

# SIGAR

**Special Inspector General for  
Afghanistan Reconstruction**

**SIGAR 18-22 Inspection Report**

## American University of Afghanistan Women's Dormitory: Construction Met Contract Requirements and Building Deficiencies Were Corrected



JANUARY  
2018



**SIGAR**

Office of the Special Inspector General  
for Afghanistan Reconstruction

January 9, 2018

The Honorable Mark Green  
Administrator, U.S. Agency for International Development

Mr. Herbert B. Smith  
USAID Mission Director for Afghanistan

This report discusses the results of SIGAR's inspection of the American University of Afghanistan women's dormitory located in Kabul, Afghanistan. In August 2015, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) awarded Perez, A Professional Corporation (Perez), a \$3.99 million firm-fixed-price task order to construct a three-story dormitory to accommodate 200 female students. The dormitory was scheduled to be completed by August 23, 2017. However, USAID modified the task order seven times, extending the project's completion date to November 20, 2017, and increasing the task order's price to \$4.1 million.

We found that Perez built a generally well-constructed dormitory that met the task order's requirements. However, we identified three construction deficiencies and one safety hazard. Specifically, we found construction deficiencies with two instances of pipes installed through partition walls without the required pipe sleeves, and one instance of improperly cured concrete parapet walls on the roof. We also found a safety hazard resulting from Perez not removing spikes from wood sheet formwork placed on the floors during the construction. We informed USAID of the deficiencies and the safety hazard in June and July 2017, and confirmed that Perez corrected those deficiencies before the building's completion. We commend USAID and Perez for taking swift action to correct these issues. As a result, we are not making any recommendations in this report.

USAID provided written comments on a draft of this report, which are reproduced in appendix II. In its comments, USAID stated that it appreciated SIGAR's recognition of the agency's responsiveness to addressing the inspection findings, resulting in a well-built facility.

We conducted this inspection under the authority of Public Law No. 110-181, as amended, and the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended; and in accordance with the *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation*, published by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John F. Sopko".

John F. Sopko  
Special Inspector General  
for Afghanistan Reconstruction

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## ABBREVIATIONS

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|            |   |
|------------|---|
| AUAF       | American University of Afghanistan        |
| O&M        | operation and maintenance                 |
| Perez      | Perez, A Professional Corporation         |
| Tetra Tech | Tetra Tech Inc.                           |
| USAID      | U.S. Agency for International Development |

On August 23, 2015, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) awarded Perez, A Professional Corporation (Perez), a \$3.99 million firm-fixed-price task order to build a women's dormitory at the American University of Afghanistan (AUAF) in Kabul (see photo 1).<sup>1</sup> The task order required Perez to design and construct a three-story, 3,000-square-meter building to accommodate 200 female students. Each bedroom was required to accommodate four students, with a bed, bedside cabinet, and cupboard for each student. Additionally, the building was required to have six or seven toilets and seven to nine showers on each floor, a communal laundry room, a fitness room, a lounge area, and a dining area. USAID noted that this project aligns with the U.S. goals of enhancing women's education and supporting women's empowerment, and is compatible with the agency's ongoing gender programs.

After seven contract modifications, the period of performance, which began September 1, 2015, was extended 84 days, from 730 to 814 days, and the task order's price increased by \$131,880.<sup>2</sup> The project was completed in November 2017, and the total cost was \$4.1 million.

USAID retained Tetra Tech Inc. (Tetra Tech) to provide quality assurance services during the dormitory's design, construction, and warranty phases. Tetra Tech was responsible for assessing and assuring that Perez's materials, quality of work, and final products complied with the project's design and technical specifications, and USAID-approved construction, health, safety, and environmental standards.<sup>3</sup> Tetra Tech's services were also intended to provide assurance that the women's dormitory was being constructed in accordance with the approved schedule and budget.

The objectives of this inspection were to determine whether the dormitory (1) was constructed in accordance with contract requirements and applicable construction standards, and (2) is being used and maintained.

We conducted our work at the AUAF women's dormitory and at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul from March 2017 through January 2018 in accordance with the *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation*, published by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. The engineering assessment was conducted by our professional engineer in accordance with the National Society of Professional Engineers' *Code of Ethics for Engineers*. Appendix I contains a detailed discussion of our scope and methodology.

## THE DORMITORY WAS GENERALLY WELL-CONSTRUCTED, AND PEREZ CORRECTED THE CONSTRUCTION DEFICIENCIES AND SAFETY HAZARD WE IDENTIFIED

We conducted three site visits to the AUAF women's dormitory from May through July 2017. We found that Perez built a generally well-constructed dormitory and supporting facilities. For example, our tests showed the

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**Photo 1 - AUAF Women's Dormitory**



Source: SIGAR, July 8, 2017

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<sup>1</sup> Perez is based in New Orleans, Louisiana. USAID awarded task order number AID-306-TO-15-00069, under contract number AID-306-I-13-00003, to the firm.

<sup>2</sup> Four of the seven modifications—001, 002, 005, and 006—did not affect the project's price or completion schedule. Modification 004 authorized Perez to perform additional work, such as installing burglar bars on all windows and double doors to sleeping quarters on the ground floor, which increased the contract's price by \$131,880 and extended its completion schedule by 20 days. Modifications 003 and 007 were no-cost extensions, extending the schedule by 33 days and 31 days, respectively.

<sup>3</sup> Tetra Tech is located in Pasadena, California.

sand, aggregate, and cement used in the concrete mix for the building and supporting infrastructure were within the parameters required by the contract.<sup>4</sup> However, during our May 2017 site visit, we identified two construction deficiencies: (1) sewage pipes in the second-floor shower and laundry areas installed through concrete partition walls without the required pipe sleeves, and (2) improperly cured concrete parapet walls on the roof caused by the lack of a moisture-retaining cover. The absence of pipe sleeves passing through rigid components of the building, such as walls, ceilings, and the roof, may weaken the strength of those components, and the pipes could break during an earthquake. We also found a safety hazard where Perez did not remove spikes from wood sheet formwork that it placed on the floors during construction.<sup>5</sup>

We notified USAID of the two deficiencies and safety hazard on June 13, 2017. In a July 5, 2017, email, USAID acknowledged our findings and stated that it shared them with Perez and Tetra Tech to ensure that they corrected them. USAID also noted that as of June 20, 2017, Perez had installed the required pipe sleeves for the pipes through the remaining portion of the wall in the shower and laundry areas, and assigned a laborer to moisten the exposed concrete continuously after removing the formwork and remove nails from the formwork immediately after it was used. Photo 2 shows the improperly installed sewage pipes in the laundry area that we found during our May 24, 2017, site visit, and photo 3 shows that Perez installed the proper pipe sleeves.

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**Photo 2 - Sewage Pipes in the Laundry Area Installed through Partition Wall without Pipe Sleeves**



Source: SIGAR, May 24, 2017

**Photo 3 - Sewage Pipes in the Laundry Area Installed through Partition Wall with Proper Pipe Sleeves**



Source: USAID, June 18, 2017

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In June 2017, we conducted a second site visit to verify that Perez had taken action to correct deficiencies we previously identified and to assess the ongoing construction. Based on our review of USAID's responses, contract requirements, site photos, and this site visit, we determined that Perez corrected the two construction deficiencies and eliminated the safety hazard. However, we also identified a third construction deficiency. Perez improperly installed pipes in the dormitory's second-floor shower area through partition walls without the required pipe sleeves. We informed USAID of this deficiency on July 3, 2017. On July 20, 2017, USAID acknowledged our finding and stated that it shared it with Perez and Tetra Tech. USAID noted that as of July 12, 2017, Perez and Tetra Tech confirmed that the pipes had been corrected. Photo 4 shows the improperly installed pipes, and photo 5 shows that Perez installed the proper pipe sleeves. After reviewing USAID's responses, relevant contract requirements, and Perez photos that accompanied its report to USAID, we determined Perez had corrected this deficiency.

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<sup>4</sup> Because construction was still ongoing at the time of our site visits, we could not assess the electrical and mechanical systems, safety features such as fire extinguishers, or furnishings.

<sup>5</sup> Formwork is a set of wooden molds used to hold wet concrete in place until it hardens.

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**Photo 4 - Pipes in the Dormitory's Second-Floor Shower Area Installed through Partition Wall without Pipe Sleeves**



Source: SIGAR, July 8, 2017

**Photo 5 - Pipes in the Dormitory's Second-Floor Shower Area Installed through Partition Wall with Pipe Sleeves**



Source: USAID, July 20, 2017

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## THE DORMITORY IS NOT IN USE BUT PLANS EXIST FOR FURNISHING AND MAINTAINING IT

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The AUAF women's dormitory was scheduled originally to be completed on August 23, 2017, but, as noted earlier, contract modifications extended the completion to November 2017. The AUAF chief facilities officer said students are scheduled to occupy the dormitory in January 2018, which is the beginning of the winter semester. However, the officer told us that if the women's dormitory is not furnished before the start of the semester, female students will continue to live in a dormitory that was built to accommodate male students. He said the university will not offer on-campus housing for male students for the 2018 academic year and instead will provide a stipend to at most 65 male students to help with their housing costs.

In September 2017, we asked USAID to provide us with documentation of any plans to furnish the dormitory and conduct operation and maintenance (O&M) once the dormitory is turned over to the AUAF. In response, USAID provided us with its agreement letter with the AUAF, dated May 7, 2015, stating that the university agrees to be responsible for funding and completing all furnishings, landscaping, and future O&M of the dormitory and its grounds. USAID also provided us with the AUAF's O&M plan, which notes that technical staff in its Facilities Management Department will perform routine and periodic maintenance. USAID noted that Perez is developing an O&M manual in English and Dari, and will provide O&M training to the technical staff once the manual is complete.

## CONCLUSION

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The AUAF women's dormitory is an example of quality contractor performance and oversight resulting in a generally well-built facility. We identified three construction deficiencies and a safety hazard, which Perez promptly corrected during the construction period after USAID brought them to its attention. We commend USAID and Perez for taking swift action to correct these issues. However, until the university furnishes the dormitory, the building will not be ready to house female students as planned, and this could negatively affect housing for both female and male students.

Because the deficiencies we identified have been corrected, we are not making any recommendations in this report.

## AGENCY COMMENTS

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We provided a draft of this report to USAID for review and comment. USAID provided written comments, which are reproduced in appendix II. In its comments, USAID stated that it appreciated SIGAR's recognition of the agency's responsiveness to addressing the inspection findings, resulting in a well-built facility.

## APPENDIX I - SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

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This report provides the results of our inspection of the American University of Afghanistan (AUAF) women's dormitory in Kabul, Afghanistan. To determine the extent to which the dormitory was constructed in accordance with contract requirements and applicable construction standards, and is being used, we:

- reviewed contract documents, technical specifications, and other relevant project documentation;
- assessed the physical properties of sand, aggregate, and cement in the concrete mix used in the construction of the facility and infrastructure;
- interviewed AUAF officials concerning the project's construction; and
- conducted site visits on May 24, June 18, and July 8, 2017.

We did not rely on computer-processed data in conducting this inspection. However, we considered the impact of compliance with laws and fraud risk.

In December 2014, SIGAR entered into a cooperative agreement with Afghan civil society partners. Under this agreement, our Afghan partners conduct specific inspections, evaluations, and other analyses. In this regard, Afghan inspectors and an engineer inspected the AUAF women's dormitory in May, June, and July 2017. We developed a standardized engineering evaluation checklist covering items required by the contract and design/specification documents for the women's dormitory. Our checklist required our partners to analyze the contract documents, scope of work, technical specifications, and design drawings.

We compared the information our Afghan civil society partners provided to accepted engineering practices, relevant standards, regulations, laws, and codes for quality and accuracy. In addition, as part of our monitoring and quality control process, we:

- communicated regularly with the Afghan engineer to ensure that the approach and planning for the inspection were consistent with the objectives of our inspection and the terms of our cooperative agreement;
- attended periodic meetings with our partners, and conducted our normal entrance and exit conferences with agency officials;
- discussed significant inspection issues with them;
- monitored our partners' progress in meeting milestones and revised contract delivery dates as needed; and
- conducted oversight of them in accordance with SIGAR's policies and procedures to ensure their work resulted in impartial, credible, and reliable information.

We conducted our work at the AUAF women's dormitory and at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul from March 2017 through January 2018. This work was conducted in accordance with the *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation*, published by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. The engineering assessment was conducted by our professional engineer in accordance with the National Society of Professional Engineers' *Code of Ethics for Engineers*. We conducted this inspection under the authority of Public Law No. 110-181, as amended, and the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended.

## APPENDIX II - COMMENTS FROM THE U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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### MEMORANDUM

December 23, 2017

**TO:** John F. Sopko  
Special Inspector General for  
Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR)

**FROM:** Tamra Halmrast-Sanchez, Acting Mission Director 

**SUBJECT:** Mission Response to Draft SIGAR Inspection titled:  
"American University of Afghanistan Women's  
Dormitory: Construction Met Contract Requirements and  
Building Deficiencies Were Corrected" (I-047)

**REF:** SIGAR Transmittal email dated December 12, 2017

USAID acknowledges receipt of the draft report *American University of Afghanistan Women's Dormitory: Constructuion Met Contract Requirements and Building Deficiencies Were Corrected*. USAID appreciates that SIGAR recognizes the Agency's responsiveness to audit and inspection findings, and the quality performance and oversight by USAID resulting in a well-built facility.

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## APPENDIX III - ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Johnny Amin, Inspector-in-Charge

Yogin Rawal, Professional Engineer

Aziz Rahman Zaki, Civil Engineer

Hasibullah Zeer, Program Analyst

This inspection was conducted  
under project code SIGAR-I-047.

## 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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