertise in training civilian police forces. Our research found instances where Black Hawk helicopter pilots were

assigned to train police, while other soldiers turned to TV shows such as “NCIS” and “COPS” as sources for police training program curricula. SIGAR believes that Congress needs to review this tangled web of conflicting priorities and authorities, with the aim of designating a single agency to be in charge of future reconstruction efforts. At the very least, there should be a comprehensive review of funding authorities and agency responsibilities for planning and conducting reconstruction activities.

- **Politically driven timelines undermine the reconstruction effort.** The U.S. military is an awesome weapon; when our soldiers are ordered to do something, they do it—whether or not they are best suited to the task. One example of this was DOD’s \$675 million effort to jumpstart the Afghan economy. DOD is not known for being particularly skilled at economic development. Frustrated by the belief that USAID’s development efforts would not bring significant economic benefit to Afghanistan quickly enough to be helpful, in 2009 DOD expanded its Iraq Task Force for Business and Stability Operations (“TFBSO”) to Afghanistan. TFBSO initiated a number of diverse and well-intentioned, but often speculative projects in areas for which it had little or no real expertise. For example, TFBSO spent millions to construct a compressed natural gas station in Sheberghan, Afghanistan, in an effort to create a compressed natural gas market in Afghanistan. It was a noble goal—but there were no other compressed natural gas stations in Afghanistan, so for obvious reasons, any cars running on that fuel could not travel more than half a tank from the only place they could refuel. In the end, the U.S. taxpayer paid to convert a number of local Afghan taxis to run on compressed natural gas in order to create a market for the station—which, to SIGAR’s knowledge, remains the only one of its kind in Afghanistan. My point here is not to hold DOD up to ridicule; it was simply doing the best it could in the time it had with the orders it was given. The real problem was a timeline driven by political considerations and divorced from reality, implemented by an agency that lacked the required expertise and had little to no oversight.
- **If we cannot end the “annual lobotomy,” we should at least mitigate its impact.** I assumed my current post in 2012. I’m now working with my fifth U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, my sixth NATO and U.S. Commanding General, and eighth head of the U.S. train, advise, and assist command. Some 80 percent of the U.S. embassy departs each summer and most of the U.S. military assigned to Afghanistan is deployed for a year or less. The lack of institutional memory caused by personnel turnover in Afghanistan is widely known. Even so, the U.S. government continues to routinely defer to the on-the-ground experience of deployed personnel to assess progress and evaluate their own work. The result is assessments that are often considerably rosier than they should be, or totally irrelevant—for example, when trainers were asked to evaluate their own training of Afghan units, they gave themselves high marks for instruction—a metric that had little to do with reflecting the units’ actual battlefield readiness. The constant turnover of

personnel in Afghanistan highlights the need for more rigorous oversight and scrutiny, not less.

- **To be effective, reconstruction efforts must be based on a deep understanding of the historical, social, legal, and political traditions of the host nation.** The United States sent personnel into Afghanistan who did not know the difference between al-Qaeda and the Taliban, and who lacked any substantive knowledge of Afghan society, local dynamics, and power relationships. In the short term, SIGAR believes Congress should mandate more rigorous, in-depth pre-deployment training that exposes U.S. personnel to the history of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, at the very least. In the long term, we need to find ways of ramping up our knowledge base in the event of future contingency operations, perhaps by identifying academic experts willing to lend their expertise on short notice as a contingency emerges. There is also a dearth of staff at U.S. agencies with the vital combination of long-term institutional memory and recent experience. In the case of Afghanistan, we should listen more to people who have developed expertise over time—most notably, Afghan officials, who have greater institutional and historical knowledge than their U.S. counterparts.

Matters for Congressional Consideration

In addition to the prior list of key lessons from SIGAR's work, at the request of committee staff, we have also compiled a list of six recommendations for immediate consideration for the Congress.

1. In light of the ongoing peace negotiations, the Congress should consider the urgent need for the Administration to plan for what happens after the United States reaches a peace deal with the Taliban. There are a number of serious threats to a sustainable peace in Afghanistan that will not miraculously disappear with signing a peace agreement. Any such agreement is likely to involve dramatic reductions of U.S. forces, and with that comes the need to plan for transferring the management of security-related assistance from DOD to State leadership. DOD manages some \$4 billion per year in security sector assistance to Afghanistan, and State is wholly unprepared at this moment to take on management of that enormous budget. Any peace agreement and drawdown of U.S. forces raises a number of other issues that could put the U.S.-funded reconstruction effort at risk. As SIGAR reported last year in its High Risk List report, these include—but are not limited to—the capability of Afghan security forces to conduct counterterrorism operations; protecting the hard-won rights of Afghan women; upholding the rule of law; suppressing corruption; promoting alternative livelihoods for farmers currently engaged in growing poppy for the opium trade—and, not least, the problem of reintegrating an estimated 60,000 Taliban fighters, their families, and other illegal armed groups into civil society.

2. To ensure Congress and the taxpayers are properly apprised in a timely manner of significant events that pose a threat to the U.S. reconstruction mission in Afghanistan, Congress should consider requiring all federal agencies operating in country to provide reports to the Congress disclosing risks to major reconstruction projects and programs, and disclosing important events or developments as they occur. These reports would be analogous to the reports publically traded companies in the United States are now required to file with the Securities Exchange Commission to keep investors informed about important events.⁶
3. In light of the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan and decreasing staffing, there will be a natural tendency for U.S. agencies to increase their use of on-budget assistance or international organizations and trust funds to accomplish reconstruction and development goals. Congress should consider conditioning such on-budget assistance on rigorous assessments of the Afghan ministries and international trust funds having strong accountability measures and internal controls in place.
4. Oversight is mission critical to any successful reconstruction and development program in Afghanistan. The Congress should consider requiring DOD, State, USAID, and other relevant executive agencies to ensure adequate oversight, monitoring and evaluation efforts continue and not be dramatically reduced as part of a right-sizing program, as witnessed recently by State's personnel reductions at the Kabul embassy. Without adequate oversight staffing levels and the ability to physically inspect, monitor and evaluate programs, Congress should consider the efficacy of continuing assistance.
5. The Congress should consider requiring U.S. government agencies supporting U.S. reconstruction missions to "rack and stack" their programs and projects by identifying their best- and worst-performing activities, so that the Congress can more quickly identify whether and how to reallocate resources to projects that are proving successful. The ambiguous responses to SIGAR's 2013 request of DOD, State, and USAID that they identify their best- and worst-performing projects and programs (see Appendix I) in Afghanistan indicate that the agencies may not routinely engage in the self-evaluation necessary to honestly evaluate what is working and what is not.
6. The Congress should request that State, DOD and USAID submit a finalized anticorruption strategy for reconstruction efforts in U.S. contingency operations. This requirement was part of the 2018 National Defense Authorization Act, which set a

⁶ Every publically traded company in the United States is required to file annual and quarterly reports with the SEC about the company's operations, including a detailed disclosure of the risks the company faces (known as "10-K" and "10-Q" reports). Public companies are also required to file more current 8-K reports disclosing "material events" as they occur, *i.e.*, major events or developments that shareholders should know about.

deadline of May 2018 for the strategy to be submitted to various congressional committees, including this one. In December 2019, State told SIGAR that the strategy "is still under development." Further, the NDAA language did not state that anticorruption is a national security priority in a contingency operation, or require annual reporting on implementation. The Congress should consider incorporating these elements into its renewed request to agencies.

Conclusion

As anybody who has served in government knows, when you undertake an effort such as our Lessons Learned Program, you will inevitably gore somebody's ox. The programs, policies, and strategies SIGAR has reviewed were all the result of decisions made by people who, for the most part, were doing the best they could. While our lessons learned reports identify failures, missed opportunities, bad judgment, and the occasional success, the response to our reports within the U.S. government has generally been positive. It is to the credit of many of the government officials we have worked with—and, in some cases, criticized—that they see the value of SIGAR's lessons learned work and are suggesting new topics for us to explore.

Our work is far from done. For all the lives and treasure the United States and its coalition partners have expended in Afghanistan, and for Afghans themselves who have suffered the most from decades of violence, the very least we can do is to learn from our successes and failures. SIGAR's Lessons Learned Program is our attempt to do that, and in my opinion, its work will be our agency's most important legacy.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to answering your questions.

Appendix I – Correspondence Between SIGAR and U.S. Government Agencies Regarding Most and Least Successful Reconstruction Projects and Programs in Afghanistan



SIGAR | Office of the Special Inspector General
for Afghanistan Reconstruction

March 25, 2013

The Honorable John F. Kerry
U.S. Secretary of State

Dear Secretary Kerry,

As you know, my office is charged by Congress with the responsibility for leading, coordinating, and recommending policies to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of programs and operations for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The audits, inspections, and investigations that SIGAR conducts form the basis for our execution of this responsibility.

In a recent conversation with the U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, I mentioned that we would be looking at the most and least successful reconstruction projects, as identified by U.S. agencies. I believe that this will be a valuable exercise. It is important to understand how U.S. agencies evaluate and perceive both their successes and failures. Such an understanding is critical for formulating lessons learned from our unprecedented reconstruction effort.

Therefore, I formally request that you provide:

- a list of the ten Afghanistan reconstruction projects/programs funded and deemed most successful by the Department of State;
- a list of the ten Afghanistan reconstruction projects/programs funded and deemed least successful by the Department of State; and
- a detailed explanation of how these projects/programs were evaluated and selected as the ten most and least successful projects, including the specific criteria used for each.

I am submitting this request pursuant to my authority under Public Law No. 110-181, as amended and the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended. Please direct your staff to provide this information by April 25, 2013, to Monica Brym, SIGAR Director of Special Projects, at monica.j.brym.civ@mail.mil. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at (703) 545-6000 or Ms. Brym at (703) 545-6003. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



John F. Sopko
Special Inspector General
for Afghanistan Reconstruction

cc: The Honorable James B. Cunningham, U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan

1550 Crystal Drive, 9th Floor
Arlington, Virginia 22202

Mailing 2530 Crystal Drive
Arlington, Virginia 22202-3940

Tel 703 545 6000

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March 25, 2013

The Honorable Rajiv Shah
Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development

Dear Dr. Shah,

As you know, my office is charged by Congress with the responsibility for leading, coordinating, and recommending policies to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of programs and operations for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The audits, inspections, and investigations that SIGAR conducts form the basis for our execution of this responsibility.

In a recent conversation with the U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, I mentioned that we would be looking at the most and least successful reconstruction projects, as identified by U.S. agencies. I believe that this will be a valuable exercise. It is important to understand how U.S. agencies evaluate and perceive both their successes and failures. Such an understanding is critical for formulating lessons learned from our unprecedented reconstruction effort.

Therefore, I formally request that you provide:

- a list of the ten Afghanistan reconstruction projects/programs funded and deemed most successful by USAID;
- a list of the ten Afghanistan reconstruction projects/programs funded and deemed least successful by USAID; and
- a detailed explanation of how these projects/programs were evaluated and selected as the ten most and least successful projects, including the specific criteria used for each.

I am submitting this request pursuant to my authority under Public Law No. 110-181, as amended and the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended. Please direct your staff to provide this information by April 25, 2013, to Monica Brym, SIGAR Director of Special Projects, at monica.j.brym.civ@mail.mil. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at (703) 545-6000 or Ms. Brym at (703) 545-6003. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

John F. Sopko
Special Inspector General
for Afghanistan Reconstruction

cc: Dr. S. Ken Yamashita, USAID Mission Director for Afghanistan



SIGAR

Office of the Special Inspector General
for Afghanistan Reconstruction

March 25, 2013

The Honorable Chuck Hagel
Secretary of Defense

Dear Secretary Hagel,

As you know, my office is charged by Congress with the responsibility for leading, coordinating, and recommending policies to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of programs and operations for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The audits, inspections, and investigations that SIGAR conducts form the basis for our execution of this responsibility.

In a recent conversation with the U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, I mentioned that we would be looking at the most and least successful reconstruction projects, as identified by U.S. agencies. I believe that this will be a valuable exercise. It is important to understand how U.S. agencies evaluate and perceive both their successes and failures. Such an understanding is critical for formulating lessons learned from our unprecedented reconstruction effort.

Therefore, I formally request that you provide:

- a list of the ten Afghanistan reconstruction projects/programs funded and deemed most successful by the Department of Defense;
- a list of the ten Afghanistan reconstruction projects/programs funded and deemed least successful by the Department of Defense; and
- a detailed explanation of how these projects/programs were evaluated and selected as the ten most and least successful projects, including the specific criteria used for each.

I am submitting this request pursuant to my authority under Public Law No. 110-181, as amended and the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended. Please direct your staff to provide this information by April 25, 2013, to Monica Brym, SIGAR Director of Special Projects, at monica.j.brym.civ@mail.mil. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at (703) 545-6000 or Ms. Brym at (703) 545-6003. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

John F. Sopko
Special Inspector General
for Afghanistan Reconstruction

cc:
General Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., Commander, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, and
Commander, International Security Assistance Force
General James N. Mattis, Commander, U.S. Central Command

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July 5, 2013

The Honorable John F. Kerry
U.S. Secretary of State

The Honorable Chuck Hagel
U.S. Secretary of Defense

The Honorable Rajiv Shah
Administrator, U.S. Agency for International Development

Dear Secretary Kerry, Secretary Hagel, and Administrator Shah:

On March 25, 2013, I wrote to you asking that your agencies provide SIGAR with information on what each of you considers to be the 10 most successful and 10 least successful projects or programs within your agency in the U.S. effort for reconstruction of Afghanistan, supplemented with explanations of selection and evaluation criteria for your choices. A copy of that letter is attached.

Comparing outcomes is, in addition to being good practice for managers and part of the job for inspectors general, the subject of formal guidance for Executive Branch departments and agencies. In May 2012, the Office of Management and Budget issued a memorandum on "Use of Evidence and Evaluation in the 2014 Budget." That document said, in part:

Agencies are encouraged to include measurement of costs and costs per outcome as part of the routine reporting of funded programs to allow for useful *comparison* of cost-effectiveness across programs. ... Once evidence-based programs have been identified, such a [return-on-investment] analysis can improve agency resource allocation and inform public understanding. ... OMB invites agencies to identify areas where research provides strong evidence regarding the *comparative* cost-effectiveness of agency investments.' [Emphasis added.]

I recognize that applying cost-effectiveness and comparative analysis to programs and projects in a contingency-operation zone like Afghanistan, where benefits may include "soft" outcomes like public opinion, and where multiple programs support similar goals, can be difficult. But the importance of the mission and the billions of dollars supporting it demand that comparisons be made as best we can. That consideration—and the well-documented flaws and disappointments in many U.S.-funded initiatives—was the motive for my March 25 letter to you.

I have the responses to that letter submitted by your designees. Mr. Daniel Feldman, Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Mr. J. Alexander Thier, Assistant to the Administrator for Afghanistan and Pakistan, supplied a joint State/USAID response dated May 9, 2013. Mr. Mike Dumont, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Affairs, submitted a response dated June 18, 2013.

Both response letters are thoughtful and informative, and include pertinent observations of the difficulty of executing reconstruction programs in a setting like Afghanistan, plagued as it is by violence, poverty, illiteracy, corruption, inadequate infrastructure, and other problems. In three trips to Afghanistan during my first year as Special Inspector General, I have seen and heard much evidence of the difficulties facing program and project planners, managers, and oversight officials, both civilian and military. I have special respect for the dedication and bravery of your staff working in that dangerous part of the world, and agree that they have contributed significantly to producing some indicators of genuine progress in security, governance, development, rule of law, human rights, and other areas that will benefit the people of Afghanistan and America's policy interests.

Nonetheless, I have some difficulties with the responsiveness of your agencies' letters.

First, State and USAID made a *joint* response, despite separate requests having been made to them. I understand—and am delighted as a citizen and taxpayer—that the agencies are in “close cooperation” on matters affecting Afghan reconstruction. However, each agency has its own internal organization and practices, its own in-house Inspector General evaluating that agency's projects and programs, and its own list of programs on its own website. Because State and USAID are legally distinct entities, and because they have operational autonomy within the ambit of their missions (however closely they cooperate), I ask that the two agencies provide separate responses to this letter. I speculate that State pursued the path of a joint response because of the limited number of its programs in Afghanistan; that point will be addressed later in this letter via slightly modified request language.

Second, neither response letter complied with my request for a listing and discussion of each agency's 10 most and 10 least successful projects or programs. The State/USAID response explicitly said, “we do not compare individual projects against others.” Yet the same letter later notes that “not every program has succeeded as originally intended,” which I read as evidence that someone has examined the results of individual programs and observed that some succeeded and others did not. Defense stated that many reconstruction programs are conducted in cooperation with partners and are “evaluated on a project-specific basis” rather than compared. That may well be, but I note that my March 25 letter asked about “projects/programs,” not exclusively one or the other.

Program evaluation inevitably entails or at least facilitates comparisons of projects. If not, what basis would agency managers have for deciding—say, in the face of budget cuts, sequestrations, or new mission directives—which projects to prioritize, expand, contract, terminate, transfer, or redesign? How do they decide which project managers deserve greater responsibility or career advancement, or the obverse, without comparing outcomes? How do they capture lessons learned to improve agency performance without making comparisons? Nonetheless, even if a formal process of comparing program or project outcomes does not exist within your agencies, I hope it will not seem unreasonable if I ask you to make at minimum a limited, judgmental comparison to help SIGAR with its official duties.

My third concern with the agency response letters involves the concept of indicators. The letters contain many interesting and encouraging data points illustrating or suggesting overall progress in Afghanistan reconstruction. Unfortunately, many of them show no obvious causal nexus with a particular U.S. program or project, or present an output as a *prima facie* indicator of success. USAID projects and programs are assigned performance indicators that are the basis for

observing progress and measuring actual results compared to expected results of the program. Yet the joint State/USAID letter does not identify discrete, program-specific indicators necessary to identify characteristics and outcomes, or to inform decisions about current and future programming. Similarly, the Department of Defense mandated that projects executed through the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) have performance metrics for all projects over \$50,000 to be tracked up to 365 days after a project has been completed.¹¹ CERP performance metrics include the issue of sustainability.¹² These are worthy requirements, but not all metrics are equally salient or useful.

For an example of a possibly ambiguous indicator, the State/USAID letter notes that the proportion of the Afghan population within an hour's walk of a health-care facility has risen from 9 percent in 2001 to more than 60 percent today. However, Afghanistan has been slowly urbanizing for decades, with estimates of 4.7 percent annual growth in urban populations in the 2010-2015 period.¹³ So some part of the observed increase in the one-hour's-walk parameter simply reflects a demographic trend. As urbanization continues, the indicator would improve even if health-facility construction stopped completely. For that matter, the indicator could also improve if more direct or better-surfaced roads and paths were built. Identifying reasonable and measurable indicators for specific efforts is admittedly not an exact science, but the causal haziness around the edges of this indicator suggests that careful attention to selection, logic, and measurement protocol is warranted.

In addition, the health indicators cited in the letter are for the country as a whole and are not specific to the 13 of 34 provinces supported by USAID. The USAID Inspector General found in one 2011 audit that

measurement of the magnitude of USAID's contribution to the national objectives could be made only indirectly using proxy indicators because no current demographic information or health statistics were available to measure health outcomes directly.¹⁴

The Afghanistan Mortality Survey of 2010 cited in the joint State/USAID letter does not address this issue as there is still no clear connection between United States government efforts and overall health improvements that have undoubtedly occurred since 2001. For example, the survey reports that the sample design had disproportionate exclusion, particularly of rural areas, in the southern region that would affect five of the thirteen provinces specifically supported by USAID.¹⁵ Some of these data points also appear to have been selectively chosen in order to emphasize progress, as with the life-expectancy improvement cited in the State/USAID letter, with a reported increase from 44 years to more than 60 years in the past decade. The World Bank, however, purposely did not include the Mortality Survey results in a recent report because the survey does not have time-series data for the last 10 years. For comparative analysis, they argue, it is essential to use statistics from a single international database.¹⁶ According to the World Bank figure, Afghan life expectancy is 48 years.

The indicators for education similarly appear to take credit for progress across the country as a whole without clear attribution to specific United States government efforts. The number of students enrolled is presented as the national total, but it is not clear what if any connection there is with the schools built and teachers trained through USAID efforts. I would have expected information such as the utilization rates of USAID-supported schools, as this would more clearly connect the United States government effort to the reported student numbers and additionally

would provide evidence of Afghan government capacity to make use of assets transferred to them.

The Department of Defense response offers some information with regard to Afghan government sustainment, but the examples are restricted to one province and cover only *three* of 4,000 education projects totaling \$230 million obligated. The World Bank has raised the issue of sustainment, noting that school construction, the same indicator touted in both letters, has crowded out operations and maintenance, with allocations falling far below requirements and rarely reaching schools.⁸ The joint State/USAID and Department of Defense responses to education highlight my issue with the indicators presented, with the State/USAID response disconnected from USAID efforts and the Department of Defense relying on anecdotal evidence.

For another example, the Defense letter notes that more than 194,000 Afghan National Security Force personnel had "some level" of literacy and numeracy training. That is encouraging, but given that the 2009 rate of ANSF illiteracy was 86 percent⁹ and that the ANSF has fairly high turnover, it does not tell us whether the effort has materially improved the overall ANSF literacy rate and, more importantly, improved it to the extent of bolstering administrative and operational success. In addition, the datum does not tell us whether the literacy program itself is efficiently conducted and monitored.

Finally, on the rule of law, I was disappointed to note that the indicators offered in the joint State/USAID response did not address two major areas of concern: high-level corruption and opium production. The letter notes that State and USAID have provided training and support to Afghan anti-corruption bodies, but unlike the prison statistics, does not give any indication of the effect, such as types and numbers of successful prosecutions. Sending 13 judges on an educational trip and putting court personnel through training courses are presumably useful activities, but such outputs need credible linkages to outcomes. Similarly, the indicators provided in reference to the drug trade note the scale of the problem, with Afghanistan accounting for roughly 90 percent of heroin worldwide, but does not connect improvements in the licit economy with decreases in the illicit economy. In 2012, the USAID Inspector General found that a key USAID alternative-development program was directed by USAID to focus only on expanding the licit economy in order to support indicators for the agriculture sector, such as those touted in the letter, and to ignore goals that dealt with assistance to voluntary poppy eradication and to farms in the aftermath of opium poppy eradication/destruction programs.¹⁰ The report further states that there was increased poppy growth in the provinces covered by the program, with two of the covered provinces losing their poppy-free status and five provinces increasing opium cultivation. The impact of USAID's agricultural programs on the licit economy are certainly laudable, but if they do not result in decreased opium cultivation then positive impacts are eroded.

National-level indicators *may* suggest a positive aggregate impact for U.S. programs, but individual results certainly vary within program portfolios of project, and positive aggregate outcomes may mask individual failures or sub-par performance. At times, it is even difficult to *identify* an individual result. Unfortunately the letters did not identify specific programs or the indicators and targets for those specific programs.

Just last month, the State Department's Office of Inspector General published an audit of the Bureau of Administration (A Bureau), Office of Logistics Management, Office of Acquisitions Management (A/LM/AQM), which directs Department acquisition programs and manages a 1 percent fee for its services. Those services include operations, missions, and programs of the

Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, as well as grants, contracts, and agreements with other nations, non-governmental organizations, and commercial entities. A portion of that State OIG audit mirrors my concerns and is worth noting here.

A/LM/AQM was tracking some metrics to assess program performance. However, these performance metrics also generally did not tie to the goals in the Business Plan. Without measuring its performance, A/LM/AQM cannot ensure it is making progress on its overall objective of providing consistent and improved procurement services to the Department.

Performance management is a systematic process of monitoring the achievements of program activities, which includes collecting and analyzing performance data in order to track progress toward a defined goal and then using the analyzed data to make informed decisions, including allocating resources, for the program. Measuring performance against program goals is an essential part of performance management.¹⁰⁸

As for Defense, GAO has been carrying DOD contract management on its High-Risk List since 1992. In an audit of a military construction that created life-and-safety electrical and fire hazards for U.S. and other coalition personnel, the DOD IG found the responsible Air Force construction-management officials "did not develop a formal process to monitor, assess, and document the quality of work performed by contractor personnel for four projects valued at \$36.9 million."¹⁰⁹ Such voids in basic data make project comparisons even more difficult.

As you know, SIGAR's own audits, investigations, and special projects have also addressed aspects of reconstruction program or project success and failure. But as the preceding citations to other IGs' work illustrate, we are not alone in spotting issues. The large body of work by SIGAR, GAO, and your agency Inspectors General—not to mention numerous agency concurrences in the findings and recommendations in that work—amply documents that many programs and projects have systematic weaknesses in framing, planning, execution, and oversight that call out for improvement. Pursuant to our statutory mandate and as part of our participation in the Joint Strategic Oversight Plan for Afghanistan Reconstruction, we are preparing additional products for release and will be launching new initiatives touching on these concerns as the reconstruction effort proceeds.

As I explained in my March 25, 2013, letter, an important part of our work is understanding how U.S. agencies evaluate and perceive both their successes and failures. That understanding is critical for formulating lessons learned from our unprecedented reconstruction effort in Afghanistan—an effort already accounting for nearly \$89 billion in appropriations. U.S. government agencies need to identify and act on lessons learned from past reconstruction projects and programs. Timely action can help implementing agencies and Congress adjust reconstruction programs to protect taxpayer funds and improve outcomes before it is too late.

My letter of March 25 therefore formally requested that you provide:

- a list of the 10 Afghanistan reconstruction projects/programs funded and deemed most successful by the [agency]
- a list of the 10 Afghanistan reconstruction projects/programs funded and deemed least successful by the [agency]
- a detailed explanation of how these projects/programs were evaluated and selected as the 10 most and least successful projects, including the specific criteria used for each

Upon considering your responses to that request, I appreciate that identifying the 10 *most-* and 10 *least-*successful programs or projects in Afghanistan may entail an unreasonable benefit/cost burden of research and analytical rigor in comparisons across many initiatives. We have no wish to impose unproductive burdens upon your staff, especially when many may be inconvenienced by the impingement of sequestration-furloughs on their work hours. Therefore I will *modify* my request and now ask you to provide the following:

- a list of 10 of the *more* successful Afghanistan reconstruction projects/programs funded by your agency
- a list of 10 of the *less* successful Afghanistan reconstruction projects/programs funded by your agency
- an explanation of how you selected the projects in each list and your view of what made them more or less successful (e.g., goal framing, requirements identification, acquiring activity, agent performance, management, oversight and technical assessment, coordination) than intended

Note: In view of State's more limited program activity in Afghanistan, a reasonable response of fewer than 10 items in each category will be satisfactory.

Based on your responses, we will identify individual programs and projects for possible further examination through reviews or audits. This could lead us to look at programs or projects deemed to have achieved their objectives, as well as less successful undertakings. In addition to noting the criteria your agency used to evaluate the projects, the results of those evaluations, and any documented lessons learned, we could assess how well the projects achieved their stated objectives and whether they contributed to the larger strategic goals underlying the U.S. government's Afghan reconstruction efforts.

In addition, for each program examined, we will seek to answer the seven questions laid out in SIGAR's January 2013 Quarterly Report to Congress. These are seven questions that decision makers, including Congress, should ask as they consider whether and how best to use remaining reconstruction funds. The questions are:

1. Does the project or program make a clear and identifiable contribution to our national interests or strategic objectives?
2. Do the Afghans want it or need it?
3. Has it been coordinated with other U.S. implementing agencies, with the Afghan government, and with other international donors?
4. Do security conditions permit effective implementation and oversight?
5. Does it have adequate safeguards to detect, deter, and mitigate corruption?
6. Do the Afghans have the financial resources, technical capacity, and political will to sustain it?
7. Have implementing partners established meaningful, measurable metrics for determining successful project outcomes?

We believe our reviews and audits, by helping to understand and document how agencies are planning strategically for reconstruction spending, establishing program objectives, evaluating programs, and identifying lessons learned, will contribute to improving the efficiency and

effectiveness of critical reconstruction programs and mitigate fraud, waste, and abuse. SIGAR will continue to make every effort to see that Congress and the implementing agencies are fully informed about the progress of the reconstruction effort—including discussions of agency policy and practice that have led to good outcomes—and have the information they need to safeguard U.S. funds and ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely.

I trust this letter clarifies the reasons for my March 25 request, and that my modification of terms fairly and reasonably addresses the concerns voiced in your previous responses. I look forward to your response and our continued cooperation in support of the national mission in Afghanistan.

Sincerely,



John F. Sopko
Special Inspector General
for Afghanistan Reconstruction

Enclosures

cc: The Honorable James B. Cunningham, U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan

Notes

¹ Office of Management and Budget, Memorandum to the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, "Use of Evidence and Evaluation in the 2014 Budget," May 18, 2012, p. 2.

² United States Agency for International Development, *ADS Chapter 203 - Assessing and Learning*, November 2012, p. 18.

³ USFOR-A, *Money as a Weapon System - Commander's Emergency Response Program SOP*, March 2012, pp. 177-178.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁵ CIA, "World Fact Book," online, accessed June 19, 2013.

⁶ USAID OIG, *Audit Of USAID/Afghanistan's On-Budget Funding Assistance to the Ministry of Public Health in Support of the Partnership Contracts for Health Services Program*, Audit Report F-306-11-004-P, September 29, 2011, p. 3.

⁷ Afghan Public Health Institute, *Afghanistan Mortality Survey 2010*, p. 10.

⁸ World Bank, *Afghanistan in Transition: Looking Beyond 2014 Volume 2*, May 2012, p. 12.

⁹ World Bank, *Afghanistan in Transition: Looking Beyond 2014 Volume 2*, May 2012, pp. 88-89.

¹⁰ The World Bank report further notes that the lack of operations and maintenance funds has caused education infrastructure to deteriorate, and that the current school population is also heavily concentrated in grades 1-4, with high dropout rates in higher grades. The World Bank states that widespread concerns exist over education quality, owing to the poor qualifications of some teachers, lack of a standardized

curriculum, lack of evaluation standards, and insufficiency of basic school supplies. Statistics collected in 2009-10 by a national teacher-registration system indicate that only 27 percent of the 162,000 registered general-education teachers are educated at a grade 14 level, the official minimum requirement for teaching, or higher.

④ Statement of Lt. Gen. William B. Caldwell IV, Commander, United States Army North, Fifth Army, before the U.S. House Subcommittee on National Security, Homeland Defense and Foreign Operations, hearing, Sept. 12, 2012.

④ USAID OIG *Audit Of USAID/Afghanistan's Incentives Driving Economic Alternatives for the North, East, and West Program*, Audit Report F-306-12-004-P, June 29, 2012, p. 5.

④ State OIG, AUD-FM-13-29, *Audit of Department of State Application of the Procurement Fee to Accomplish Key Goals of Procurement Services*, May 2013, p. 50.

④ DOD IG, Report No. DODIG-2013-052, *Inadequate Contract Oversight of Military Construction Projects in Afghanistan Resulted in Increased Hazards to Life and Limb of Coalition Forces*, March 8, 2013, 1



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

August 5, 2013

John F. Sopko
Special Inspector General for
Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR)

Dear Mr. Sopko,

Thank you for your feedback on our March 25 response to your query regarding our top 10 most and least successful projects and programs in Afghanistan. We found this to be a useful exercise that sparked productive conversations and enhanced coordination both within the Department of State and with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), with whom we answered jointly.

Our agencies chose to respond jointly to highlight our close interagency cooperation in achieving measurable results from our assistance efforts in Afghanistan in support of our national security goal of ensuring Afghanistan can no longer be a safe haven for terrorists that threaten U.S. interests. We were pleased to report on some of the accomplishments of the Department of State and USAID in Afghanistan in recent years, as well as on some of the problems that we have faced in implementing foreign assistance.

We highlighted assistance programs in the education sector, in the field of public health, in public financial management, and with respect to promoting the empowered role of women, access to electricity and good governance and the rule of law. These programs have contributed to measurable positive impacts on Afghanistan's development and stability, with achievements-based objective indicators of progress including improvement on international indices for human, economic, and democratic development. We also acknowledged that operating in a war-time environment means it is inevitable that not every program has succeeded as originally intended. Delays, fraud, poor performance, security challenges, and contractor overcharges have been an unfortunate feature of trying to achieve our national priorities in Afghanistan that we have constantly battled against. Many of the obstacles we have encountered have been well documented and have benefited from SIGAR's oversight.

In noting in the March response those areas where continuing attention is warranted given the challenges of operating in Afghanistan, we emphasized that we share SIGAR's goal of safeguarding U.S. taxpayer resources from fraud, waste, and abuse, while seeking the most effective uses of those resources in advancing our national security through assistance programs in Afghanistan. We look forward to working together to find ways to improve our oversight mechanisms.

As we explained in our March letter, however, we monitor and evaluate individual projects against the detailed standards and outcomes established in the initial performance documents. Given the wide range of assistance projects and programs our agencies have carried out, we do not compare individual projects against others, particularly over a decade of intensive rebuilding efforts, which result in constantly changing conditions for each project. We also recognize that achieving our strategic goals in any particular sector in Afghanistan requires a number of projects working together in time or over time -- including those using other donors' funds.

While we recognize the value of many of the points emphasized in your follow up letter, upon reviewing the modified request we believe we have no additional information to supplement our response to your original request. We welcome further discussion and oversight of any of our existing or past reconstruction projects and programs in Afghanistan.

Sincerely,



Jarrett Blanc
Deputy Special Representative for
Afghanistan and Pakistan



May 9, 2013

John F. Sopko
Special Inspector General for
Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR)

SUBJECT: SIGAR Letter to the Department of State, USAID and Department of Defense Requesting Top Most Successful and Least Successful Projects

In response to your letter of March 25, we are pleased to report on some of the accomplishments of the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in Afghanistan in recent years, as well as on some of the problems that we have faced in implementing foreign assistance.

Our agencies have chosen to respond jointly to highlight our close cooperation in achieving measurable results from our assistance efforts in Afghanistan in support of our national security goal of ensuring Afghanistan can no longer be a safe haven for terrorists that threaten U.S. interests. From a society shattered by more than three decades of war, and after more than a decade of rebuilding, there is now significant statistical data outlining Afghanistan's steady progress, despite the political, economic, and security challenges presented by that turbulent past.

We monitor and evaluate individual projects against the detailed standards and outcomes established in the initial performance documents. Given the wide range of assistance projects and programs our agencies have carried out, we do not compare individual projects against others, particularly over a decade of intensive rebuilding efforts, which result in constantly changing conditions for each project. We also recognize that achieving our strategic goals in any particular sector in Afghanistan requires a number of projects working together over time -- including those using other donors' funds.

In Part I below, we highlight assistance programs that have contributed to measurable positive impacts on Afghanistan's development and stability. The achievements are based on objective indicators of progress including improvement on international indices for human, economic, and democratic development. In Part II, we highlight the problems we have encountered in ensuring the most cost-effective use of taxpayer dollars in achieving these gains and the methods we use to overcome them.

Part I: Measurable Results

In the education sector, there are clear indicators of progress. In 2002, only an estimated 900,000 boys, and virtually no girls, were in school. Now, there are 8 million students enrolled in school, more than a third of whom are girls. University enrollment has increased from 8,000 in 2001 to 77,000 in 2011. USAID has supported these gains by building 605 schools, training

teachers, and developing university teaching degree programs. Multiple implementers, donors and coordinated projects are responsible for these achievements. Additionally, the Embassy's Public Affairs Section funded the Bagch-i-simsim (Sesame Street) radio project. This project builds upon the success of the television project with the same name and targets millions of young rural Afghan children who do not have access to a television. The program's themes spread the values of tolerance, fairness, and peaceful resolution of conflict. Twenty-six different episodes of 30 minutes each in Dari and Pashto are broadcast on multiple radio stations throughout the country. Each show includes original content that is aligned with the Ministry of Education's early childhood educational framework.

Other U.S. Government-sponsored education programs target other equally important audiences and are designed to build capacity in critical government sectors and achieve foreign policy goals. In November 2012, the State Department hosted a two-week training program in Washington for 13 Afghan diplomats in partnership with the Public Diplomacy Council and the University of Maryland. Through formal training sessions, lectures, interactive simulations, and site visits, the Afghan visitors developed their practical skills as diplomats and gained better understanding of United States culture and policy, particularly the importance of women's rights and human rights. The importance of regular interaction with a free and independent media in a democracy was also highlighted.

The program was the second phase of a joint training program for Afghan diplomats; the first phase was sponsored by the Government of China and took place in Beijing in May. By building the capacity of the staff of the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we enhanced its professionalism and its ability to work cooperatively and effectively with the U.S. government and other countries, as well as NGOs, media outlets, universities, businesses, and religious institutions.

In the field of public health, since the displacement of the Taliban, the Afghan Ministry of Public Health has been successful in rebuilding the healthcare system with low cost, high impact interventions, to improve the health of Afghans, primarily women and children. With substantial support from the United States and other donors, access to basic health services (defined as a person's ability to reach a facility within one hour by foot) has risen from 9 percent in 2001 to more than 60 percent today, and more than 22,000 health workers have been trained *through multiple projects*.

According to the Afghanistan Mortality Survey 2010, Afghanistan has seen a rise in life expectancy from 44 years to more than 60, or an increase of 15-20 years, in the last decade. The under-five mortality rate has been reduced from 172 to 97 deaths per 1,000 live births. The estimated maternal mortality ratio declined significantly from 1,600 per 100,000 births to 327 per 100,000 births. The number of functioning primary health care facilities increased from 498 in 2002 to over 1,970 in 2010.

The gains made in the health sector are due to a coordinated effort by the donor community in the early stages of the rebuilding efforts, a focus on providing low-cost basic health services, and a determination by the Afghans to strengthen the Ministry of Public Health. These are long-term

programs that span multiple donors, and various contractors and grantees over a decade of determined focus by the health teams at USAID and the international community in concert with the Afghan Government.

In public financial management, USAID's support has helped the Afghan government grow its internal revenue collection by almost 20 percent per year since 2002. Domestic revenue is critical to reduce the Afghan government's reliance on foreign assistance and to promote long-term sustainable growth through investment in infrastructure and services. In 2010/11, domestic revenue reached \$1.7 billion or 11 percent of GDP, exceeding the IMF target of 9.2 percent per year. Revenue from Customs is the fastest-growing segment, increasing more than 400 percent since 2006. USAID's programs have assisted the Afghan government to develop a centralized Customs collection system, contributing to the sharp increases in annual Customs revenues. Afghan domestic revenue collection has underperformed in 2012, and USAID is working with the Ministry of Finance to identify potential reasons and remedial actions to address the shortfall.

To promote the role of women in Afghan politics, culture, and business, our work has helped Afghan women take on larger roles in society. Today, almost 20 percent of Afghans enrolled in higher education are women. Twenty seven percent of seats in the Parliament, one governor, three cabinet, and 120 judicial positions are now held by women. Hundreds of women's organizations are working to end violence and discrimination against women, and the Afghan Government has committed to ensuring that by 2013 at least 30 percent of government employees are women.

The Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) funds Women for Afghan Women to operate Children's Support Centers (CSCs) in Kabul, Mazar-e Sharif, and Kunduz. The CSCs provide housing and educational services for children who would otherwise be in prison with their incarcerated mothers. The majority of these children have had little to no formal education prior to arriving. CSC-educated children are at the top of their classes and some have been placed in advanced study programs abroad. Children are allowed to stay at the CSC until they turn 18 years of age (even after their mothers are released), allowing their mothers to have the time needed to construct a stable home environment. INL's commitment to helping these children improve their lives has been key to the overall success of this program.

INL also supports the operations of nine women's shelters across Afghanistan and the Afghan Women's Shelter Network, which brings together Afghan shelter providers to discuss best practices and advocate for victims. INL's support has expanded the number of provinces where services are available to victims of gender-based violence and discrimination and facilitated an Afghan-led campaign to increase public acceptance of women's shelters. We have seen an increase in government referrals to and political support for the shelters, indicating that the Afghan government is starting to accept shelters as legitimate resources for women seeking legal and protective services. Shelters have been provided multi-year funding that extends into 2015. In 2012, INL-funded shelters benefited approximately 2,000 women and children in 30 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces.

To promote access to reliable electricity, USAID assistance has included hydro-electric and solar facilities, and has focused on making the Afghan national power company (DABS) self-sustaining through increased revenue collection and increased efficiency. In 2002, only 6 percent of Afghans had access to reliable electricity. Today nearly 30 percent do, including more than 2 million people in Kabul who now benefit from electric power 24 hours a day. DABS has increased revenues country-wide by roughly 50 percent from 2010 to 2012. This represents hundreds of millions of dollars saved in subsidies from U.S. taxpayers and other donors. The success of DABS over such a short period of time, four years, is a remarkable achievement.

To promote good governance and the rule of law in Afghanistan, INL has, through its implementing partner, assisted the General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Centers (GDPDC) in improving its capability to operate safe, secure, and humane Afghan correctional facilities. This is particularly important, given the sharp increases in arrests and prosecutions, which caused the prison population to grow dramatically from 600 prisoners in 2001 to more than 27,000 in 2013. Despite poor infrastructure, comparatively low staff salaries, and a 17 percent annual inmate growth rate, the GDPDC has built and maintained humane facilities, worked to separate National Security Threat (NST) inmates from common criminals, and implemented standard operating procedures in line with international standards in an expanding number of prisons and detention centers. These improvements can be attributed in part to comprehensive hands-on mentoring and training by INL's Corrections System Support Program (CSSP). CSSP advisors have trained 8,000 corrections officers since 2006, under rigorous oversight from INL's program managers and contracting personnel. INL's focus on training Afghan Government trainers not only created sustainable training capacity, but has resulted in the successful transfer of 90 percent of all corrections training activities to the Afghan government, an important milestone in the development of GDPDC's capabilities.

The State Department and USAID also provide training to the judicial sector and other elements of Afghan criminal justice institutions, for example, through the State Department's work with the Justice Center in Parwan (JCIP). The JCIP is a special Afghan court for the adjudication – under Afghan law, and by Afghan judges, prosecutors and defense counsel – of criminal charges filed by Afghan authorities against former U.S. Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC) detainees. The JCIP is a partnership of the Afghan Supreme Court, Attorney General's Office, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of the Interior, National Directorate of Security and Ministry of Defense, with support from Combined Joint Interagency Task Force 435, the Australian Agency for International Development, and INL.

Coordinated U.S. Government support enables the JCIP to hear thousands of cases and builds both the adjudicative capacity of the court and its personnel. The JCIP did not exist three years ago: it heard its first case in June 2010. The JCIP tried 31 primary court cases in 2010; 288 in 2011; 974 in 2012; and 780 in just the first four months of 2013. Even with its growing caseload, Afghan defense attorneys who have worked at the JCIP consistently describe the court as providing among the fairest trials in Afghanistan. INL provides formal training, daily mentoring, and operational support to nearly 100 Afghan judges, prosecutors, defense counsel, and investigators in evidence-based criminal investigations and prosecutions. In addition to

strengthening the Afghans' ability to try the important national security cases at the JCIP, INL's capacity-building support allows these legal professionals to take the skills, experiences, and lessons learned from the JCIP to their next assignments, expanding the impact of INL's support across the Afghan justice system.

The Department of State's Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) program has built and developed the Presidential Protective Service (PPS) into an effective dignitary protection unit. Beginning with the inception of the unit a year after 9/11, the ATA program has provided training, equipment and mentorship to several hundred PPS officers at the unit's camp facility. Not only has PPS received extensive training in tactical skills such as protection of national leadership, counter-assault, and defensive marksmanship, it has also institutionalized the wealth of information in those courses into its own training structure. Through participation in instructor development courses and ongoing work with ATA advisors, PPS has developed the ability to train its own officers in these specialized protective skills. In addition, Department of State-funded implementing partners have cleared more than 343,414,869 square meters of land and removed or destroyed approximately 8,049,260 landmines and other explosive remnants of war such as unexploded ordnance, abandoned ordnance, stockpiled munitions, and home-made explosives.

Part II: Problems and Solutions

The programmatic achievements noted above represent just part of the progress achieved by Afghanistan with the support and sacrifice of the United States and other donors over the past decade. Operating in a war-time environment means it is inevitable that not every program has succeeded as originally intended. Delays, fraud, poor performance, security challenges, contractor overcharges have been a too-constant feature of doing business in Afghanistan—and many of the obstacles we have encountered have been well documented and have benefited from SIGAR's oversight.

To fight corruption, we have worked aggressively to provide training and pressed the Afghan government to address corruption on a systematic basis. USAID is supporting the fight against corruption both in the way we do business, such as encouraging the use of mobile money to ensure wages are paid directly into personal accounts, and through projects like the Assistance for Afghanistan's Anticorruption Authority (4A), which supports the High Office of Oversight in the Afghan government to combat corruption.

To improve the rule of law and fight criminal activities, USAID and the Department of State work together in several areas. Afghanistan's role in the international drug trade – accounting for roughly 90 percent of heroin worldwide – contributes to increased crime, degrades the establishment of governance and the rule of law, undercuts the licit economy, and undermines public health. USAID and Department of State are working to reduce poppy cultivation by strengthening the Afghan Government's capacity to combat the drug trade and countering the link between narcotics and the insurgency. USAID's agricultural programs have helped establish 314,268 hectares with alternative crops, increased sales of licit farm and non-farm

products by \$273,333,642, benefited 2,519,420 families, and created 192,686 full-time equivalent jobs between FY 2008 - 2012.

Growth of the nation's licit economy is impeded by a largely illiterate workforce that lacks vital technical skills, as well as credit and banking systems that are underdeveloped and fragile. Meanwhile, porous borders encourage unlawful trade. These challenges, plus corruption and security concerns, continue to hinder physical and capital investment, especially by the private sector.

Inadequate security and a shortage of skilled technicians, engineers and construction workers hinder the construction and maintenance of critical infrastructure. Construction supplies often have to be imported, significantly increasing project costs.

Across sectors, a persistent insurgency and difficult security environment have made the mission much harder, despite the strong presence of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). As an example, on one USAID road project, 19 people were killed while working on construction, and 364 security incidents were reported. Security dangers often slow progress, and daily activities are made more complicated by an atmosphere of opportunism, corruption and lawlessness.

To effectively monitor the use of taxpayers' funds where there is a lack of capacity, USAID and State employ numerous oversight mechanisms at every project phase — from awarding the contract to reviewing payment claims, to overseeing the performance of our implementing partners. The Afghanistan mission uses these and more. In remote, insecure areas, USAID's monitoring and evaluation efforts are supplemented by third-party evaluators. As you are aware, in addition to our work with your office, we also work with a variety of independent oversight entities, including the State and USAID Offices of the Inspectors General and the U.S. Government Accountability Office and share the goal of ensuring U.S. funding is not wasted or abused.

In addition, by monitoring and evaluating outcomes, we are constantly seeking new ways to ensure taxpayer dollars are being used most effectively, focusing on the return on our project investment. Administrator Shah issued Sustainability Guidance to ensure that every USAID program supports increased Afghan ownership, contributes to stability, and makes the most of limited funds. Department of State programs conduct similar analyses in developing projects.

In Afghanistan, USAID is strengthening award mechanisms, vetting, financial controls and project oversight, working closely with our Afghan and ISAF counterparts. On an interagency level, databases such as FACTS Info and Afghan Info allow USAID and the Department of State to share project information, metrics, best practices and more. With Afghans, we have also launched the Assistance for Afghanistan's Anti-Corruption Authority series of initiatives to encourage transparency and accountability. This includes helping the Afghan government develop a strong anti-corruption policy and establishing a joint committee with U.S. Forces-Afghanistan and ISAF on contractor vetting and corruption.

To ensure accountability, some projects are drastically altered or funding stopped. USAID's rigorous emphasis on evaluation led us to take a hard look at the Strategic Provincial Roads project in eastern and southern Afghanistan. After three years, project outcomes were falling far short of project objectives. To avoid continued investment of taxpayer funds into an under-performing program, USAID ended the project in fall 2011.

In other cases, program benefits merited continued investment-with strategic recommendations for improvements. The National Solidarity Programme in Afghanistan had reached thousands of communities, but payment delays and operating risks in insecure areas threatened to limit future outreach. Today, the program tracks indicators of good governance, such as transparency and accountability, and an inter-ministerial committee is exploring the role existing community development councils can play for expansion into insecure areas.

In June 2009, after the Afghan Government took back control of its central prison from insurgent inmates, INL began a comprehensive renovation. Poor contractor performance and corruption led the Department to halt renovations and terminate the contract. The problems with this project highlighted the need to have an adequate number of Contracting Officer Representatives (CORs), Governmental Technical Monitors (GTMs), engineers, and program officers on the ground to provide oversight. Recognizing the need to improve oversight of construction projects, INL has significantly increased the number of U.S. and locally engaged (LE) engineers in Afghanistan and has strengthened its review and management policies.

To promote dialogue among tribal elders and the Ministry of Border and Tribal Affairs, a State public diplomacy project planned to conduct jirgas and shuras with government and local leaders. However, the implementing partner, Afghan Community Consulting, was unable to obtain adequate cooperation from the Ministry of Border and Tribal Affairs, particularly with regard to oversight of funds, or evidence of the number of participants and outcomes. When it was determined that adequate oversight could not be achieved on spending or outcomes, PAS Kabul terminated the grant, suspended future jirgas, and determined the amount of funds owed to the embassy for incomplete work, which were all returned.

We appreciate this opportunity to highlight a number of our programmatic achievements with the Afghan government and people over the past decade, as well as to note those areas where continuing attention is warranted given the challenges of operating in Afghanistan. We share SIGAR's goal of safeguarding U.S. taxpayer resources from fraud, waste, and abuse, and advance while seeking the most effective uses of those resources in advancing our nation's national security through assistance programs in Afghanistan. We look forward to working together to find ways to improve our oversight mechanisms.

Sincerely,



Daniel Feldman
Deputy Special Representative
for Afghanistan and Pakistan



J. Alexander Thier
Assistant to the Administrator
for Afghanistan and Pakistan



ASIAN AND PACIFIC
SECURITY AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
2700 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-2700

June 18, 2013

Mr. John Sopko
Special Inspector General for
Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR)
1550 Crystal Drive
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Mr. Sopko,

In response to your letter of March 25, 2013, the Department of Defense (DoD) reviewed reconstruction activities in Afghanistan and prepared the enclosed overview of successes and challenges. The U.S., Coalition, and Afghan partners have reached a decisive milestone in the campaign. Later this month, the Afghan government and the ANSF will formally assume lead security responsibility across all of Afghanistan. This is the Afghans' greatest demonstration to date of real progress towards stability and sovereignty. The enclosed response provides an overview of what we have done to get to this point and some of the things we are focused on to sustain these gains.

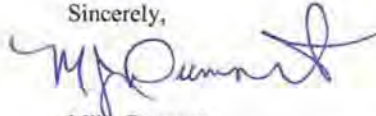
The DoD reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan aim to expand security and stability in order to achieve our core objectives: to ensure al Qaeda never again uses it as a safe haven to conduct international terrorists attacks and to ensure the Taliban do not overthrow the Afghan Government. Since the initiation of the campaign in Afghanistan, the DoD has provided support to a wide range of reconstruction activities with impact on the security, economic, and governance sectors. Many reconstruction programs are conducted together with other U.S. agencies and Coalition partners as part of the integrated civil-military campaign. Typically, reconstruction programs are evaluated on an individual basis according to program-specific criteria and their contribution towards our broader objectives in Afghanistan. Our main metrics for how we are achieving these objectives are specified in statute and are reported on in our semi-annual "Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan." We also provide extensive information for your quarterly reports to Congress on these efforts.

The enclosed information on the DoD priority reconstruction activities highlights progress and challenges experienced in the development of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and select infrastructure programs. The response reviews the positive impact of DoD efforts to grow, train, and equip the ANSF and identifies capability shortfalls that persist. It also highlights the social, economic and security benefits that accrue from a multitude of DoD-funded infrastructure projects while acknowledging the challenges that remain, including growing the capacity of the Afghan government to sustain critical infrastructure.



Thank you for the opportunity to provide this assessment of ongoing reconstruction projects and programs in Afghanistan. We want to ensure that American taxpayers are getting the results they expect from our reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. We appreciate the important role that the Special Inspector General plays to promote the efficiency and effectiveness of those programs and operations, and we will continue to work together to ensure proper oversight and accountability of government funds.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mike Dumont", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mike Dumont
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
Asian & Pacific Security Affairs

Attachments: Department of Defense Response to SIGAR March 25 Inquiry

Department of Defense Response to SIGAR March 25 Inquiry

Security Sector Reconstruction

Among the multiple lines of effort in Afghanistan, the Department of Defense's central effort has been the development of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) into a force capable of assuming lead security responsibility throughout Afghanistan and providing for its own internal security. As a result of the concerted effort by the Afghans, U.S. and Coalition partners, we have seen a significant turnaround in the security sector in Afghanistan.

As of late 2002, the Afghan government did not have legitimate control of any of the security elements in Afghanistan. The Afghan National Army (ANA) was established in early 2003, followed in 2005 by the Afghan National Police (ANP), but for years both suffered from poor leadership, low training standards, inadequate equipment and the absence of a sustainment system. As of 2009, the ANSF still lacked combat capability to meet its internal security requirements. The combined military and police forces totaled approximately 200,000, and the mission was largely confined to guard duty at static check-points. The ANSF lacked hardened vehicles, possessed limited fire support with no indirect engagement capability and had rudimentary aircraft with no casualty evacuation capability. They were further constrained by insufficient ammunition, small arms and a minimal ability to resupply. The ANSF throughout Afghanistan were understrength, fragmented, and devoid of the basic skills necessary to coordinate operations at echelons above the kandak or battalion level. The ANSF were not capable of securing Afghanistan, and U.S. and Coalition forces bore almost all the burden—and casualties—of this mission.

In late 2009, with President Obama's announcement of the U.S. troop surge, a concerted Coalition effort to grow the ANSF was initiated, with the goal of generating and fielding trained and equipped Afghan combat elements capable of pushing back the Taliban and establishing security in populated areas. A combined ANSF and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) partnership established training programs and an equipping plan to rapidly develop ANSF combat capabilities. Unit partnering between Afghan and ISAF forces, enabled by the troop surge, provided the space to develop ANSF capabilities and leadership skills from the tactical level up. This resulted in a current force of over 340,000 military and police personnel with proven capabilities in counterinsurgency operations with increasing coordination across the Army, Police, and intelligence personnel. Although nascent, the ANA has demonstrated an emerging ability to conduct more complex combined arms operations by synchronizing infantry, artillery and other combat capabilities at the Corps/Brigade level. In some areas, the ANSF have implemented a layered security concept that decreases vulnerabilities in any single arm of the force by leveraging the capabilities of the entire force (e.g., Afghan Local Police (ALP), ANA Special Operations Forces (ANASOF), ANA, ANP, Afghan Border Police (ABP), National Directorate of Security (NDS), etc.), providing security to the Afghan people with minimal or no assistance from the Coalition.

The ANSF, and especially the ANA, have made remarkable progress, particularly since early 2012. In late 2012, the ANA had no corps/division headquarters and only one of the 23 Afghan National Army (ANA) brigade headquarters capable of conducting independent operations. Today the ANA

has one corps/division headquarters, five brigade headquarters and 27 battalions capable of operating independently. Another six ANA Corps/Divisions, 16 ANA Brigades and 71 battalions are rated as "Effective with Advisors." ANP units have also improved, with 44 units rated as "Independent with Advisors" and a further 86 units rated as "Effective with Advisors."¹ The growing ANA Special Operations Command (ANASOC) has also made strides towards becoming an independent and effective force – with the vast majority of ANA special operations forces (SOF) missions, to include night operations, being Afghan-led. The ANSF are now leading over 80 percent of total operations and carrying out many unilaterally. ISAF unilateral operations account for less than 10 percent of total operations nationwide, and in many provinces, ISAF unilateral operations account for less than 1 percent. The Afghan government will soon announce Milestone 2013: recognizing the Afghan assumption of security lead for 100 percent of the population and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) will shift to an advisor-support role.

A few areas of development are highlighted below to show the impact of the combined U.S. and Coalition forces security force assistance programs to the ANSF:

- **Build.** The ANSF have grown 73 percent in overall numbers since 2009. This growth is extraordinary given that the ANSF have been actively engaged in combat operations while building the force. In addition, the Afghan Local Police, a village-based security program administered by Ministry of Interior (MoI) and aimed at expanding security and governance, has also grown at a steady pace from 3,100 in January 2011 to over 21,000 in March 2013. An emerging ANSF maneuver capability is the Mobile Strike Force (MSF), an armored, wheel-based platform conceived to rapidly reinforce infantry units. The fielding of seven MSF kandaks has begun and is projected to be complete by December 2014.
- **Equipping.** The total Afghan security forces consist of six ANA combat corps, an ANASOC, which includes an Afghan Special Mission Wing, hundreds of ANP units, and an ALP equipped with more than 14,700 up-armored vehicles; 68,900 other combat support vehicles; half a million pieces of weaponry, including more than 1,500 indirect-fire weapons; 193,000 pieces of communications equipment; 10,500 night-vision devices; and a growing counter-IED capability consisting of 24 Route Clearance Company units with 457 mine rollers.
- **Training development.** Through professional development branch schools, including the National Military Academy of Afghanistan, and institutional training centers, including the premier Kabul Military Training Center (KMTC), the ANSF have received leadership and technical training to develop the capabilities needed to sustain the force. To augment training capacity, the ANA and ANP are using mobile training teams to provide professional training to personnel fielded without training at branch schools. In accordance with the overall Transition, the ANSF developed a self-training capability, via the "Train the

¹ "Independent with Advisors" is defined as the unit being able to plan and execute its mission and, if necessary, can call for and integrate joint effects from Coalition forces. "Effective with Advisors" means that the Coalition provides only limited, occasional guidance to staff and may provide enablers that are missing from higher or lower ANSF units.

Instructor” program and have grown their number of instructors by 60% since 2010. The ANSF now conducts 85 percent of all training, including all basic courses.

- **Sustainment.** The ability of the Afghan forces to supply and sustain themselves remains a significant challenge and is a focus of current DoD assistance. As their capabilities develop, the ANSF are gradually taking responsibility for combat service support and sustainment responsibilities, including distribution, maintenance, ammunition management, fuel and other classes of supply at the national and regional logistics nodes and institutions. Several classes of supply including Class I Subsistence (food and water), Class II Individual Equipment (clothing), Class IV (construction materiel), and Class VI (personal items) have already been fully transitioned to ANSF control. For the MoD, the Central Movement Agency (CMA) conduct monthly resupply missions to the ANA forces on their own from the Central Supply Depot (CSD).
- **Literacy.** Widespread Afghan illiteracy also poses a challenge for developing the ANSF into a sustainable force with the requisite technical and leadership skills. Literacy training efforts for the ANSF have been expansive to tackle this issue. Between November 2009 and April 2013, over 194,000 ANSF personnel passed some level of Dari and/or Pashto literacy and numeracy training, including over 57,000 who have achieved Level 3 literacy. As of April 2013, over 73,000 ANSF personnel are in some form of literacy training.
- **Ministerial development.** The Ministries of Defense and Interior must have the capacity to organize, resource, train, and sustain their forces, and to exercise command and control over them. With the ANSF force structure nearly complete, the DoD is focused on ministerial development and is adjusting an existing program to deploy DoD functional experts to help develop crucial ministry capabilities, such as: resource management; acquisition; contracting; strategy and policy development; and human resources management.

While the ANSF have demonstrated remarkable progress, shortfalls persist in some enabler areas, including command and control, intelligence fusion, logistics, counter-IED, fire support, and air support. Having realized the goal of growing and equipping the ANSF into a force capable of assuming the lead security role, we have shifted emphasis to increasing the quality and professionalism of the ANSF. As we move beyond combat operation capability to more technical areas, we are building off the literacy improvement to increase professionalism, upgrade intelligence capability and improve the sustainment systems (including logistics and maintenance). Many of the units that remain to be fielded are specialty units and critical enablers and will require more time to receive training that is more technical in nature. The DoD developed a plan to accelerate the development of enabler capabilities, including expanded training in logistics, maintenance, engineering, and intelligence. The FY14 DoD budget request for Afghan Security Forces Fund includes \$2.6B to support this effort.

The progress made by the ISAF-led surge has put the Afghan government in control of all Afghanistan’s major cities and 34 provincial capitals. ISAF’s focus is now shifting from directly fighting the insurgency to supporting the ANSF in holding these gains. Through the ISAF Security Force Assistance Team (SFAT) concept of train, advise, and assist, we expect the

ANSF will take full security responsibility for Afghanistan while simultaneously gaining proficiency in combat enablers and combat service support systems.

Construction and Infrastructure Development

The Department of Defense has also provided support to numerous projects and programs focused on developing civilian and military infrastructure that enable social, economic, governance, and security improvements that bring stability to Afghanistan. These efforts help strengthen the connection between the Afghan population and the district, provincial and national governments, facilitate access to security, healthcare and commerce, and help maintain security and stability gains. Below are some illustrative project and program highlights of the impact these activities have had and the benefit they provide to the overall mission:

Security Sector Infrastructure

ISAF is nearing completion of its infrastructure building program for the ANSF, which will deliver the final 429 projects by December 2014 and result in a program end state of more than 3,900 separate structures, valued at \$9.4 billion, built for both the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior. These include national and regional headquarters, military hospitals, training centers and schools, and forward operating bases, and have helped expand the reach of the security, governmental, and medical services. This program is continuously reviewed to ensure that the current infrastructure projects are still valid requirements, and has resulted in the reduction in total cost of the ANSF program from the originally planned \$11.38 billion to \$9.41 billion. As these projects come to completion, facility maintenance will be a challenge. Both ANSF organic capability and contracting support to maintain facilities are still nascent and the number of assigned facility engineers for both MoD and MoI are below targets. As a bridging strategy, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) provides facility maintenance and training for a period of up to six months following construction completion, allowing time to build the capabilities of assigned Afghan engineers.

Civil Sector Reconstruction

The DoD recognizes education as a priority for increasing security and stability and continues to use the Commander's Emergency Response Fund (CERP) to advance development in this area. The DoD has obligated more than \$230 million in CERP funds to support more than 4000 projects aimed at improving the education of Afghan students, including building and refurbishing schools, and the purchase and distribution of millions of textbooks for math, science, language, civics, history, and cultural studies.

CERP projects in Farah highlight these contributions. A series of schools were built in Farah province over the past few years and are successfully staffed and maintained by the Afghan ministry of education, including Zehken School, Lash Juwain High School, Qala Zaman High School, Mirman Nazo High School, Runaakha School, and the Pir Kunder School.

- Zehken Girls School Project. A school built specifically for the education of girls in the northwestern district of Anar Dara in Farah province was completed in July of 2009 and has

been educating girls in Anar Dara ever since. Teachers and building maintenance are supplied by the Ministry of Education.

- Lash Juwain High School Project. This secondary school built in the southwestern district of Lash Juwain is one of the few High Schools in the region. It was completed in 2008 and has continuously educated students since then.
- Runaakha Girls School Project. This girls' school was built in the First District of Farah City in 2006 and has been continuously used and maintained since then.

In the first quarter of 2013, the DoD funded the procurement and delivery of desks and chairs for students in Mazar-e-Sharif who would otherwise sit on classroom floors due to overcrowding. As the operational environment has matured with more emphasis on stabilization and enabling governance, support for education programs is even more critical, especially for increasing the role of women within the Afghan government and society.

The DoD has also provided substantial support to building and refurbishing healthcare facilities throughout Afghanistan, and recently completed the construction of a small district hospital in Shindand that brings a higher level of medical care to over 240,000 Afghans.

The DoD has played a key role in providing increased electrical power to the restive areas of Kandahar and Helmand provinces. The Kandahar Bridging Solution, initiated through CERP, and maintained with the Afghanistan Infrastructure Fund, rapidly provided additional electricity to the Kandahar City area helping to increase stability and security in the area. The power project increased the availability and reliability of electricity to hundreds of thousands of residents and facilitates employment, communication, healthcare, education and industry. While in 2010 there were only three factories in the Shorandam Industrial Park powered by their own small generators, there are now roughly 66 factories in Shorandam with the additional power made available through the Kandahar Bridging Solution.

Finally, the DoD supports the development of road infrastructure. Improving the Afghan's ability to move freely around the country (both civilians and military) via paved road network is an important part of establishing and maintaining stability and security, enhancing economic development and improving the lives of the Afghan populace. The DoD has successfully built and refurbished a number of roads throughout Afghanistan. One prime example is the Nawa to Lashkar Gah road paving project in the southwest, funded by the Afghanistan Infrastructure Fund, which provides an important link between Nawa and the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah. The highly successful paved road has increased security for the population, and improved access for many residents to the more sophisticated health care offered in Lashkar Gah. The road is also bolstering commerce between the two cities, decreasing the delivery time for perishable goods, and facilitating increased overall economic activity throughout the region.

While the Afghan government continues to develop the capability and capacity to sustain transportation networks and power infrastructure, the ministries responsible for maintaining this critical infrastructure still require continued training and assistance to adequately execute an Operations and Maintenance plan on the scale required for Afghanistan. Identification,

budgeting, and financing of externally financed assets will be a challenge facing transition. The Afghan government will have to maintain the political will for reforms to grow internal capacity in order to sustain existing infrastructure. Improvements in capacity will support both the budgeting processes for O&M costs, as well as the disbursement of the budget throughout the year, increasing the likelihood of sustainability for assets and service delivery.