



**OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR  
AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION**

**2019 CHIEF FOIA OFFICER REPORT**

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## NARRATIVE

The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) was created by Congress in 2008 with the mission of providing independent and objective oversight to funds made available for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. SIGAR conducts audits, inspections, civil and criminal investigations of programs supported with U.S. reconstruction funds, and maintains a forward-deployed office of approximately 40 full-time staff in Afghanistan.

SIGAR's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552, program reflects the agency's commitment to making information more accessible to the public. A properly managed and effective FOIA program permits the public to ascertain government costs and program outcomes that might not be reported elsewhere.

To ensure that the agency has an effective FOIA program, we have incorporated an overview of the FOIA into our annual records management training for all employees. This training underscores the importance and purpose of the law, every employee's obligation and requirement to comply, and where and how to submit a request. The training is administered by the Public Information Manager, a FOIA expert who consistently reviews the latest court decisions and DOJ's guidance.

SIGAR received fewer FOIA requests during Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 for a total of 27, compared to 38 in FY 2017. This decline may be because SIGAR regularly makes its reports and other materials publicly available on a proactive basis. As a major improvement in FY 2018, SIGAR reduced the FOIA requests carried over to the new fiscal year by approximately 60 percent. At the end of FY 2017, SIGAR carried 5 FOIA requests over to the new fiscal year, but at the end of FY 2018 only 2 recently received requests remained. This decrease shows that SIGAR's FOIA office is continuing to make progress in reducing backlogged requests.



SIGAR processed a total of 30 FOIA requests in FY 2018, which included 25 of the 27 new requests combined with the 5 requests carried over from FY 2017. Of those 30 requests, 12 were fully or partially granted. Of the requests that were denied, only 7 were denied in full based on FOIA exemptions. The remaining request denials were due to no responsive records being found, all responsive records being referred to another agency, the original request being withdrawn, the records requested being not reasonably described, or the request being improper. SIGAR continued to ensure records that could be segregated from exempted material were at least partially released with each request.

Given that SIGAR's work regularly involves several different agencies with interests in Afghanistan, it is sometimes necessary for SIGAR to consult with those other agencies when processing FOIA requests. This process of consultation can sometimes add significantly more time to the decision-making process. Additionally, given that SIGAR conducts criminal investigations in Afghanistan, we often have to make use of law enforcement exemptions to protect those investigations. While these considerations can make the FOIA process difficult at times, SIGAR communicates with requesters and separates releasable information from that which requires consultation.

## CONCLUSION

We hope this narrative underscores that SIGAR is committed to promoting openness in government. Many of our products are available for public inspection at [www.sigar.mil/contact/foia](http://www.sigar.mil/contact/foia) and [www.sigar.mil/allreports](http://www.sigar.mil/allreports), and we actively work to ensure that products of potential public interest are proactively made available.