

SIGAR

**Special Inspector General for
Afghanistan Reconstruction**

OFFICE OF SPECIAL PROJECTS

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BASE CLOSURES AND TRANSFERS IN AFGHANISTAN: THE U.S. HAS DISPOSED OF \$907 MILLION IN FOREIGN EXCESS REAL PROPERTY

This product was completed under SIGAR's Office of Special Projects, the Special Inspector General's response team created to examine emerging issues in prompt, actionable reports to federal agencies and the Congress. The work was conducted pursuant to the Special Inspector General's authorities and responsibilities under the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2008 (P.L. 110-181).



MARCH 2016

SIGAR-16-23-SP



SIGAR

Office of the Special Inspector General
for Afghanistan Reconstruction

March 14, 2016

Congressional Committees:

Between January 2010 and October 2015, the Department of Defense disposed of about \$907 million worth of Foreign Excess Real Property (FERP) in Afghanistan.¹ Of that amount, approximately \$858 million worth of FERP was donated to the Afghan government, which constitutes additional resources that the United States has made available in connection with the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The purpose of the following report is to inform Congress and U.S. taxpayers about the process DOD follows when disposing of FERP in Afghanistan as well as the monetary value of the property provided to the Afghan government.

In connection with our broader review of the U.S. military's efforts to retrograde and dispose of equipment, vehicles, and other property in Afghanistan, SIGAR requested information from DOD regarding the transfer and closure of former U.S. military bases there.² In particular, my office requested information concerning base names, locations, and the total estimated value of transferred real and personal property associated with closed bases and those bases transferred to the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF).

After analyzing the information provided by the department, we determined that DOD mainly disposed of FERP by transferring it to the ANDSF and other entities within the Afghan government. We also determined that DOD has now closed more than 200 bases that it formerly operated. Finally, it is important to note that the property values presented in the following report conform to DOD depreciation models, which DOD uses in determining whether and how to transition a base, and do not reflect the original acquisition costs of the property.

We received comments on a draft of this report from the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia. Those comments do not dispute our findings and are reproduced in Appendix I. We also received technical comments on a draft of this report from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, and U.S. Central Command, which we incorporated as appropriate.

We conducted this special project in Washington, D.C. from July 2015 to March 2016, in accordance with SIGAR's quality control standards. These standards require that we carry out work with integrity, objectivity, and independence, and provide information that is factually accurate and reliable. For more information on the policies and procedures and quality control standards for conducting

¹ U.S. Forces – Afghanistan has defined FERP as any U.S.-owned real property located outside of the U.S. and its territories that is under the control of a Federal agency, but that the head of the agency has deemed to be unnecessary to meet the agency's needs or responsibilities.

² SIGAR, *Transfer of U.S. Bases to the Afghan National Security Forces Inquiry Letter*, Special Project 15-48-SP, April 17, 2015.

special project work, please see SIGAR's website (www.SIGAR.mil). SIGAR performed this special project under the authority of Public Law No. 110-181, as amended, and the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended. Should you or your staff have any questions about t this project, please contact Mr. Matthew Dove, Director of Special Projects, at (703) 545-6051 or matthew.d.dove.civ@mail.mil.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John F. Sopko', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John F. Sopko
Special Inspector General
For Afghanistan Reconstruction

LIST OF COMMITTEES

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BACKGROUND

In January 2010, the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) began “transitioning” its bases in Afghanistan, shortly before the President announced that the U.S. mission in Afghanistan was going to shift from combat to support.³ While U.S. combat operations did not formally cease until the end of 2014, the complexity of drawdown operations warranted base closures and transfers before the formal conclusion of those operations.⁴

DOD’s “transitioning” of bases in Afghanistan generally involves one of three general approaches:

- **Closure:** Requires the complete removal or deconstruction of all base functions, personal property, and known environmental hazards from a base. Upon removal or deconstruction, the real estate of the base must be returned to the owner.⁵ Where DOD has leased land for bases from a private owner, the U.S. must return the land to its original private owner after the lease agreement is terminated.⁶
- **Transfer:** Entails transferring excess personal property, real property,⁷ or both at a base to the Afghan government or other non-profit organization, for its occupation and use.⁸ Base Closure Assistance Teams identify property for potential donation, while US Forces – Afghanistan (USFOR-A) vets the property to determine that it is excess and no longer needed. The Resolute Support Commander has the final authority to transfer property.⁹
- **Partial transfer or closure:** Occurs when only portions of a base are transferred or closed, while U.S. forces continue to use and occupy the remaining portion.¹⁰

The real property on U.S. bases in Afghanistan that are closed or transferred generally falls under the label of Foreign Excess Real Property (FERP). USFOR-A defines FERP as any U.S.-owned real property located outside of the United States and its territories that is under the control of a Federal agency, but that the head of the agency has deemed to be unnecessary to meet the agency’s needs or

³ President Barack Obama, Remarks by the President on the Way Forward in Afghanistan (June 22, 2011).

⁴ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Afghanistan Equipment Drawdown Progress Made, but Improved Controls in Decision Making Could Reduce Risk of Unnecessary Expenditures*, GAO-14-768, September 2014.

⁵ U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, *Base Closure and Transfer Policy & Standard Operating Procedures (Bagram, Afghanistan: United States Forces-Afghanistan)*, 2015.

⁶ DOD, *Response to SIGAR Inquiry Letter on the Transfer of U.S. Bases to ANSF*, (SIGAR Inquiry Letter 15-48-SP Dated April 17, 2015), August 6, 2015.

⁷ Real property is typically defined as “Land and anything growing on, attached to, or erected on it, excluding anything that may be severed without injury to the land,” and is distinguished from personal property. See, e.g., Black’s Law Dictionary. However, for the purposes of base closure and transfer in Afghanistan, USFOR-A defines real property as “land, structures and facilities, improvements, fixtures, and related personal property.” U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, *Base Closure and Transfer Policy & Standard Operating Procedures (Bagram, Afghanistan: United States Forces-Afghanistan)*, 2015, p. 26). For the purposes of this SIGAR product, the term “real property” is used consistent with USFOR-A’s definition.

⁸ According to U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, *Base Closure and Transfer Policy & Standard Operating Procedures*, donations to the Afghan government are considered donations to a non-profit organization (see, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, *Base Closure and Transfer Policy & Standard Operating Procedures (Bagram, Afghanistan: United States Forces-Afghanistan)*, 2015, p. 27).

⁹ DOD, *Response to the Inquiry Letter on the Transfer of U.S. Bases to ANSF*, (SIGAR Inquiry Letter 15-48-SP Dated April 17, 2015), June 29, 2015; U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, *Base Closure and Transfer Policy & Standard Operating Procedures (Bagram, Afghanistan: United States Forces-Afghanistan)*, 2015.

¹⁰ U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, *Base Closure and Transfer Policy & Standard Operating Procedures (Bagram, Afghanistan: United States Forces-Afghanistan)*, 2015.

responsibilities.¹¹ Before disposing of FERP in Afghanistan, the donor agency must declare the property excess and ensure that another department or agency of the U.S. government does not require it to fulfill U.S. government objectives.¹²

According to the DOD Base Closure and Transfer Policy Standard Operating Procedures, bases should only be considered for transfer when there is an operational or tactical necessity, the receiving Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) unit has been established but is awaiting assignment of personnel, or the base is a permanent bed-down location.¹³ FERP donated by DOD to the Afghan government constitutes further resources made available through the reconstruction effort. When determining which items on a base to destroy or donate, DOD considers the following:

- The operational security of U.S. and Coalition Forces;
- U.S. and Coalition requirements for using equipment at other locations;
- The Afghan government's desire to receive the real or personal property;
- An assessment of the Afghan government's requirements and ability to sustain facilities and equipment transferred;
- The criticality of the equipment or facilities to base security and infrastructure; and,
- U.S. requirements to remove hazardous material.¹⁴

While Resolute Support Mission provides engagement and support to the ANDSF on the maintenance and sustainment of real property that the U.S. has provided, the U.S. government does not monitor FERP once it is transferred to the Afghan government. DOD has reported that it does not intend to expend further funds on U.S. and Coalition bases that were transferred to the Afghan government, because the U.S. intended from the time it began constructing bases in Afghanistan to remove them completely or to replace them with permanent infrastructure at the end of their lifecycles.¹⁵

On April 15, 2015, SIGAR sent a letter to the Secretary of Defense requesting information related to the transfer of U.S. bases to the ANDSF. In particular, SIGAR requested information regarding the number of bases transferred, the policies governing the process for transferring property, the value of the bases transferred, and any efforts DOD was undertaking to monitor bases after transfer to the ANDSF. DOD provided responses to the inquiry letter on July 6, 2015, and provided updated information on July 20 and August 13, 2015. The following report reflects SIGAR's analysis of the information provided by DOD.

¹¹ U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, *Base Closure and Transfer Policy & Standard Operating Procedures (Bagram, Afghanistan: United States Forces-Afghanistan)*, 2015, p. 26).

¹² DOD, *Response to the Inquiry Letter on the Transfer of U.S. Bases to ANSF, (SIGAR Inquiry Letter 15-48-SP Dated April 17, 2015)*, June 29, 2015.

¹³ U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, 2015. Force bed-down is the provision of expedient facilities for troop support to provide a platform for the projection of force.

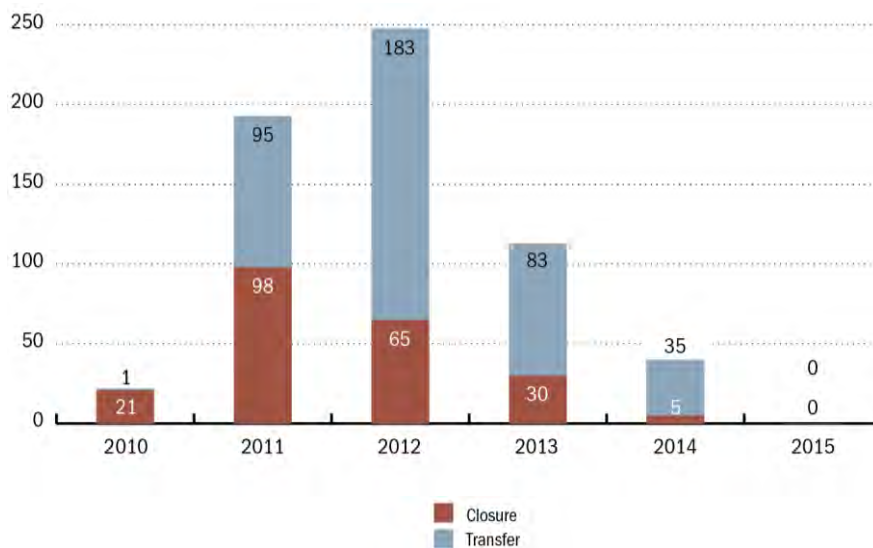
¹⁴ DOD, *Response to the Inquiry Letter on the Transfer of U.S. Bases to ANSF, (SIGAR Inquiry Letter 15-48-SP Dated April 17, 2015)*, June 29, 2015.

¹⁵ Department of Defense, *Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, 2015.

DOD TRANSFERRED OR CLOSED 616 BASES BETWEEN 2010 AND 2015

According to DOD, the first bases transferred to the Afghan government were generally tactical infrastructure outposts, which were small, temporary locations that had been occupied by a platoon-sized element or smaller.¹⁶ Over the course of the drawdown, the size and value of the bases and associated infrastructure transferred to the Afghan government gradually expanded. According to DOD, the U.S. operated 715 bases over the course of the war, ranging from small, tactical combat outposts to large operational bases.¹⁷ From 2010 to February 2015, DOD transferred 391 U.S. bases to the Afghan government, and six bases to other U.S. government agencies.¹⁸ In addition, DOD closed 219 bases.¹⁹ Figure 1 shows the breakdown of transfers by year versus closures by year.

Figure 1 - Transfers and Closures of U.S. Bases Comparison by Year, 2010 - 2015 (Number of Bases)²⁰



Source: SIGAR Analysis of USFOR-A Data

¹⁶ DOD, *Response to the Inquiry Letter on the Transfer of U.S. Bases to ANSF*, (SIGAR Inquiry Letter 15-48-SP Dated April 17, 2015), June 29, 2015; SIGAR, *Afghan National Security Forces: Additional Action Needed to Reduce Waste in \$4.7 Billion Worth of Planned and Ongoing Construction Projects*, Audit Report 13-18-AR, Audit 13-18, September 2013, p. 4.

¹⁷ DOD, *Response to the Inquiry Letter on the Transfer of U.S. Bases to ANSF*, (SIGAR Inquiry Letter 15-48-SP Dated April 17, 2015), September 9, 2015. Of the 715 bases that the U.S. operated, 12 bases remain open, and 87 bases were Assistance Platforms, NATO Special Operations Component Command – Afghanistan, and Special Operations Joint Task Force – Afghanistan locations that were transferred or closed.

¹⁸ Of the six bases transferred to other U.S. government agencies, four were transferred to the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force- Afghanistan, one to the Department of State, and one to an unspecified government agency.

¹⁹ DOD reported and tracked the closure of 369 bases, 150 of which were not U.S. locations but bases where U.S. forces may have been co-located (such as Assistance Platforms located within established ANDSF bases) and may have transferred U.S. property to the ANDSF.

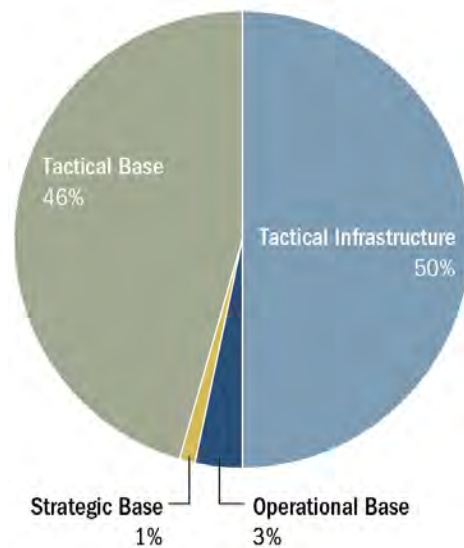
²⁰ According to DOD data, the last U.S. location was transferred to the Afghans in November 2014 but DOD reported and tracked the transfer of 3 non-U.S. locations up to February 2015.

DOD divides the bases that were transferred or closed into the following four categories:

1. **Tactical infrastructure:** Can range from large bases to small combat outposts.
2. **Tactical bases:** Usually house companies, battalions, or brigade-sized elements.
3. **Operational bases:** Are primarily used for intra-theatre transportation and are capable of providing support for local and regional operations, security, and humanitarian relief. Operational bases have “limited infrastructure and rely on contracted services for sustainment.”²¹
4. **Strategic bases:** Provide a platform for inter-theatre transportation and can provide strategic or operational command and control. Strategic bases serve as regional logistics hubs.²²

Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of base types transferred to the Afghan government. As shown, tactical infrastructure and tactical bases made up the majority of transferred bases.

Figure 2 - Total Percentage of U.S. Base Transfers by Base Type, 2010 - 2015



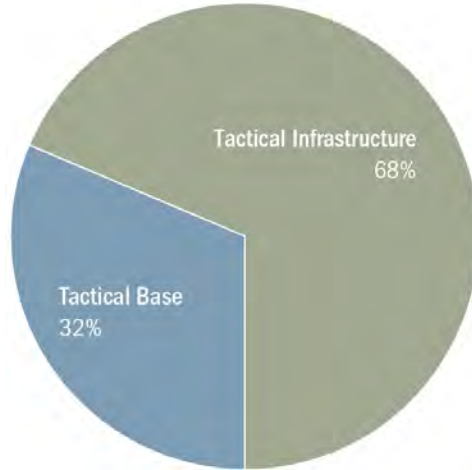
Source: SIGAR Analysis of USFOR-A Data

Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of base types that the DOD closed in Afghanistan.

²¹ U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, *Base Closure and Transfer Policy & Standard Operating Procedures (Bagram, Afghanistan: United States Forces-Afghanistan)*, 2015.

²² *Id.*

Figure 3 - Total Percentage of Base Closures by Base Type, 2011 - 2015



Source: SIGAR Analysis of USFOR-A Data

Of the 397 bases that DOD transferred, the Afghan National Army (ANA) received 225, and the Afghan National Police (ANP) received 118. DOD also transferred 48 bases to other Afghan entities, and 6 bases to other U.S. government agencies. Table 1 further describes the types of bases transferred directly to the ANA and ANP, and does not include bases transferred to other Afghan entities or U.S. agencies.

TABLE 1 - BASES TRANSFERRED BY RECIPIENT AND TYPE

	ANA	ANP
TACTICAL BASE	115	38
TACTICAL INFRASTRUCTURE	93	80
OPERATIONAL BASE	13	-
STRATEGIC BASE	4	-
TOTAL	225	118

Source: SIGAR Analysis of USFOR-A Data

The ANA received the largest proportion of transferred U.S. bases (57 percent). Of the 225 U.S. bases transferred to the ANA, 115 of them (51 percent) were tactical bases. The ANP received 30 percent of the total base transfers. Unlike the ANA, the ANP received a majority of tactical infrastructure, which accounted for 68 percent of all bases transferred to the ANP.²³

²³ The total number of bases transferred to the Afghan National Army includes bases transferred to the Afghan

National Army Special Operations Forces. The total number of bases transferred to the Afghan National Police includes bases transferred to the Afghan Border Police, the Afghan Uniform Police, and the Afghan National Civil Order Police.

While the ANA and ANP were the two largest recipients of transferred bases, the U.S. also oversaw the transfer of bases to other components of the Ministry of Defense as well as the Ministry of Interior. In addition, other U.S. government agencies also received transferred bases, including the Department of State.

Table 2 further describes the types of U.S. bases that were closed.

TABLE 2 – BASES CLOSED BY TYPE

TACTICAL BASE	69
TACTICAL INFRASTRUCTURE	150
TOTAL	219

Source: SIGAR Analysis of USFOR-A Data

DOD DISPOSED OF \$907 MILLION IN FERP FROM 2010 TO 2015

DOD disposed of FERP mostly through donations to the Afghan government. From 2010 to 2015, DOD reported to SIGAR that it disposed of a depreciated total value of \$907,129,693.83 of FERP from the transition of 616 bases in Afghanistan.²⁴ The U.S. cannot sell FERP in Afghanistan to the Afghan government.²⁵ If not transferred to another U.S. military department or federal agency, FERP can only be abandoned, deconstructed, or donated. Different items of FERP on the same base can each be abandoned, deconstructed, or donated. FERP can be abandoned or deconstructed if any one of the following three circumstances apply: (1) the property has no commercial value, (2) the estimated cost of continued care and handling of the property exceeds the estimated sales revenue, or (3) the abandonment or destruction is a military necessity or a health and safety consideration.²⁶

For example, a small combat outpost may be deconstructed in order to prevent the enemy from occupying key terrain.²⁷ When considering whether to abandon FERP on military bases, commanders must assess whether the abandonment will have a negative impact on the local population.²⁸

Table 3 shows the total depreciated value of completed FERP donations, destruction, and abandonment in Afghanistan.²⁹

²⁴ DOD calculates the depreciated value of FERP by multiplying the initial cost of the property by the remaining number of years of useful life and dividing that number by the total number of years of the useful life of the property.

²⁵ U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, *Base Closure and Transfer Policy & Standard Operating Procedures (Bagram, Afghanistan: United States Forces-Afghanistan)*, 2015, p. 105.

²⁶ Id, p. 27.

²⁷ Id, p. 32.

²⁸ Id.

²⁹ Tables 3, 4, and 5 reflect the total number of items donated, deconstructed, or abandoned. According to DOD, in some cases, bases were transferred without any items donated, deconstructed, or abandoned. Tables 3, 4, and 5 exclude these bases. On some bases,

Table 3: Value of Completed FERP Donations, Destruction, and Abandonment

	DEPRECIATED VALUE	#ITEMS
COMPLETED DONATIONS	\$858,710,545.83	11,762 across 223 bases
COMPLETED DESTRUCTION	\$45,876,145.00	808 across 15 bases
COMPLETED ABANDONMENT	\$2,543,003.00	181 across 18 bases
COMPLETED FERP DISPOSAL TOTAL	\$907,129,693.83	12,751 across 256 bases

Source: SIGAR Analysis of USFOR-A Data

As shown in Tables 4 and 5, the majority of FERP disposal was composed of donations on transferred bases. Of the approximately \$907 million in completed FERP disposal, completed donations on transferred bases accounted for \$851 million—nearly 94 percent.

Table 4: Value of Completed Donations, Destruction, and Abandonment of Items of FERP on Transferred Bases

	DEPRECIATED VALUE	#ITEMS
COMPLETED DONATIONS	\$851,378,452.13	10,930 across 202 bases
COMPLETED DESTRUCTION	\$42,140,473.00	449 across 11 bases
COMPLETED ABANDONMENT	\$1,460,297.00	152 across 10 bases
COMPLETED FERP DISPOSAL TOTAL	\$894,979,222.13	11,531 across 223 bases

Source: SIGAR Analysis of USFOR-A Data

Table 5 – Value of Completed Donations, Destruction, and Abandonment of Items of FERP on Closed Bases

	DEPRECIATED VALUE	#ITEMS
COMPLETED DONATIONS	\$7,332,093.70	832 across 21 bases
COMPLETED DESTRUCTION	\$3,735,672.00	359 across 4 bases
COMPLETED ABANDONMENT	\$1,082,706.00	29 across 8 bases
COMPLETED FERP DISPOSAL TOTAL	\$12,150,471.70	1,220 across 33 bases

Source: SIGAR Analysis of USFOR-A Data

Nearly \$236 Million of FERP Donated at Camp Leatherneck

One of the largest FERP donations to the Afghan government was that associated with the transfer of Camp Leatherneck on October 26, 2014, when the NATO coalition formally ended its mission in Helmand province. Coalition forces transferred Camp Leatherneck (U.S.) and Camp Bastion (United Kingdom) to the ANA 215th Corps. The U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) previously controlled and operated Camp Leatherneck and DOD records obtained by SIGAR indicate that DOD donated \$235,999,549.00 worth of FERP from the base to the Afghan government. Additionally, DOD reported the deconstruction \$38,806,549.00 worth of FERP on Camp Leatherneck.

DOD's depreciation calculation resulted in a value of \$0 for some items of FERP. In these cases, DOD donated items that had no monetary value. As a result, DOD transitioned 512 bases that contained items of value.

In August 2014, the USMC coordinated with ANA officials to decide which Camp Leatherneck buildings, infrastructure, and equipment would be donated, destructed, or abandoned. The USMC formulated a training plan with ANA personnel to show the ANA how to properly operate and maintain Camp Leatherneck's infrastructure systems before transferring the base, including the base water, sewage, electrical (power grids and generators), telecommunications, transportation, and environmental systems. This training and turnover plan was implemented between September and October 2014. According to DOD, the ANA 215th Corps currently utilize and share the facilities at Camp Leatherneck with advisors and trainers.

CONCLUSION

Between January 2010 and October 2015, the DOD transferred or closed 616 of the 715 total bases that it operated in Afghanistan, including tactical infrastructure, tactical bases, operational bases, and strategic bases throughout the country. When transitioning these bases, DOD has closed 219 bases and transferred 391 bases to entities within the Afghan government, most often to the ANA and ANP. DOD transferred the remaining six bases to other U.S. government agencies.

The FERP that DOD has disposed of from those 616 bases has a total depreciated value of more than \$907 million. Of that amount, the total depreciated value of FERP that originally supported U.S. troops but that the U.S. has abandoned or destroyed is approximately \$48 million. The total depreciated value of FERP that originally supported U.S. troops and has been donated to the Afghan government is approximately \$858 million. Since this donated property is now supporting the ANDSF and other components of the Afghan government, it constitutes additional resources that the United States has provided to the Afghan government as a part of the reconstruction effort.

APPENDIX I – COMMENTS FROM THE DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN, AND CENTRAL ASIA, DATED 01 MARCH 2016



ASIAN AND PACIFIC
SECURITY AFFAIRS

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

The Honorable John Sopko
Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
1550 Crystal Drive, 9th Floor
Arlington, VA 22202

March 1, 2016

Dear Mr. Sopko:

In response to your January 2016 Report, "Department of Defense Base Closures and Transfers in Afghanistan: The U.S. Has Disposed of \$907 Million in Foreign Excess Real Property," please see the attached clarifications provided by USFOR-A via CENTCOM.

U.S. forces consider several criteria during the base closure process in Afghanistan. With respect to property, in most cases transfer to the Afghan Government is the most cost effective means of disposing of unneeded U.S. Government facilities. Transferring property reduces U.S. disposal costs when compared to deconstruction and provides the Afghan Government with facilities that can be used for a variety of purposes including commercial re-development or the provision of government services to the people of Afghanistan. For those facilities no longer needed by the Afghan Ministries of Defense or Interior, DoD works with the Ministries to divest those properties in our efforts to reduce long-term facilities sustainment costs.

Similar to the provision in status of forces agreements with other countries, Article 8 of the Security and Defense Cooperation Agreement between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan states:

"United States forces shall return to Afghanistan any agreed facility or area, or any portion thereof, including buildings, non-relocatable structures, and assemblies connected to the soil, including those constructed, altered, or improved by United States forces, when no longer needed for United States forces' use. United States forces shall keep the requirements for such agreed facilities and areas under periodic reassessment with a view toward such return."

Please feel free to contact me or my staff should you have any additional questions concerning this subject or any other area that you are reviewing.

Sincerely,

Christine Abizaid
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia



APPENDIX II – ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

William B. Gaertner, Associate General Counsel
Tobi Rosenweig, Intern

This project was conducted
under project code SP-96C.

SIGAR's Mission

The mission of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) is to enhance oversight of programs for the reconstruction of Afghanistan by conducting independent and objective audits, inspections, and investigations on the use of taxpayer dollars and related funds. SIGAR works to provide accurate and balanced information, evaluations, analysis, and recommendations to help the U.S. Congress, U.S. agencies, and other decision-makers to make informed oversight, policy, and funding decisions to:

- improve effectiveness of the overall reconstruction strategy and its component programs;
- improve management and accountability over funds administered by U.S. and Afghan agencies and their contractors;
- improve contracting and contract management processes;
- prevent fraud, waste, and abuse; and
- advance U.S. interests in reconstructing Afghanistan.

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