



SIGAR | SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR
AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
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Afghan Politician Sentenced on Federal Welfare Fraud Charge

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction John F. Sopko announced today that Ahmad Yusuf Nuristani, a prominent Afghan politician for many decades, was sentenced Monday by a federal judge to three years of probation and six months of home confinement.

Nuristani pleaded guilty on December 11, 2019, to theft of public money, admitting that he received over \$100,000 in government benefits by concealing foreign travel and residency between July, 2015, and December 2018.

Nuristani admitted that he applied for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) from the Social Security Administration in July 2015. He also acknowledged that he knew an SSI recipient must reside within the United States, and that he was required to report any travel outside of the United States lasting more than 30 days.

In violation of these requirements, Nuristani admitted to concealing and repeatedly lying to the Social Security Administration about his foreign travel and residency. Nuristani also admitted that he received \$27,492.44 in SSI payments and to causing a loss of \$73,090.34 to the state of California for healthcare payments and services as a result of his fraud.

Prior to sentencing in U.S. District Court in San Diego, Nuristani made full restitution to the Social Security Administration and the California Department of Health Care Services. Nuristani, 71, a former Fulbright Scholar, previously served as governor of Herat province, and was the chairman of the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan during the country's last presidential election.

In September 2018, President Ashraf Ghani appointed Nuristani to the Meshrano Jirga, the upper body of parliament in Afghanistan. Nuristani received SSI at his claimed residence in El Cajon, California, while serving as head of Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission and as an Afghan senator.

Special Inspector General Sopko said: "Make no mistake, no one is above the law in Afghanistan or the United States, no matter how prominent or powerful they may be. Our work in this case demonstrates that SIGAR and its partner agencies are fully committed to this principle. Just

because someone can get away with criminality in Afghanistan, he or she should not think the same applies here in the United States.”

This case was brought through the Travel and Residency Enforcement Co-Op (TREC), a pilot project of the Social Security Administration, its Office of Inspector General, the California Department of Health Care Services Investigations Division, and the United States Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of California. Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Jeffrey Hill led the prosecution. Special agents with the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) assisted with this investigation.

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