

## Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction Information Resources: Documenting the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan – Audio transcript

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[ Please standby for realtime captions ]

Hello, everyone. This is the final sound check. We will get ready in three minutes.

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Hey, everyone welcome to our session when it comes to Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction information resources. I have a few housekeeping reminders. First, please use the chat box of four technical issues and comments. We will keep track of all the questions and address them at the end of the presentation. Second, we are recording the conference. Everyone will receive a link to the recording after the event. Join me and welcoming Professor Bert Chapman. I will hand it to him to start the session.

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Good afternoon or morning, everyone. As we have experienced recently in the controversial events in Afghanistan, [ Indiscernible ] has produced information resources and there will be sources for political debate for multiple decades to come. I would like to introduce you to some currently available resources on Afghanistan produced by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction or SIGAR. Let me give you a little historical background on a federal inspector general activity. In 1978, Congress enacted the Inspector General act. That included the U.S. code section 4. It comes from the State Department. That was dating back to the 1950s. There have been -- since 1978, there have been more recent amendments to the law. The purpose of federal Inspector General's -- creating that unit within the department is to evaluate program performance for Congress. That includes reporting criminal penalties to the Attorney General if fraud is committed in the programs by agency employees and private-sector contractors. And then we have the heads of fees agencies. They are presidentially appointed and subject to Senate confirmation. There is extensive reporting of IG activities except for those -- the head IGs, except for the Capitol Police and Postal Service , are not subject to term limits. They can be around for a significant amount of time. You can find one-stop access to federal Inspector General's at oversight.gov. This is something I did a few weeks ago. Think about the subject area. You can find lots of really in-depth material on the performance or nonperformance parts. In 2004, or maybe even 2003, a special Inspector General was established. That existed for about a decade and their website is still available and you can find lots of information. The special inspector general for SIGAR was established in the national Defense authorization act, under that session. There was about \$145 billion spent on this since 2002. SIGAR's purpose was looking at in the auto gets -- these funds were promoting good governments and conductive assistants and any corruption efforts were looked into. Here is a map of Afghanistan, showing the neighborhood that it is in with various surrounding countries. This was the man pointed as the SIGAR. He has experienced a lot of areas of the federal government, including various departments , agencies, and congressional committees. Some of SIGAR's basic requirements are communicating with the secretary of defense about reconstruction problems and deficiencies, possible corrective actions and implementing them. One of the things neat about them is they collaborate with multiple agencies. In this case, they will collaborate with the defense, state, and U.S. agency for international development. They are required to submit quarterly reports summarizing their audits and investigative activities. I have taken -- this shows a map of Afghanistan that has basic geographic and ethnographic information and shows areas of where the SIGAR offices are. They are in the red, a couple areas. Sorry I could not get better resolution on the snap. And then SIGAR puts out lots of different press

releases looking at fraud and investigations and convictions. Here are a couple of them. And then this is an example of one of their investigation releases. They announced an individual from California that pled guilty into U.S. District Court for trying to -- they were assigned to conduct -- to build an electric grade. There were more details on that. These cases will go to federal court. This is another example from the Justice Department, an individual from Georgia pled guilty in October of last year to defraud the U.S. and commit theft of property and making false statements. She -- [ Indiscernible ] . She stole items worth over \$150,000. There are other things. They received a 41 month prison sentence. They had to pay nearly \$180,000 in fines. They regulate test testify before Congress. It is 35 pages long. [ Indiscernible ] before congressional committee hearings will be very informative resources. We are talking about high risk U.S. reconstruction program areas in Afghanistan, mentioning some gains but also multiple threats. They proposed some different questions for policymakers to look at, such as have U.S. agencies and their partners established and inherent to reasonable and practical metrics for determining successful project outcomes and for protecting taxpayer dollars from waste, fraud, and abuse? There are other questions that they pose as well. And then they conclude today -- what is quite prophetic is the gains from the nation's invest in mint is uncertain post peace settlement funding and -- there other various actions and threats to women and illegal narcotics trade. You can also find a podcast on this website. Here is about a 30 minute podcast that was recorded in April 2019 on women's rights. You can download it. It is over 13 1/2 minutes long and you can read the transcript. This was an interview with a SIGAR official. They have a designations director and they talk about what gives them the reason to direct the -- to conduct investigations and how it aggressively works with the Justice Department to prosecute violations and they work with experienced Justice Department prosecutors as well as supporting [ Indiscernible ] military justice advocates through a judge advocate in the judicial system. SIGAR also puts out a number of lessons learned reports and they describe what they have learned and what recommendations they make. This is telling them about how many reports they have done at the time this particular summary came out. And then in August of this year, just as Kabul was following, they -- they have lessons from 20 years of Afghanistan reconstruction. It is 123 pages on significant things. I mentioned provinces where they are conducting various audits or inspection work. Those are the ones that will be the lighter colored -- though shading here. They mentioned there are some bright spots in U.S. reconstruction systems like [ Indiscernible ] per capita domestic products and increased literacy rates. They also tell that there are considerable problems. This is what the table of contents looked like. They have a summary and they have specific subject areas and they give page numbers. A also include questions for policymakers at the end of each chapter. One of the things they stress that was problematic is that the U.S. did not understand how political power works in Afghanistan, same thing with patriot networks that are highly entrenched in the local economy. They mentioned the U.S. failed to recognize Afghanistan lacks formal government traditions like we have in the west. As mentioned, in a report on corruption, by legitimizing good will warlords -- between their own power networks and the Afghan state. They continue on and explain other things. They mentioned between this area they spent over \$1 billion on a program in Afghanistan with rule of law and about 90% of that went to form a local legal system. That was something that was a foreign -- approximately 89% have always had them handled that way. They provide specific examples of a case and I think this one province in 2010. And then this example of specific lessons learned with U.S. government agencies were really conducting sufficient monitoring and evaluation to understand the impact of their efforts. They included -- within these reports, they included all kinds of statistical photographs. They are showing a flood protection wall that they built in this province of Afghanistan. This is a before and after photo. And then examples of questions they ask for policymakers is how can -- this is supposed to be well-managed and having realistic expectations. They also do quarterly reports to Congress and these have been done from October 30th of 2008 to July 30th of this year. They mentioned the most recent report, where they mention the budget from President Joe Biden, which included \$3.33 billion and they also mentioned the

deteriorating situation at the time, which, unfortunately, worsened since then. They also mentioned that SIGAR is the only oversight agency on the ground. They mention the financial results that they achieved from the most recent work. They also include a calendar and a chart. This is a list of events between May -- also, with July. There are some different things. Unfortunately, [ Indiscernible ] drug control summary of Afghanistan's opium problem. There was a 30% increase in opium poppy cultivation since 2019. They close the school for the third time during the pandemic on May 29th. There are also other figures. There are a lot of specific parts. Like this is a report they did on fuel for Afghan National Defense and Security Forces. They mentioned this is [ Indiscernible ]. They spent \$3.74 billion on fuel and they want to spend another \$1.45 billion. They mentioned there are all kinds of problems with the management and oversight of this fuel dissipation. The summary is very fragmented. They want to improve the situation. And then they also referenced an Afghan civic engagement program and how cost continues to increase and [ Indiscernible ] contractor and internal controls for the program. The information about the agency's budget and staff now. They were funded through September 30th and under the Consolidated Appropriations Act act that was enacted after Christmas last year. They provided \$84.9 million to support SIGAR activities . [ Indiscernible ] altogether with five members assigned to the embassy in Kabul and also with national offices. Testified before Congress this year, the director mentioned that, thankfully, the U.S. and Afghan employees in Kabul have been successfully evacuated. In August, what they were envisioning about possible SIGAR -- [ Indiscernible ] SIGAR projections. They wanted to establish a threat -- they wanted to disrupt and eliminate finance cells to identify them and they might be involved in drug trafficking and terrorist networks. Because of what has happened, I think a lot of these points are moot but it gives you an idea of what SIGAR was thinking with the deteriorating situation. This is a chart of funding appropriations to Afghanistan reconstruction. You will notice the categories where security is the most prominent but also humanitarian, agency operations, and others. You can see how the funding trending for Afghanistan reconstruction went. In February of this year, they put out a 242 page report called support for gender equality, lessons from the U.S. experience in Afghanistan. They mentioned that the government at that time spent just over [ Indiscernible ] to support Afghan women and girls . [ Indiscernible ] support for women and girls and gender equality. They mentioned on the good side, there were significant gains in maternal health and education but they also found there were serious shortcomings. They found trouble establishing a relationship between activities and outcomes. There was insufficient monitoring. It was impossible to assess the actual impact of the programs. This is one of the chapters in the book on education and they mentioned youth literacy rates but they also mentioned some different problems. Some of the key findings. And the first Taliban regime, there were few, if any girls, that were female teachers. When this report came out, there were about 3.5 million girls enrolled in a skill -- [ Indiscernible ]. They mentioned as of 28 team, nearly 70,000 women were teaching. With three rates nearly doubled. It also increased with adult women. I mentioned -- the education gains for women had been [ Indiscernible ] in urban areas and based in the primary school level. The probability is problematic and they were doubtful whether girls educational gains were sustainable. That was for various reasons. A number of SIGAR publications are in CGP. Some are in the S1 .2 and others are in the section here. If you see something from SIGAR -- let us know. This is a brief sample. This is the bibliographic record to one SIGAR publication in CGP. I think there are a number of different benefits that you can gain from using SIGAR information resources. You can learn detailed qualitative and quantitative information about U.S. government and taxpayers spending on civilian and military programs in that country. You can learn about reconstruction successes, failures, and ambiguities. You can also learn how corruption by the U.S. and U.S. allies and Afghans can impact, dilute, and ruin the effectiveness of this spending. It is also possible to assess whether the foreign economic and assistance is in the U.S. national interest on a country by country basis. You can get further insight on whether the U.S. should provide long-term reconstruction and foreign economic and military assistance to countries where the U.S. has been militarily involved. I think

one important thing is you can gain effort to support or oppose nation-building efforts in such countries. It can influence historical and emerging development in Afghanistan following the Taliban seizure of power. Resources from SIGAR are very multidisciplinary. I think you can also enhance understanding of the complex cultural at the graphic factors of countries where U.S. administrators have had assistance programs. It is important to enhance awareness of ambiguities in these programs with [ Indiscernible ]. One other thing I will mention before taking questions is when the inspector general [ Indiscernible ] on October 6, he also mentioned that an area of investigative activity was engaging in -- finding out what may have happened to millions of dollars that were believed to have been taken out of Afghanistan, the former Afghan president. With that, I am ready for your questions.

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We have one question that came in while you were talking from Jenny. She wants to know if there is a pronunciation difference between special Inspector General for Afghanistan reconstruction and special Inspector General for Iraq reconstruction.

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You can sigh try "Seh-Gar" and "Sih-Grr" .

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Any other questions for Bert?

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[ Silence ]

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The only one -- oh.

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Hello, another couple questions came in. Are they where they have a military presence?

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No Kim I think the most recent ones have been Iraq and Afghanistan. That would require congressional authorization. You could also use a Defense Department Inspector General report. That would be to find information about the performance of the U.S. government or the U.S. military [ Indiscernible ] in different countries.

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Okay, from Kate, how closely is SIGAR aligned with intelligence?

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There probably is some alignment. I have no idea what kind of brief information exchanges there may be between SIGAR and various intelligence agencies. My guess would be there might be some cooperation between SIGAR and the Defense intelligence agency. That would probably depend on a case-by-case basis. Since a lot of SIGAR's work is released to the public, there would be limitations on what kinds of information, like military -- what they could publicly release.

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Another question. Is SIGAR going to shut down now that there U.S. reconstruction efforts are ending?

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They are still in operation. You can go to their website and still see recent published information. As I mentioned, they are curl only looking at whether the former Afghan president stole millions of dollars worth of money from Afghanistan. Congress would have to have to shut it down, I think.

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[ Silence ].

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Arthur any more questions for Bert? There is one more question from Jenny. How are they selected?

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They are presidentially appointed and have to go through Senate confirmation. One of the slides I mentioned earlier was except for a couple of departments, they are not limited. They do not have term limits.

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[ Silence ]

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Any more questions?

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[ Silence ]

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Okay, well, if there are no more questions, we can close this up. We want to thank Professor Bert Chapman before being here.

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I hope this information is useful to you and your users.

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There are a lot of notes in the chat saying this is very useful and a new resource that people have not heard of before. That is excellent. So thank you so much for your wonderful program, Bert.

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Thank you.

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Next will be 15 amazing facts about digital deposits. You will have to see how they can change [ Indiscernible ] forever and that will be at 3:15. The other virtual meeting room, the next program is the technical report archive and image library. If you want to join that program, you will need to close out of this virtual room first. If you see -- access URLs are found at the event page. For now, we will take a short break and pick up again at 3:15.

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Thank you, Melissa.

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No problem. We just have one last check for questions. I think that is it. Thank you so much, Bert.

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Okay, thank you. Goodbye.

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[ The event is on a recess. The session will reconvene at 3:15 EST. Captioner on standby. ]

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