

SIGAR

**Special Inspector General for
Afghanistan Reconstruction**

OFFICE OF SPECIAL PROJECTS

**BRIDGES IN GHAZNI PROVINCE,
AFGHANISTAN: ALL EIGHT BRIDGES
WE VISITED WERE IN GOOD
CONDITION**



14 March 2019

SIGAR 19-24-SP



SIGAR

Office of the Special Inspector General
for Afghanistan Reconstruction

March 14, 2019

The Honorable Patrick M. Shanahan
Acting Secretary of Defense

General Austin Scott Miller
Mission Commander, U.S. Forces–Afghanistan and
Commander, Resolute Support

Dear Acting Secretary Shanahan and General Miller

I am writing to inform you of the results of site visits to verify the locations and conditions of eight DOD-funded bridge projects in Ghazni province, Afghanistan. The eight bridges were constructed or rehabilitated using funds from the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) between 2009 and 2012.

We found that the location information maintained in DOD systems was accurate; all eight bridges were within one kilometer of their recorded coordinates. We also found that all eight bridges were open, in good condition and that local community members regard them as being very useful to the local communities.

This is the third in a series that discusses our findings from site visits to bridge projects that were built or repaired using CERP funds. The other two provinces were Baghlan (SIGAR 18-70-SP) and Kabul (SIGAR 19-08-SP). With the exception of two bridges in Baghlan Province all the bridges covered by these three reports were in good condition.

SIGAR provided a draft of this report to the Department of Defense for comment on February 19, 2019. DOD provided technical comments to the report on March 12, 2019, which we incorporated as appropriate.

We conducted our work in Ghazni province, Afghanistan and Washington, D.C. from May 2018 to March 2019 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 Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation*. Should you or your staff have any questions about this project, please contact Mr. Benjamin Piccolo, Director of Special Projects, at (703) 545-2192 or benjamin.j.piccolo.civ@mail.mil.

Sincerely,

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

John F. Sopko
Special Inspector General
for Afghanistan Reconstruction

BACKGROUND

DOD established the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) in fiscal year 2004 to enable military commanders to respond to urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction requirements in Iraq and Afghanistan.¹ In Afghanistan, CERP funds were used to implement projects in all 34 provinces to support diverse sectors, including transportation, education, agriculture/irrigation, healthcare, and water and sanitation. CERP was intended for small projects that cost less than \$500,000. CERP projects that cost more than \$500,000 must be contracted by a U. S. government warranted contracting officer.

Projects that supported Afghanistan's transportation sector were among the most common and costly CERP projects. One component of CERP-funded transportation projects included the construction, repair, and replacement of pedestrian and vehicle bridge infrastructure throughout Afghanistan. Bridges are important because they help link communities and provide access to markets—both of which aid in economic development and promote stability. However, Afghanistan's mountainous terrain, seasonal snowmelt, and tectonic activity, coupled with its tenuous security environment and budgetary constraints, pose challenges for the maintenance and longevity of CERP-funded bridges.

This report includes our observations from eight such bridges that were rehabilitated or constructed in Ghazni province between 2009 and 2012. The eight projects cost approximately \$578,000 in total and were paid for with CERP funds.

This is the third and final report in a series of examinations of bridges throughout Afghanistan that were constructed or rehabilitated using CERP funds. In previous reports on CERP funded bridges in Kabul and Baghlan provinces, SIGAR inspected 14 bridges across both provinces costing roughly \$1.9 million to build or repair. Of these 14 bridges, two were in disrepair and were the subject of SIGAR Alert Letters, and one was identified as having inaccurate coordinates.²

We worked jointly with an Afghan civil society organization to perform limited inspections of the bridges in Ghazni in June 2018. At each site, we took time-, date-, and location-stamped photographs. Where possible, the following activities were also completed during each visit:

- An overall assessment of the bridge to record, among other information, the geospatial coordinates of the project and whether the bridge appeared to be open to the public, structurally sound, and safe to use
- An interview with a community member
- An interview with an Afghan official.

We conducted our work from May 2018 to December 2018. Our site inspections did not include comprehensive engineering evaluations of the structures.

¹ Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense for the Reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan, 2004, Pub. L. No. 108-106, § 1110, 117 Stat. 1209, 1215 (2003).

² SIGAR, *Alert Letter: Structural Damage at Baghlan Bridge 2*, SIGAR-18-50-SP, May 22, 2018, And SIGAR-18-39-SP *Alert Letter: Structural Damage at Baghlan Bridge 1*. April 03, 2018

EIGHT BRIDGES IN GHAZNI PROVINCE ARE IN GOOD CONDITION, WITH ACCURATE LOCATION INFORMATION

Using the province, district, bridge project name, and geospatial coordinates for each bridge, we confirmed the existence of all eight bridges. We found that the location information maintained in DOD systems was accurate. Enclosure 1 shows the location information for each bridge we visited. This enclosure will not be publicly released due to security concerns.

We found that the eight bridges, having spans of between an estimated six meters and thirty meters and mostly crossing seasonal rivers or streams were being used and all appeared to be in good condition. According to an Afghan official tasked with maintaining the structures, the bridges are important to the province and are generally heavily relied upon by the citizenry. The December 2009 Money As A Weapon System- Afghanistan MAAWS-A gives guidance that construction projects in excess of \$50,000 “require a memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the project sponsoring unit and the appropriate GIRoA representative with the authority to accept and fund follow-on maintenance and sustainment requirements.”³ However, only three CERP bridge project files contained the agreement (Bridges 2, 7 and 8), three projects didn’t require an agreement because they were under \$50,000 (Bridges 1 & 4) and we could not locate a Memorandum of Agreement for three bridge projects (Bridges 3, 5, and 6).

An Afghan official noted that all eight bridges were requested by local leaders. When asked about the last instance the bridges were maintained or repaired, that same Afghan official stated that there have not been maintenance services as of yet. However, no serious safety or structural concerns were observed at any of the bridges. We also spoke to a community member in the general vicinity of each bridge to obtain their opinion on how useful the bridge was to the local community. Seven out of eight community members expressed the opinion that the bridge in their community was “very useful.” The combined cost of the bridges was \$578,570.

Bridge 1

Bridge 1 is a vehicle and pedestrian bridge completed in September 2012. The 25 meter concrete and stone bridge was rehabilitated at a cost of \$46,570. We found that the bridge was in good condition and estimated it was used by approximately 500 people daily. The Afghan official we spoke with stated the community relied heavily on the bridge and was proposed by local leaders. One community member interviewed described how, prior to the bridge’s construction village residents would travel significant distances to gain access to the lands and facilities available across the river.

³ Money As A Weapon System Afghanistan (MAAWS-A), USFOR_A Pub 1-06, Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP) SOP, Updated: Dec 2009 Page 26 Annex A, Section 3 subsection B-1.

Photo 1 - Bridge Project 1



Source: SIGAR, June 7, 2018

Photo 2 - Bridge Project 1



Source: SIGAR, June 7, 2018

Bridge 2

Bridge 2 is a vehicle and pedestrian bridge completed in December 2011. The estimated 12-meter concrete bridge was constructed at a cost of \$44,000. We found that the bridge was in good condition. We estimated that it is used by approximately 250 individuals daily. The Afghan official we interviewed stated that the bridge was heavily relied upon by the community and was proposed by local leaders. A community member described the bridge as “very useful,” noting that the bridge connected the village to main agricultural areas opposite the river, and was needed to safely transport working animals. He also noted that without the bridge community members would have to walk between five and ten kilometers to cross the river. According to the project files, the Afghan government agreed to maintain the bridge as part of a Memorandum of Agreement, dated January 21, 2011, with DOD.

Photo 3 - Bridge Project 2



Source: SIGAR, June 12 2018

Photo 4 - Bridge Project 2



Source: SIGAR, June 12 2018

Bridge 3

Bridge 3 is a vehicle and pedestrian bridge constructed in 2010. The six meter concrete bridge was completed at a cost of \$162,000. We found that the bridge was in good condition. The Afghan official noted that the community was “heavily” reliant on the bridge and that the bridge allowed the community to access health care and social services in a larger town nearby. We estimated it is used by more than 280 people daily. A community member noted that the bridge was useful year round, and used by the community to access agricultural land and other workplaces. We were unable to locate a Memorandum of Agreement between a GIRoA representative and the U.S. requiring maintenance of the bridge on the part of the Afghan government in the project files.

Photo 5 - Bridge Project 3



Source: SIGAR, June 13, 2018

Photo 6 - Bridge Project 3



Source: SIGAR, June 13, 2018

Bridge 4

Bridge 4 is a vehicle and pedestrian bridge. The 8 meter concrete and stone bridge was completed at a cost of \$30,000 in October 2010. We found that the bridge was in good condition, and estimated that the bridge was being used by approximately 150 people each day. The Afghan official we interviewed stated that the local community was heavily reliant on the bridge. The community member we interviewed responded that the bridge was “very useful” and used for connecting villages throughout the district and for access to work and other services.

Photo 7 - Bridge Project 4



Source: SIGAR, June 13, 2018

Photo 8 - Bridge Project 4



Source: SIGAR, June 13, 2018

Bridge 5

Bridge 5 is a vehicle and pedestrian bridge constructed in 2010. The 12 meter concrete bridge was constructed at a total cost of \$86,000. We found that the bridge was in good condition, and we estimated it was used by approximately 400 people each day.

The Afghan official we interviewed stated that the community was heavily reliant on the bridge. Similarly, a community member we interviewed stated that the bridge was “very useful” and that it connected the community to their respective workplaces. He further noted that the bridge is used year-round, and is especially useful during the flooding seasons. The bridge also connected the community to an important health clinic and other nearby villages. We were unable to locate a Memorandum of Agreement between a GIROA representative and the U.S. requiring maintenance of the bridge on the part of the Afghan government in the project files.

Photo 9 - Bridge Project 5



Source: SIGAR, June 17, 2018.

Photo 10 - Bridge Project 5



Source: SIGAR, June 17, 2018.

Bridge 6

Bridge 6 is a vehicle and pedestrian bridge. The 12 meter concrete bridge was built at a cost of \$55,000 and completed in December 2010. We found that the bridge was in good condition and we estimated that approximately 250 people and vehicles used the bridge each day. We did note some minor damage to the guardrails as seen in photo 12.

The Afghan official we interviewed stated that the bridge was “heavily” relied on by the community, and was proposed by local leaders and community members. The community member we interviewed said they used the bridge daily, and was often used to travel to home and work. The bridge connected the community to an important health clinic nearby, and according to CERP files the dangerous conditions of the previous bridge had caused several deaths in the community due to the inability to access medical care. We were unable to locate a Memorandum of Agreement between a GIRoA representative and the U.S. requiring maintenance of the bridge on the part of the Afghan government in the project files.

Photo 11 - Bridge Project 6



Source: SIGAR, June 20 2018.

Photo 12 - Bridge Project 6



Source: SIGAR, June 20 2018.

Bridge 7

Bridge 7 is a vehicle and pedestrian bridge made from concrete. This bridge is a 30 meter bridge completed in January 2011, and together with bridge 8 cost a combined \$155,000.⁴ We found that the bridge was in good condition, and we estimated that approximately 430 people used the bridge each day.

The Afghan official we interviewed stated that the bridge was “heavily” relied on by the community, and was proposed by local leaders and community members. During our site visit, the community member we interviewed said the bridge was “very useful”, and connected the community to two cities and their facilities. There was a Memorandum of Agreement dated January 21, 2010 between the U.S. Department of the Army and the Afghan government in the files whereby the Afghan government agreed to maintain the bridge.

⁴ Bridges 7 and 8 were two separate structures built as part a single CERP project.

Photo 13 - Bridge 7



Source: SIGAR, June 20 2018.

Photo 14 - Bridge 7



Source: SIGAR, June 20 2018.

Bridge 8

Bridge 8 is also a vehicle and pedestrian bridge made from concrete. This bridge is also a 30 meter bridge completed in January 2011. Bridges 7 and 8 cost a total of \$155,000. We found that the bridge was in good condition and we estimated that more than 280 people and vehicles used the bridge each day. Our site visit did note minor guard rail damage.

The Afghan official we interviewed stated that the bridge was “heavily” relied on by the community, and was proposed by local leaders. During our site visit, the community member we interviewed said the bridge was “very useful,” and connected the community to two cities and their facilities. According to the project files, the Afghan government agreed to maintain the bridge as part of a Memorandum of Agreement, dated January 21, 2010, with DOD.

Photo 15 - Bridge 8



Source: SIGAR, June 20 2018.

Photo 16 - Bridge 8



Source: SIGAR, June 20 2018.

SIGAR 19-24-SP Eight Bridges in Ghazni Province in Good Condition

CONCLUSION

We found that all eight bridges in Ghazni were in use and in good condition and the coordinates on file were accurate. Three of the project files did not contain evidence of an agreement between the United States and any Afghan official for the provision of bridge maintenance.

This project was conducted
under project code SP-208

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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- Phone International: +1-866-329-8893
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