SIGAR | Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction

November 27, 2013

The Honorable Chuck T. Hagel
Secretary of Defense

General Lloyd J. Austin III
Commander, U.S. Central Command

General Joseph F. Dunford, Jr.
Commander, U.S. Forces – Afghanistan, and
Commander, International Security Assistance Force

Dear Secretary Hagel, General Austin, and General Dunford:

In my letter dated July 8, 2013, I requested information about the unoccupied 64,000 square foot building at Camp Leatherneck originally intended to serve as a command headquarters in support of the troop surge in Helmand Province. Nearly five months later, I have yet to receive a formal response to my questions.

Following delivery of my July letter, I was advised that an investigation into the facts and circumstances surrounding construction of the building was ongoing, and upon its completion answers to my questions would be forthcoming. Accordingly, I delayed my investigation of this matter assuming a speedy and fulsome review by your staff.

While I still have not received a response to the questions posed in my July letter, I have received the results of your most recent Army Regulation (AR) 15-6 investigation of the 64,000 square foot building, signed by Major General James M. Richardson, Deputy Commander-Support, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A). Unfortunately, Gen. Richardson's report raises additional questions, and has prompted my decision to restart SIGAR's investigation.

Gen. Richardson's report does not respond to my initial inquiry, nor does it fully address the issues associated with the 64,000 square foot building. On November 14, 2013, DOD's Director of Congressional Investigations emailed a partial copy of Gen. Richardson's report to my staff. This copy does not include the numerous exhibits and enclosures referenced in the report, lacks transparency, contains a number of unsupported statements, and fails to adequately explain its key findings and recommendations. Frankly, this does not instill confidence that a thorough and candid review was conducted of this matter.

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In addition, Gen. Richardson's report fails to address the underlying conditions that resulted in the construction of this $36 million[1] building that apparently no one wanted or needed. Without identifying and correcting these deficiencies it is almost certain that similar wastes of taxpayer dollars will occur.

My concerns are magnified by the Army's conflicting reports on this building. The Army's first AR 15-6 investigation (in May 2013) found that the building was neither wanted or needed, and suggested that it could be converted to a gymnasium and movie theatre so that it would not be a total loss. Now, only six months later, Gen. Richardson's new AR 15-6 investigation finds that it was needed after all, and recommends that more money be spent to complete the building and that someone should be ordered to "occupy and use [it] for its original purpose."

Under the circumstances, I am troubled by the recommendation that the U.S. taxpayer invest additional money to complete this building when there is a lack of clarity on the future status of Camp Leatherneck as U.S. troop withdrawals continue. If Camp Leatherneck were to close, the nearest enduring support base is likely to be Kandahar Airfield, more than 115 miles away.

Gen. Richardson's findings and recommendations raise new, additional questions, including:

- Will Camp Leatherneck remain an enduring location, as the original planning documents cited in this investigation suggest? Will the future footprint of this installation leave the unoccupied headquarters building inside or outside Camp Leatherneck? Will the building be transferred to the Afghan Government? If so, has this transfer been coordinated with the Afghan Government?

- What cost analyses and feasibility studies were performed on the unoccupied 64,000 square foot building that led to Gen. Richardson's recommendation to complete and occupy it? Were future operating and maintenance costs considered? Will there be any additional costs created by units vacating currently occupied facilities and relocating to this building? If so, what are those costs?

- Gen. Richardson found that there was no act or omission, dereliction of duty, or any other violation of law or regulation involved in the decision by Major General Peter M. Vangjel, who was then the Deputy Commanding General of U.S. Army Central Command (ARCENT),[2] to spend $25 million to construct the 64,000 square foot building. Gen. Vangjel overruled the recommendations of the Deputy Commander of USFOR-A and the Commanding General of the Marine Expeditionary Force at Camp Leatherneck, who both requested that the building be cancelled prior to its construction. Moreover,

[1] Gen. Richardson's AR 15-6 investigation report states that as of April 25, 2013, the total cost of the building had risen to $25.08M, at 98 percent complete. The higher SIGAR estimate is based on our review of the contract documents and our identification of items that we believe should be included in the total construction cost, such as the road to the building, the fencing around the building, and communications equipment for the building.

[2] Major General Vangjel's name was not contained in the AR 15-6 report – only his position was given.

according to Gen. Richardson's report, Gen. Vangjel believed it was more efficient to cancel a proposed request for a 30,000 square foot building at Camp Leatherneck, rather than to cancel the 64,000 square foot building, since the larger building had already been funded. It was noted that it would be easier to reduce the size of the already-funded 64,000 square foot building than to start over on a new approval process for a smaller building. However, in the end, this wasn't done. Why wasn't the size of the 64,000 square foot building reduced prior to construction beginning? What procedural steps led to this failure of execution? Why was this issue not specifically addressed by Gen. Richardson's AR 15-6 investigation?

To address these issues as well as the concerns raised in my July letter, I am reinstituting SIGAR's investigation of the decisions that led to the construction of this 64,000 square foot building. I believe there are important lessons we can learn from this potential waste of nearly $36 million in taxpayer funds, to make sure we do not continue to construct buildings that no one will use. We must also ensure that USFOR-A truly needs this facility before spending any additional money on a building that may never be used.

To aid our investigation, please take immediate action to retain and preserve all records, including documents, information, and data stored electronically or otherwise, related to issues surrounding the planning and construction of this building, as well as all records related to the May 2013 AR 15-6 investigation and the AR 15-6 investigation conducted by General Richardson. I also request that you direct all DOD active duty, civilian, and contractor employees not to delete or alter any such records. This request includes all pre-decisional material and applies to both on- and off-site computer systems and removable electronic media.

Please promptly provide copies of these materials, in addition to your formal responses to my July letter, so that my staff may analyze them in conjunction with our investigation. While I understand it may take some time to fully respond to this request, in the interim please provide within 10 days from the date of this letter copies of all exhibits and enclosures referenced in the first AR 15-6 investigation (dated May 20, 2013) and Gen. Richardson's recent AR 15-6 investigation (undated, but delivered to SIGAR Nov. 14, 2013).

I look forward to your prompt response and continued cooperation.

Sincerely,

John F. Sopko
Special Inspector General
for Afghanistan Reconstruction

Enclosure: Timeline for 64,000 Square Foot Building At Camp Leatherneck

ENCLOSURE
64,000 SQUARE FOOT BUILDING AT CAMP LEATHERNECK

2010

- **DECEMBER 2009:** U.S. Central Command requests funding for 64,000 sq. ft. building in FY10 Supplemental.
- **APRIL 2010:** Maj. Gen. Mills assumes command of Camp Leatherneck.
- **MAY 2010:** Maj. Gen. Mills requests cancellation of 64,000 sq. ft. building construction.
- **JUNE 2010:** Army Central Command G7 non-concurs with request to cancel 64,000 sq. ft. building construction.
- **JULY 2010:** President approves FY10 Supplemental Appropriations.

2011

- **FEBRUARY 2011:** Contract awarded for construction of 64,000 sq. ft. building building.
  - Original estimated cost $13.5M
  - Contract ceiling $24M

2012

- **OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2012:**
  - October 15: Marine Expeditionary Force-Forward accepts 64,000 sq. ft. building as constructed.
  - November 11: 64,000 sq. ft. building found to be not ready for occupancy and further construction issues arose.
- **DECEMBER 2012:** Contract modifications issued

2013

- **APRIL 2013:**
  - April 9: Marine Expeditionary Force-Forward Commander conveys intentions to not move into 64,000 sq. ft. building building
    - Fighting season is about to begin
    - Building is not ready
  - April 25: 64,000 sq. ft. building listed as 98% complete.
    - Total cost estimate risen to $25.08M
- **MAY 2013:** First AR 15-6 investigation recommends converting the 64,000 sq. ft. building to a gymnasium and movie theatre
- **NOVEMBER 2013:** SIGAR received second AR 15-6 investigation, signed by Maj. Gen. Richardson. The report recommends that the Commander, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan consider spending additional funds to complete the building and to occupy and use the building for its original purpose.