From the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction

Transcript for: Operation Oversight – Episode 7: UH-60 Audit

Description: Hear about SIGAR's recent performance audit of the Afghan Air Force's modernization program to replace their fleet of MI-17 helicopters with UH-60 Black Hawks.

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[Jennifer George-Nichol] Welcome to Operation Oversight, the official podcast for the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. My name is Jennifer George-Nichol, I'm with SIGAR's Public Affairs office and I'm joined today by Jeff and Carole from our Audits directorate. Welcome to the podcast, guys.

[Carole] Thank you.

[Jeff] Thank you for having us.

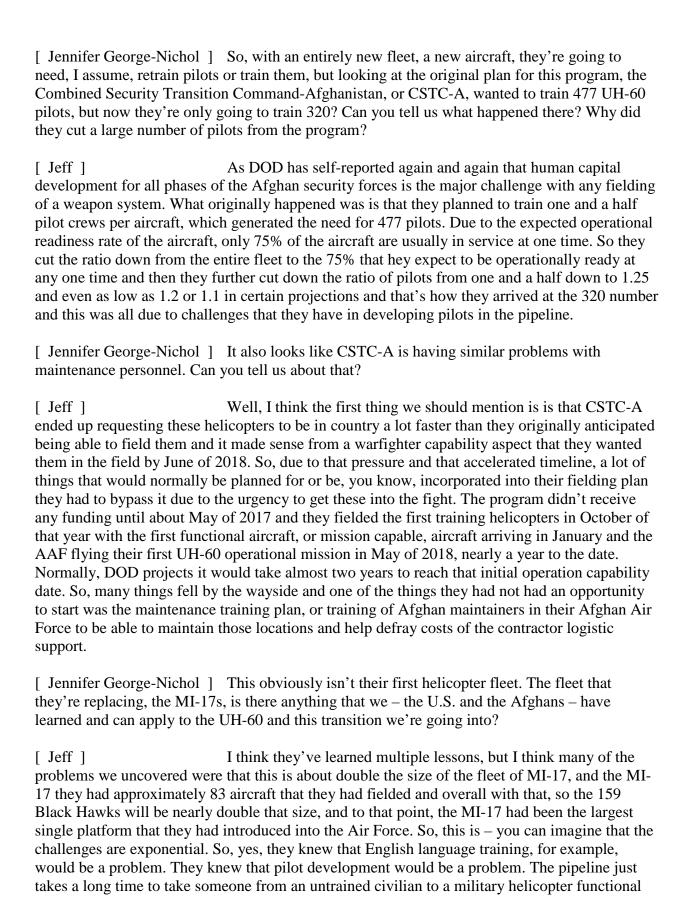
[Jennifer George-Nichol] Jeff and Carole are here to talk about a recently released audit of an Afghan Air Force re-modernization program that was aimed at replacing an aging helicopter fleet of MI-17s with UH-60s, or sometimes called, Black Hawks.

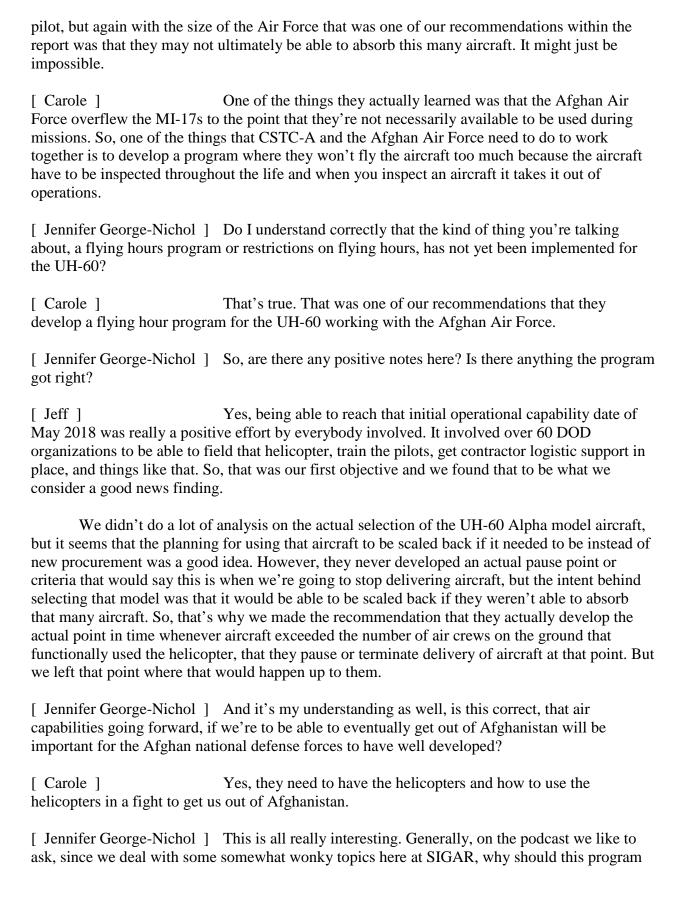
Before we get into the audit, can you guys tell me a little bit about the decision to modernize the Afghan Air Force's fleet, the importance of the Afghan Air Force, why this was a priority for the United States?

[Carole] Sure, the Afghan Air Force is made up primarily of MI-17 helicopters which are Russian-built and it's become, according to DOD, much more difficult to support and maintain these helicopters in part because of the deteriorating relationship between the U.S. and Russia. The aircraft are important because Afghanistan's a large country, doesn't have a lot of roads. So, to move people around Afghanistan and to get the Afghan Army into the fight they need to have stable and usable helicopters. So that was DOD's understanding of why they needed to modernize the Afghan Air Force.

[Jennifer George-Nichol] Why don't you guys tell me about the audit and what you guys found?

[Jeff] Yeah, so first as you mentioned, we looked at the replacement of MI-17s with the UH-60 which was titled "the modernization of the Afghan Air Force". There are some other helicopters that will be and other aircraft that are part of that fleet; some MD-530s and some A-29s, and things like that. However, when the 159 UH-60 Black Hawks are fielded that'll be more than 50% of the total air force that the Afghans have. So, this audit looked at that program, which will cost between five and seven billion dollars.





and its successes and or failures be important to the average American? Why does the U.S. taxpayer care about something happening literally halfway around the world?

[Jeff] Well, I would say that, in my opinion, the American taxpayers are paying for a lot of this. This is their money that's going to support the Afghan national security forces and the country itself. And one of the hardest challenges with replacing the American forces in Afghanistan where those combat enablers, you know, you can train an army, you can fight, and all of those things and the Afghans may be good at that, but medevac, close air support, all those things- what we consider combat enablers that help win the fight are the hardest thing to train and this is where the UH-60s come in and ultimately this is a key crux in maintaining American interest in Afghanistan, you know, ultimately contributing to that mission not allowing Afghanistan to be used for a hotbed of terrorism and terrorist acts like 9/11.

[Carole] In addition, if the Afghans can't fly their own helicopters then it might fall to the U.S. to provide helicopter support to the Afghans which would mean more Americans at risk.

[Jennifer George-Nichol] Absolutely, and more American taxpayer dollars, it sounds like. Thank you guys so much. This was really interesting. Congrats on the audit. If you would like to read the <u>audit</u> itself, it can be found on our website <u>www.sigar.mil</u> as can all the other SIGAR reports that have both been discussed on this podcast and not. Or, to follow our products, you can check us out on Facebook at <u>SIGARHQ</u> or on <u>Twitter</u> at the same handle. Thanks for listening to the latest episode of Operation Oversight. We'll see you guys next time.

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