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November 16, 2015

The Honorable Ashton B. Carter  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC, 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Carter:

I write to express deep concern at the findings in a recently released Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) report.

As you know, the SIGAR recently published a report on an Afghan reconstruction project—a natural gas filling station—implemented through the Department of Defense’s (DOD) Task Force for Stability and Business Operations (Task Force). The title of the SIGAR report characterizes this project as “ill-conceived” and based on the report’s findings, it is impossible for me to disagree.

The SIGAR found no evidence, for example, that the Task Force conducted a feasibility study on the filling station or considered potential obstacles before construction began. And while the original contract was awarded for just under \$3 million according to the SIGAR, the Task Force spent nearly \$43 million to construct the project between 2001 and 2014! The SIGAR concludes that this filling station far exceeded the costs of similar projects nearby and that Task Force spent nearly \$43 million to build a filling station “that would have cost no more than \$500,000 in neighboring Pakistan.”

This report’s most disturbing findings, however, concern the DOD’s behavior. According to the SIGAR, DOD claims that nobody remains at the Department with knowledge of the Task Force. This is a baffling claim, given that the Task Force was dissolved less than a year ago. More disturbing still, the SIGAR stated clearly that its review “was hindered by DOD’s lack of cooperation” and paints a picture of a Department restricting access and failing to deliver on commitments.

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Several of my colleagues have already publicly committed to plumbing this report and its disturbing conclusions. I will wholeheartedly assist them in those efforts. As one of the sponsors of the Audit the Pentagon Act of 2015, I also feel compelled to tell you that this filling station appears to be exactly the type of unacceptable boondoggle that our legislation aims to prevent. With this in mind, please provide my office, in writing, an update on the DOD's auditability efforts, including the best current estimate of when the Department will be audit-ready.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator