



SIGAR

**Special Inspector General for
Afghanistan Reconstruction**

U.S. ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS: A STRATEGIC PLAN AND MECHANISMS TO TRACK PROGRESS ARE NEEDED IN FIGHTING CORRUPTION IN AFGHANISTAN

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).

SEPTEMBER 2013

SIGAR SP-13-9

September 11, 2013

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

The Honorable James B. Cunningham
U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan

Reducing corruption and increasing accountability are important components of the U.S. reconstruction strategy in Afghanistan. Since 2002, the United States has appropriated over \$96 billion for reconstruction assistance in Afghanistan and, as part of that assistance, has designated numerous programs or activities to directly or indirectly help strengthen the ability of Afghan government institutions to combat corruption. In 2010, in line with a commitment to provide more assistance directly to the Afghan government, the United States and other donors committed, in part, to providing technical assistance to develop the Afghan government's capacity to reduce corruption.¹ The ability of the Afghan government to deliver services to its citizens without the illicit diversion of resources is crucial to the country's development and the government's standing as a legitimate, sovereign authority. Further, as Afghanistan subsequently enters a transformation phase during which it will need to rely on progressively smaller amounts of funding from international donors, it must work to ensure that the revenue it generates is not susceptible to graft and corruption.

In August 2010, we reported that more than \$50 billion in U.S. assistance had been provided for reconstruction in Afghanistan without the benefit of a comprehensive anti-corruption strategy, and U.S. anti-corruption efforts had provided relatively little assistance to some key Afghan institutions.² Since that time, an additional \$46 billion has been appropriated for reconstruction in Afghanistan. For the Afghan Ministries of Interior and Defense alone, the United States has committed at least \$1 billion in bilateral assistance for its security forces and plans to provide more bilateral aid to the Afghanistan government in the future.

We initiated this review to follow up on the findings of our 2010 report, specifically on the Department of State's establishment of a comprehensive anti-corruption strategy and to evaluate the progress the United States has made in meeting its anti-corruption goals in Afghanistan. Our objectives for this review were to (1) identify the United States' strategic goals and objectives for reducing corruption in Afghanistan and (2) assess the overall progress that U.S. agencies have made against those goals and objectives.

To conduct this review, we reviewed relevant U.S., Afghan, and international strategies and plans, program documents, and status reports, including the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework,³ the U.S. Civil-Military Strategic Framework for Afghanistan,⁴ and U.S. Embassy Kabul anti-corruption working group documentation.

¹ During a January 2010 multi-donor conference in London, the United States along with other members of the international donor community committed to increase the percentage of reconstruction assistance delivered directly through the Afghan government to 50 percent in the next two years. This support was conditioned on the Afghan government's progress in strengthening public financial management systems, reducing corruption, improving budget execution, and developing a financing strategy and government capacity to meet the goal. Conference participants confirmed their intention to provide technical assistance to develop the government's capacity to achieve this goal. See *Communique of the International Conference on Afghanistan*, London, Jan. 28, 2010.

² SIGAR Audit-10-15, *U.S. Reconstruction Efforts in Afghanistan Would Benefit from a Finalized Comprehensive U.S. Anti-Corruption Strategy*, August 5, 2010.

³ *Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework*, July 8, 2012.

⁴ *U.S. Civil-Military Strategic Framework for Afghanistan* (Kabul: October 2012, Revision 1 and August 2013, Revision 2).

We also interviewed the Deputy Ambassador to Afghanistan and numerous officials at the U.S. Embassy Kabul from the Departments of Justice; Homeland Security; and State, including officials in the Office of the Coordinating Director for Rule of Law and Law Enforcement, the Office of the Coordinating Director for Development and Economic Affairs, and Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs; and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). We conducted this review in Washington, D.C., and Kabul, Afghanistan, from February to August 2013. This work was conducted under the authority of Public Law No. 110-181, as amended and the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended.

Summary of Findings

We found that the U.S. anti-corruption activities in Afghanistan are not guided by a comprehensive U.S. strategy or related guidance that defines clear goals and objectives for U.S. efforts to strengthen the Afghan government's capability to combat corruption and increase accountability. The Department of State (State) never finalized the draft 2010 U.S. anti-corruption strategy for Afghanistan and, according to agency officials, the draft strategy and its related implementation plan are no longer in effect. In the absence of a relevant and specific anti-corruption strategy, agency officials informed us that two documents guide their current anti-corruption efforts in Afghanistan: the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework and the U.S. Civil-Military Strategic Framework for Afghanistan. However, we found that both documents lacked specific goals and objectives with measurable outcomes for anti-corruption activities against which the U.S. government can measure its progress. This evidence suggests that the U.S. government lacks a comprehensive anti-corruption strategy that (1) clearly links specific program goals and objectives to the U.S. strategic goals and objectives for combating corruption in Afghanistan, (2) aligns necessary interagency resources to achieve those strategic goals and objectives, and (3) describes the performance measures that will be used to assess anti-corruption activities and their outcomes against the strategic objectives.

As the U.S. military and civilian presence in Afghanistan is reduced, U.S. agencies plan to continue to implement programs and activities to increase the Afghan government's accountability and ability to combat corruption. To oversee these programs and activities, senior leadership at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul made an effort to coordinate the agencies' various anti-corruption programs and related efforts by establishing three anti-corruption working groups in 2012. These working groups coordinate agencies' activities under the broad goals of building Afghan government institutional capacity, improving financial regulations and public financial management, and enhancing revenue generation. However, these groups do not measure the medium- or long-term progress of their programs against comprehensive anti-corruption goals. As a result, State and Embassy Kabul remain unable to assess the overall progress the U.S. government has made to improve the Afghan government's capacity to combat corruption.

We are making two recommendations to the Secretary of State to better define and direct the U.S. government's anti-corruption goals and desired outcomes in Afghanistan. In commenting on a draft of this report, State agreed with the importance of establishing clear objectives and benchmarks in order to measure outcomes. In addition, as a result of our findings, State is developing a targeted set of anti-corruption objectives, benchmarks, and plans against which U.S. efforts and resources will be directed and assessed.

Background

Widespread corruption in Afghanistan is a significant problem and remains a threat to the success of reconstruction and assistance programs. In 2012, Transparency International ranked Afghanistan in a tie with

Somalia and North Korea as the most corrupt country in the world.⁵ A 2012 Asia Foundation survey found that more than two-thirds of Afghans view corruption as a major problem in their provincial government (70 percent) and in Afghanistan as a whole (79 percent), the highest levels since 2006. Corruption in Afghanistan raises the risk that reconstruction funds will be misused or wasted, reduces popular support for the Afghan government, hampers economic growth and governmental performance, and reduces international support for the entire reconstruction effort. State, USAID, and the Department of Defense, along with the United Nations and other international organizations, have cited corruption as a severe roadblock to building a stable Afghanistan.

The United States has made strengthening the Afghan government's capacity to combat corruption a priority. State, the designated lead on the effort to combat corruption in Afghanistan's non-security sectors, has delegated the responsibility to the U.S. Embassy in Kabul to establish and implement anti-corruption programs in Afghanistan.⁶ The U.S. anti-corruption effort involves multiple agencies across various sections of the U.S. Embassy Kabul, including USAID, State, and the Departments of Justice, the Treasury, and Homeland Security.

In 2010, we reported that the U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan had drafted a comprehensive anti-corruption strategy, and several U.S. agencies had assistance programs to build the capacity of the Afghan government to combat corruption.⁷ At that time, the Secretary of State had not approved the comprehensive strategy to provide guidance to those agencies and, accordingly, we found that the majority of U.S. assistance to Afghanistan had been provided without the benefit of an approved strategy. Our work also found that although the Afghan government had established a number of oversight institutions focused on reducing corruption, these institutions lacked independence, audit authority, and capacity. Further, U.S. anti-corruption efforts provided relatively little assistance to some key Afghan oversight institutions. In 2010, to improve and direct U.S. anti-corruption efforts in Afghanistan and to help strengthen the capacity of Afghan government institutions to combat corruption and protect U.S. and other donor funds from waste, fraud, and abuse, we recommended that the U.S. Secretary of State approve and implement the draft comprehensive U.S. anti-corruption strategy for reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan.

U.S. Embassy Kabul's Anti-Corruption Efforts are Not Guided by a Comprehensive Strategy to Combat Corruption

The Secretary of State never provided final approval for the draft anti-corruption strategy and, according to agency officials, the draft strategy document is no longer current or applicable and no successor document exists. In 2010, the U.S. Embassy Kabul prepared and used an anti-corruption implementation plan in line with the draft anti-corruption strategy discussed above. This implementation plan reflected the elevated resources available, accounting for the 2010-2011 troop and civilian increases.⁸ U.S. Embassy Kabul reportedly used the 2010 draft strategy and plan for some time; however, both documents are no longer in effect. Due to intervening events, including the death of the ambassador serving as the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, the strategy never received final approval from the Secretary of State, according to State and U.S. Embassy Kabul officials. Further, due to the withdrawal of combat troops by the end of 2014

⁵ Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index, 2012, p. 4.

⁶ Although the focus of this report is the anti-corruption effort led by State, the Department of Defense has also taken steps to combat corruption through its effort to train and professionalize the Afghan National Security Force (ANSF). This review does not include DoD programs with the ANSF.

⁷ See SIGAR Audit-10-15.

⁸The anti-corruption implementation plan is a classified document and details on the contents of that plan remain classified.

and the transition of security responsibilities entirely to the Afghan government, embassy officials and senior leadership told us in March 2013 that they are no longer following the 2010 strategy or implementation plan, specifically noting that the plan used a resource-intensive approach that is not sustainable given the current focus on transition and rightsizing of the U.S. mission in Afghanistan. To date, there is no final strategy, plan, or guidance that comprehensively defines goals, objectives, and outcomes for the U.S. government's efforts to combat corruption in Afghanistan.

The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 and the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 identify the importance of accountability by executive agencies in achieving their program results. The acts establish guidelines and the sharing of best practices that require agencies to develop long-term strategic plans that (1) identify specific program goals and objectives, (2) align necessary resources to achieve those goals and objectives, and (3) describe the performance measures that will be used to assess program outcomes.⁹ Embassy officials identified the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework and U.S. Civil-Military Strategic Framework for Afghanistan as the key documents guiding their ongoing efforts for anti-corruption programs in Afghanistan. However, as framework documents they do not contain specific anti-corruption goals and objectives, align necessary resources, or identify performance metrics in a comprehensive way that would enable an evaluation of progress in achieving measurable results. Specifically:

- The purpose of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework is to reaffirm the partnership in Afghan economic growth and development between Afghanistan and the international donor community.¹⁰ The Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework was not intended to be a strategic plan for reducing corruption. The Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework addresses corruption as a component to be addressed within governance, rule of law, and human rights. The Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework alone does not delineate specific anti-corruption goals or objectives against which the U.S. government can measure its progress.
- The U.S. Civil-Military Strategic framework for Afghanistan, updated in August 2013, articulates the strategic vision of the U.S. government to achieve its national goals in Afghanistan and facilitates U.S. civilian and military cooperation and partnership in Afghanistan.¹¹ This document outlines U.S. operational involvement in Afghanistan under three pillars—governance, rule of law, and social and economic development—that rest on a foundation of security.¹² The U.S. Civil Military Framework does not offer a set of strategic goals focusing specifically on the fight against corruption, but includes

⁹ Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, Pub. L. No. 103-62, § 3, 107 Stat. 285, 286 (1993); GPRA Modernization Act of 2010, Pub. L. 111-352, § 2, 124 Stat. 3866, 3866-67 (2011).

¹⁰See *Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework*, July 8, 2012. The Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework established an approach based on the mutual commitments of the Afghan government and the international donor community to help Afghanistan achieve specific development and governance goals. It groups these goals into five areas: (1) representational democracy and equitable elections; (2) governance, rule of law, and human rights; (3) integrity of public finance and commercial banking; (4) government revenues, budget execution, and sub-national governance; and (5) inclusive and sustained growth.

¹¹ See *U.S. Civil-Military Strategic Framework for Afghanistan* (Kabul: August 2013, Revision 2) p. 1. The two U.S. strategic goals in Afghanistan as defined by the President in June of 2011 are (1) disrupt, dismantle, and eventually defeat al-Qaeda and its affiliates and prevent their return to Afghanistan, and (2) build a partnership with the Afghan people that ensure that the United States will be able to continue to target terrorists and support a sovereign Afghan government. See also President Barack Obama, Remarks by the President on the Way Forward in Afghanistan (June 22, 2011).

¹² Each pillar is broken down into a series of key priorities in order to better measure success on the Civil-Military framework's strategic goals.

anti-corruption as a part of its governance and rule of law pillars. Under the governance pillar, the Framework directs U.S. government actors to continue to support programs that identify and reduce corruption while encouraging a more open and transparent Afghan government. Under the rule of law pillar, the Framework pledges to help build the technical capacity of key justice sector institutions and support efforts to improve border regimes and customs collection.

The 2010 draft U.S. anti-corruption strategy offered an approach governed by operational principles divided year by year, with each period having specific anti-corruption pillars, implementation approaches, and benchmarks and measures of effectiveness. The related 2010 implementation plan also identified ongoing U.S. and international initiatives and gaps where more programming was necessary. Other U.S. strategic documents have included more specific guidance. For example, the 2011 U.S. Government Integrated Civilian-Military Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan, replaced by the Civil-Military Framework, identified a series of anti-corruption sub-objectives and related metrics, each placed on a 12- to 18-month timeline.¹³

Embassy officials told us that, in lieu of an anti-corruption strategy, the U.S. government's anti-corruption efforts in Afghanistan are currently overseen by the Deputy Ambassador and coordinated through three working groups: (1) Anti-Corruption Capacity Building, (2) Kabul Bank, and (3) Borders. These groups focus on three broad goals of building Afghan government institutional capacity, improving financial regulation and public financial management, and enhancing revenue generation, respectively. Officials stated that the purpose of the working group model is to promote coordination and communication, and draw on all of the assets available at the U.S. Embassy Kabul.

In addition, officials at the U.S. Embassy Kabul told us that they are in the process of developing a new Rule of Law strategy that will encompass a large portion of their anti-corruption efforts. This effort is currently being coordinated through the U.S. Embassy Kabul's interagency process. According to the Coordinating Director for Development and Economic Affairs, the new Rule of Law strategy will address four areas: (1) the Afghan justice sector, with a focus on law enforcement institutions, (2) the executive branch for improving Afghanistan's regulatory framework and reducing corruption, (3) the legislative branch charged with overseeing the executive branch and drafting new laws, and (4) civil society organizations and the media as independent watchdogs. We were informed by U.S. Embassy Kabul officials that the new strategy will have specific benchmarks and milestones, and will include a section on combating corruption. Embassy officials indicated that they did not have any further plans to draft a strategy addressing anti-corruption efforts beyond what will be addressed in the new Rule of Law strategy. As of July 2013, agency officials told us that the Rule of Law Strategy remains in draft form and is undergoing interagency review at the U.S. Embassy Kabul.

U.S. Embassy Kabul Does Not Have a Mechanism for Tracking Long-Term Progress on Anti-Corruption Efforts or Achievement of Anti-Corruption Goals and Objectives

Currently, the U.S. Embassy Kabul does not have a method for tracking progress made over time on the anti-corruption engagement issues listed in the working group documents, determining whether these projects and programs have been successful, or identifying how these projects and programs are meeting the broad goals that these groups are intended to focus on (building Afghan government institutional capacity, improving financial regulation and public financial management, and enhancing revenue generation). Embassy officials

¹³ *United States Government Integrated Civilian-Military Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan* (February 2011, Revision 1), pp. 16-17.

referred to the working group documents as their method for tracking progress made in the anti-corruption effort.

The three working groups organize their projects and programs into identified categories of issues and report on the headway made in each category. However, the working groups do not categorize the issues by objectives that are tied to the respective goals of the group and would allow the U.S. Embassy Kabul or the State Department to track progress in meeting the broad goal of each group. Despite this, our analysis of the working group documents found that the engagement issues each working group is undertaking do lend themselves to being grouped by larger objectives under the goals of each of the working groups. Table 1 shows the goal of each working group as defined by the U.S. Embassy Kabul's working group documents and the objectives we identified from our analysis of these documents.

Figure 1 - Table 1. U.S. Embassy Kabul Anti-Corruption Working Group Goals and Objectives

Working Group	Working Group Goal	Objectives Identified by SIGAR
Anti-Corruption Capacity Building	Build capacity of Afghan law enforcement and judicial institutions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve the Supreme Court's Anti-Corruption Tribunal 2. Strengthen the Attorney General's Office 3. Improve government transparency
Kabul Bank	Improve financial regulation and public financial management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Address direct consequences of the Kabul Bank collapse 2. Establish a framework for a strong financial sector 3. Ensure integrity of public finance and the banking system
Borders	Enhance revenue generation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase borders-related law enforcement coordination 2. Improve borders-related law enforcement capacity 3. Maximize revenue generation for the government

Source: SIGAR analysis of U.S. Embassy Kabul's anti-corruption working groups documents.

Note: SIGAR has initiated several audits of specific agency programs that fall under these working groups. These include a review of (1) U.S. programs and funds dedicated to training Afghan justice sector personnel with a focus on State's Justice Sector Support Program and Justice Training Transition Program, (2) U.S. efforts to develop and strengthen the capacity of Afghanistan's Central Bank, Da Afghanistan Bank, and (3) USAID and Department of Homeland efforts to develop and strengthen Afghanistan's capacity to assess and collect customs revenue.

In addition, there is no connection between the categories of issues that the working groups have identified and any set of measurable benchmarks that would specifically guide working group efforts. Although embassy officials referred to the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework and the Civil-Military framework as guidance for the anti-corruption effort, these frameworks lack the specific anti-corruption benchmarks against which the embassy can assess its progress. Such benchmarks did exist in the draft 2010 anti-corruption strategy and implementation plan. In addition, neither framework is intended to provide a mechanism to identify related resource needs and measure success or setbacks in the U.S. government's anti-corruption program. Embassy officials, including the Deputy Ambassador, confirmed that there is no mechanism currently used to track overall progress.

Further, the working group documents do not identify any future actions, articulating only those currently underway or already completed. Only the Deputy Ambassador to Afghanistan can approve the addition of new engagement issues, a process that has in some cases caused a disconnect between information collected by

individuals in the field and the information that is shaping the progress reports in the working group documents.

The U.S. Embassy Kabul is implementing a variety of ongoing activities and agency programs to address corruption throughout Afghanistan. A sample of ongoing anti-corruption activities reported by the U.S. Embassy Kabul working groups include: training for the Afghan Supreme Court's Anti-Corruption Tribunal, efforts to institute a nationwide case management system for the tracking of criminal cases, streamlining construction permit processes, and increasing intelligence sharing among units in Afghan ministries to maximize unity of effort in addressing corruption and smuggling. Agency officials at the U.S. Embassy Kabul indicated that they intend to implement tools to track and measure progress on all of the programs encompassed within the working group documents. These same officials told us they often report on the progress of their projects through their internal processes, but we learned that they do not consistently share these reports with the applicable working group for inclusion in the group's documents. The U.S. Embassy Kabul also reports on the anti-corruption efforts through its cables to State headquarters. However, without clearly articulated objectives and benchmarks, the U.S. Embassy Kabul currently has no way to track progress over time or identify where some embassy programs and projects are succeeding and others are failing.

Conclusion

Since the issuance of our August 2010 audit report, the U.S. government has continued to implement programs, projects, and initiatives to combat the ongoing problem of corruption in Afghanistan without the benefit of an approved comprehensive U.S. anti-corruption strategy. The U.S. Embassy Kabul has made an effort to coordinate the anti-corruption programs and activities of multiple agencies around three main goals to be pursued by three interagency working groups. However, the lack of specific strategic guidance for its anti-corruption efforts—including a clear linkage to strategic goals, supporting objectives, and benchmarks—hampers U.S. Embassy Kabul's ability to measure progress and track what it has accomplished. The efforts are also hampered by the lack of an implementation plan that identifies resource needs and a timeline for meeting specific benchmarks. We continue to believe that the United States would benefit from an anti-corruption strategy that defines a more coordinated approach to building the capacity of Afghan institutions to fight the pervasive corruption across the country, particularly as the U.S. government plans to provide more of its future reconstruction funds in the form of direct assistance to the Afghan government. Further, with the ongoing drawdown of U.S. military forces and the transition at the embassy from a civilian uplift posture to a more traditional level of personnel and other resources, a strategic allocation of U.S. anti-corruption priorities, efforts, and resources will be even more important in providing accountability and oversight for U.S. funds. Without a comprehensive strategy and a supporting implementation plan, it is difficult to adequately account for the U.S. funds and resources needed to implement these anti-corruption programs and activities or demonstrate measurable progress U.S. agencies have made in reducing corruption in Afghanistan.

Recommendations

To better define the U.S. government's anti-corruption goals and the desired outcomes of its anti-corruption effort, we recommend that the Secretary of State, in consultation with all other appropriate departments:

1. Develop and approve a comprehensive, coordinated strategy for U.S. anti-corruption efforts in Afghanistan, including goals, objectives, and measureable outcomes, and
2. Develop an updated operational plan for the implementation of the identified anti-corruption goals and objectives that identifies benchmarks and timelines for the accomplishment of these goals and accounts for the needed funding and personnel resources.

Agency Comments and Our Response

We provided a draft of this report to the Department of State and U.S. Embassy Kabul for their review. The Department provided comments, which are reproduced in enclosure I. State agreed with the importance of establishing clear objectives and benchmarks in order to measure outcomes. State identified steps the U.S. Embassy in Kabul is taking to provide senior-level focus and strategic direction and establish clear objectives and benchmarks for its anti-corruption efforts. According to the Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, the three anti-corruption working groups provide the targeted and flexible approach necessary to work effectively in Afghanistan's rapidly changing environment in a way that is more responsive than a single, static strategy. In response to SIGAR's findings, he indicated that the U.S. Embassy Kabul is in the process of creating a new anti-corruption coordination group to provide senior-level focus and strategic direction for all of the Embassy Kabul's anti-corruption efforts. In addition, the anti-corruption working groups are developing a targeted set of anti-corruption objectives, benchmarks, and plans against which to measure the U.S. effort and direct and assess resources. Once those documents are finalized, State stated that the U.S. Embassy Kabul will provide those documents to SIGAR.

This product was completed under SIGAR's Office of Special Projects, the SIGAR response team created to examine emerging issues in prompt, actionable reports to federal agencies and the Congress. The work was conducted under the authority of Public Law No. 110-181, as amended; the Inspector General Act of 1978; and the Inspector General Reform Act of 2008. Major contributors to this report were Monica Brym, William Gaertner, and Gabriele Tonsil. Technical support was provided by Kim Corthell, and Larry Dare.



John F. Sopko
Special Inspector General
for Afghanistan Reconstruction

ENCLOSURE I: COMMENTS FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

www.state.gov

September 5, 2013

Elizabeth A. Field
Assistant Inspector General for Audits and Investigations
Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR)
1550 Crystal Drive, Suite 900
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Ms. Field:

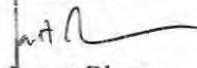
Thank you for the opportunity to provide the Department of State's comments on SIGAR Draft Special Project Report SP-06: U.S. Anti-Corruption Efforts: A Strategic Plan and Mechanisms to Track Progress are Needed in Fighting Corruption in Afghanistan.”

To address the widespread and complicated nature of corruption in Afghanistan, our anti-corruption efforts are crosscutting and woven into many facets of U.S. government programming. Embassy Kabul has coordinated U.S. activities to reduce corruption and improve rule of law through three working groups, each of which focuses on a core anti-corruption goal: anti-corruption capacity building, Kabul Bank/financial sector strengthening, and reducing corruption at border crossings. These groups, which draw from various sections within the Embassy, direct the programs that provide the targeted and flexible approach necessary to work effectively in Afghanistan’s rapidly changing environment in a way that is more responsive than a single, static strategy would be. Embassy Kabul is also in the process of refining this structure by creating a new Anti-Corruption Coordination Group, to be chaired by Coordinating Director Dr. Ken Yamashita, that will provide senior-level focus and strategic direction for all of the Embassy’s anti-corruption efforts.

We agree with the importance of establishing clear objectives and benchmarks in order to measure outcomes. To this end, and in response to SIGAR feedback received during the examinations for this special project report, the Embassy’s working groups are developing a targeted set of anti-corruption objectives, benchmarks, and plans against which our U.S. efforts and resources will be directed and assessed. Once finalized, the Embassy will provide these documents to SIGAR.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment, and we welcome any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jarrett Blanc', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Jarrett Blanc
Deputy Special Representative
for Afghanistan and Pakistan

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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:

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