A Better Management Information System Is Needed to Promote Information Sharing, Effective Planning, and Coordination of Afghanistan Reconstruction Activities

July 30, 2009

OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION

July 30, 2009

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U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan

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Commander, U.S. Central Command

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Commander, Afghanistan Engineering District
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This report examines the use of management information systems at key U.S. agencies and commands to track and report on reconstruction activities in Afghanistan. Several agencies and commands—the State Department, U.S. Embassy Kabul; the U.S. Agency for International Development; U.S. Central Command; U.S. Forces –Afghanistan and Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan; and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Afghanistan Engineer District—serve a key role in the implementation of U.S.-funded reconstruction, security, and development programs in Afghanistan. Based on SIGAR's findings, we concluded that an integrated management information system for all U.S. reconstruction activities in Afghanistan would provide essential information for decision-makers and stakeholders to better plan, coordinate, monitor, and report on U.S. activities. We are recommending that the U.S. civilian agencies and military commands work together toward developing an interagency information management system for Afghanistan reconstruction.

A summary of our report is on page iii. The audit was conducted by the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction under the authority of Public Law 110-181, and the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended. When preparing the final report, we considered written comments from the U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. Central Command, and the Combined Security Transition Command - Afghanistan on a draft of this report. Copies of their comments are included in appendices II-IV of this report. In addition, we also considered informal comments received from the U.S. Embassy Kabul.

John Brummet
Assistant Inspector General for Audits
Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction

SIGAR RESULTS

What SIGAR Reviewed

The U.S. Government has appropriated about $38 billion to fund reconstruction and development activities in Afghanistan since 2001. This report examines the use of management information systems by U.S. agencies and commands to track and report on reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan and the extent to which these systems are integrated. We conducted our review from March to June 2009 in Kabul, Afghanistan where we obtained information from documents and interviews with U.S. officials, from the Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the Department of Defense. Our work was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

What SIGAR Found

Key U.S. agencies and commands in Afghanistan have management information systems for collecting data on their reconstruction activities, but there is no single management information system that provides complete and accurate information of all completed, underway, and planned reconstruction activities. While these U.S. entities indicated they utilize fairly mature and established management information systems for financial and accounting purposes, the availability and use of management information systems for project management varied significantly and provided little opportunity for sharing information without considerable effort. Sharing of reconstruction information between agencies and commands typically occurs through periodic meetings and manually intensive processes involving spreadsheets, presentations, and other ad hoc reports. An integrated management information system that provides a common operating picture of all U.S. reconstruction activities in Afghanistan would provide essential information for the decision-makers to better plan, coordinate, monitor, and report on U.S. activities. Without an effective management information system or other means to provide a complete view of reconstruction efforts undertaken by the various U.S. entities operating in Afghanistan, there is an increased chance of duplication of efforts, conflicting ventures, and overall wasted resources. Senior representatives from the key agencies and commands we met with agreed that there would be a benefit in having visibility into the projects undertaken by other entities. In June 2009, at the direction of the National Security Council's Deputies Committee, the U.S. Agency for International Development completed a study assessing the feasibility of a joint information management system for reconstruction activities. A more formal, fully-coordinated effort among key U.S. Government implementing entities is now needed to jointly assess current information systems and develop the requirements for an integrated management information solution.

What SIGAR Recommends

To provide a complete view of U.S. reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, SIGAR recommends that U.S. civilian agencies and military commands work together toward developing an integrated management information system, or comparable integrated information solution, for Afghanistan reconstruction activities that provides a common operating picture of reconstruction programs and projects. The U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. Central Command, and the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan generally concurred with the report's recommendations. They also cautioned that the development of an integrated management information system would be a challenging effort, raising various issues that should be discussed and considered in the implementation of these recommendations. Similar comments regarding the recommendations and challenges were expressed by the U.S. Coordinating Director for Development and Economic Assistance at the U.S. Embassy Kabul.

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Abbreviations

CSTC-A	Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan
ICMAG	Integrated Civil-Military Action Group
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
SIGAR	Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USFOR-A	U.S. Forces–Afghanistan

A Better Management Information System Is Needed to Promote Information Sharing, Effective Planning, and Coordination of Afghanistan Reconstruction Activities

OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

This report examines the use of management information systems by key U.S. agencies and commands to track and report on reconstruction activities in Afghanistan and the extent to which these systems are integrated. We obtained information from documents and interviews with key U.S. Government agencies and commands responsible for reconstruction and development efforts in Afghanistan, including the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development at the U.S. Embassy Kabul; U.S. Forces-Afghanistan and its subordinate commands, the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan and the Combined Joint Task Force-101; and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Afghanistan Engineer District.[1] Specifically, we reviewed the management information systems used by each of these entities to collect and track information and to report on their reconstruction efforts. We did not evaluate the accuracy or completeness of data in those systems. We conducted work in Kabul, Afghanistan, from March to July 2009. We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

BACKGROUND

Since 2001, the United States has appropriated about $38 billion in support of reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan.[2] In addition, the international community has pledged $25 billion in support of reconstruction efforts. Recent statements by leadership of the U.S. Government and the governments of its international partners have indicated plans to increase the level of financial and military support for Afghanistan over the coming years. Providing the strategic framework for the on-going efforts in Afghanistan are the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and the new U.S. Government strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. Both strategies demand robust oversight for the entire reconstruction program.

To execute these strategies, a complex coalition of international support is involved in bringing assistance and aid to the people of Afghanistan and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), a North Atlantic Treaty Organization-led coalition of 42 contributing countries, operates under the authority of the United Nations Security Council. ISAF is organized into five Regional Commands, which include the 26 provincial reconstruction teams responsible for reconstruction activities at the provincial level. In addition to the international support coordinated by ISAF, a number of U.S. agencies and commands play a key role in the implementation of U.S.-funded reconstruction activities in Afghanistan.

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[1] In June 2009, the 82nd Airborne Division assumed command of the Combined Joint Task Force from the 101st Airborne Division.

[2] This amount includes funds appropriated in the 2009 Supplemental Appropriations for Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Pandemic Flu (P.L. 111-32).

The U.S. Embassy in Kabul is the principal authority for all Department of State and other U.S. agency activities in Afghanistan. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is the key agency for implementing many of the reconstruction and development efforts in Afghanistan. In addition, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Afghanistan Engineer District provides engineering support to reconstruction efforts for the Departments of Defense and State, and for USAID.

In October 2008, the U.S. Central Command established U.S. Forces–Afghanistan (USFOR-A) to consolidate U.S. military forces operating in Afghanistan under one unified command. USFOR-A and its sub-commands—the Combined Joint Task Force-Afghanistan and the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A) —provide support to ISAF. The Combined Joint Task Force 101 is the command authority responsible for the 12 U.S.-led provincial reconstruction teams in Afghanistan. CSTC-A is responsible for managing the training and equipment programs for the Afghan National Security Force. In addition, training support for the Afghan National Police is provided, in coordination with CSTC-A, by the Department of State's International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs Bureau.

U.S. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION ARE NOT INTEGRATED ACROSS U.S. AGENCIES AND COMMANDS

Accurate and timely information helps decision-makers to plan, coordinate, monitor, and report on activities and, if necessary, take appropriate corrective actions. While the key agencies and commands indicate that they utilize fairly mature and well-established management information systems for financial and accounting purposes, the availability and use of these systems for project management varied significantly and provided little opportunity for sharing information without considerable effort. Information shared between U.S. agencies and commands conducting reconstruction activities is typically done using periodic meetings and manually intensive processes that include spreadsheets, presentations, and other ad hoc reports. An integrated management information system that provides a common operating picture of reconstruction efforts by all entities in Afghanistan would provide useful information to decision-makers so that they can better plan and coordinate the total effort.[3] Currently there is no single management information system available to provide a common operating picture across all reconstruction agencies and commands of past, present, and future reconstruction efforts. As a result, without an effective management information system or other means to provide a cross-organizational view of reconstruction efforts undertaken by the various agencies and commands operating in Afghanistan, there is an increased chance of duplication of efforts, conflicting ventures, and overall wasted resources. Senior representatives from key U.S. agencies and commands told us that there would be a benefit in having more visibility into the reconstruction activities undertaken by other U.S. entities in Afghanistan. In June 2009, at the direction of the National Security Councils Deputies Committee, USAID completed a study that assessed available opportunities to create a joint system for information sharing of Afghanistan reconstruction activities.

Multiple Management Information Systems Used in U.S. Reconstruction Efforts

Generally, there are two types of information systems used to track and report on reconstruction efforts: financial data systems and project tracking systems. Table 1 provides a summary of the most prominent management information systems used by five key U.S. agencies and commands, or sub-

[3]We use the term "common operating picture" to refer to the entire Afghanistan reconstruction program across all U.S. agencies and commands to include their past, present, and planned future projects and programs.

commands, responsible for reconstruction activities in Afghanistan. According to U.S. government officials, none of the financial or project information managed by the reconstruction entities listed in the table below is shared directly with any of the other entities in a systematic way. Further, the systems listed in table 1 are of varying complexity and capability and therefore present an added challenge for any information solution that would integrate financial and project tracking data.

Table 1: Management Information Systems Used by U.S. Government Agencies and Commands for Reconstruction Activities in Afghanistan

U.S. Agency or Command	Financial Data Systems	Project Tracking Systems
U.S. Agency for International Development	Worldwide Financial Management System Ariba Acquisition Management Systems	GeoBase Infrastructure Project Management and Reporting Database Spreadsheets
Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs	Resource Management Tool Standard Financial System	Spreadsheets Presentation slides
U.S. Forces - Afghanistan and Combined Joint Task Force	Navigator Standard Financial System	Combined Information Data Network Exchange
Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan	Navigator Standard Financial System	Spreadsheets Presentation slides
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Afghanistan Engineer District	Corps of Engineers Financial Management System	Resident Management System Promise (P2) application system Primavera

Source: USAID, Department of State, USFOR-A, CSTC-A, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Afghanistan Engineer District.

The financial data systems used to manage financial information on reconstruction projects and activities in Afghanistan vary by agency or command from fairly mature and well established systems to locally collected and consolidated systems. For example, the financial data systems used by USAID, USFOR-A and its sub-commands, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Afghanistan Engineer District, are integrated throughout their respective departments, allowing for centralized fiscal and budgetary tracking and reporting processes with data input coordinated between the authorized field units up through the higher agency or command levels. In another example, financial data for reconstruction activities under the Combined Joint Task Force-101 are collected and input into the system at the provincial reconstruction team level using a local resource management tool and then subsequently rolled up and included in the Standard Financial System of the Department of Defense.

The project tracking systems we reviewed in Afghanistan were generally structured to meet the immediate local requirements rather than a department-level requirement for program information.

These systems varied from integrated organizational systems[4] to independently managed databases, to spreadsheets and presentation slides. For example, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Afghanistan Engineer District uses an integrated organizational system. According to officials from the Afghanistan Engineer District, their project tracking system interfaces with their financial management system, allowing for accounting and project data to be shared and verified between the two systems. This interface between the two systems minimizes the risk associated with entering data multiple times and potentially introducing data integrity and accuracy errors. The integration of the financial and project information allows decision-makers at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and its Afghanistan Engineer District to obtain timely and complete information, allowing them to assess project progress and, when necessary, implement corrective actions, according to these officials.

USAID officials stated that they have developed some independent databases such as GeoBase and the Infrastructure Project Management and Reporting Database for project tracking. However, neither database links directly to other data sources. Project data is collected and recorded at the field level using a local data collection tool, such as a spreadsheet. This data is often manually rolled up and/or merged with other agency data and sometimes included in one of the independent databases. As this data is passed from one source to the next, there is a risk that the integrity of the data could be compromised. USAID officials acknowledged the potential risk of introducing data integrity and accuracy errors. In addition, these officials stated that USAID has an effort underway to develop a new management information system intended to better integrate financial and project data and minimize the manual manipulation of the data once recorded.

Management Information Systems Lack Integration Across U.S. Agencies and Commands

To effectively plan, coordinate, monitor, and report on U.S. reconstruction and development activities in Afghanistan, agencies and commands need a system for sharing and integrating information from existing systems with varying complexity, and this needs to be done in a consistent and timely way. The officials we met with from the key reconstruction agencies and commands indicated they did not have a management information system in place that provides a common operating picture across all U.S. Government activities. Senior U.S. Government officials we interviewed expressed an interest in having access to a management information system that could provide a common operating picture. They cited numerous benefits such a system could provide. These include:

- enhancing unity of effort,
- minimizing duplication of effort,
- identifying areas saturated with a particular form of assistance and others that have not received adequate attention,
- providing better coordination and oversight capability,
- providing a comprehensive historical record to mitigate the effects of personnel and unit rotations, and
- providing the capability for more thorough data analysis of efforts.

[4]An integrated organizational system is one that directly links data from multiple information systems.

In addition, U.S. officials we interviewed noted that time provided to support a new management information system would be offset by the value added of such a system and time saved in no longer having to manually generate reports or acquire external data from other commands. However, these officials also expressed concern that data for a new system should have a focused purpose and not be collected just for the sake of collecting data. The U.S. Embassy in Kabul established the Integrated Civil-Military Action Group (ICMAG) in November 2008 with the intention that this group would better align actions of U.S. Government civilian and military agencies in support of an integrated counter-insurgency strategy.[5] Representatives from the ICMAG stated that having a management information system that provides a common operating picture across all U.S. Government reconstruction agencies and commands would be a valuable tool.

USAID has taken some steps towards the development of an integrated management information system. According to USAID officials, in late 2008, the National Security Council's Deputies Committee identified a need for a development tracking database in Afghanistan. In January 2009, USAID provided an initial report and recommended further study to assess the feasibility of a Joint Management Information System, which was approved by the National Security Council's Deputies Committee. USAID awarded a contract for the assessment and the contractor conducted the assessment from February to April 2009.[6] The contractor delivered the final report on the results to USAID in June 2009.[7] The assessment included recommendations for a development strategy, design requirements, and change management control that could be used as a basis for a broader coordinated effort to develop a robust system to share information on reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan.

While this assessment was a good step toward developing an integrated management information system, SIGAR noted, in discussions with USAID, several potential weaknesses in the study. For example, the assessment excluded CSTC-A and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Afghanistan Engineer District in the feasibility assessment, although the two entities together are responsible for over $20 billion in reconstruction activities. Furthermore, the assessment proposed reliance on the ICMAG for unified data management and control responsibilities, although discussions SIGAR had with ICMAG officials indicated they did not have the technical expertise to do this. In addition, the assessment proposed the establishment of a Unified Change Control Management Board to review or approve any change recommendation for the joint management information system, but did not suggest membership or participation in the Board by CSTC-A or U.S. Army Corp of Engineers' Afghanistan Engineer District. In June 2009, USAID officials stated that any future actions regarding the development or establishment of a Joint Management Information System were pending discussion with the U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan.

Further efforts to develop a system to provide a common operating picture should consider lessons learned government-wide and in Iraq. The U.S. Congress and Office of Management and Budget have

[5]The Executive Working Group is comprised of the Deputy Chief of Mission, USFOR-A Deputy Commanding General, USFOR-A Military Advisor to the Ambassador, USAID Mission Director, Regional Command East Deputy Commanding General for Support, CSTC-A Deputy Commanding General for Programs, and Regional Command South Deputy Commanding General for Stability.

[6]USAID awarded the contract task order to the contractor using an existing contract.

[7]Joint Management Information System Assessment Final Report, June 2009.

identified the importance of information technology management controls for U.S. agencies.[8] Specifically, the Office of Management and Budget has issued guidance on integrated information technology modernization planning. While the overall information technology guidance does not specifically address multi-agency contingency operations such as those in Afghanistan or Iraq, legislative and executive action indicate the importance of utilizing basic principles for promoting better efficiency, effectiveness, and oversight in multi-agency operations.

In November 2003, the U.S. Congress passed P.L. 108-106, the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense and for the Reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan. The Act established reporting and monitoring requirements on the implementing agencies in Iraq and appropriated $50 million to fund a solution for meeting these requirements in Iraq, which led to the development of the Iraq Reconstruction Management System. In Afghanistan, the National Security Council's Deputies Committee identified the need for a common development tracking database which led to the USAID joint management information system assessment report. Additionally, U.S. Government officials we met with in Afghanistan acknowledged the benefits of an integrated management information system.

In Iraq, the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction has reviewed the management information systems used by U.S. agencies in Iraq and identified several issues that needed to be considered in a revision of the Iraq Reconstruction Management System.[9] These issues included:

- Organizational Accountability: Executive level leadership is necessary to provide long-term leadership and strategic guidance, resources management, and, issue resolution of coordinating working group.

- Data Quality: System designs must ensure data integrity, consistency, accuracy, and completeness. Designs should be scalable and flexible to allow for emerging requirements.

- Funding and Other Resource Responsibility: Identifying funding and resource requirements and sources for developing, operation and support, and maintaining the system are necessary for budgetary planning.

- Transferring Information to the Host Government: If data is to be transferred to the host government, design considerations should be made regarding what data will be transferred and how it will be delivered. A formal agreement defining the expected format of the data and the transfer process should be made with the host government and reviewed periodically.

[8]40 U.S.C. 11311-11313 and see OMB*, Management of Federal Information Resources*, Circular A-130 (Washington, D.C., Nov. 28, 2000).

[9]SIGIR has issued four reports on the management of information for reconstruction programs and activities in Iraq: *Issues Related to the Use of the $50 Million Appropriation to Support the Management and Reporting of the Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund* (SIGIR-05-026, January 2006); *Management of Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund Program: The Evolution of the Iraq Reconstruction Management System* (SIGIR-06-001, April 2006); *Review of Data Entry and General Controls in the Collecting and Reporting of the Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund* (SIGIR-06-003, April 28, 2006); and, *Comprehensive Plan Needed to Guide the Future of the Iraq Reconstruction Management System* (SIGIR-08-021, July 2008).

CONCLUSIONS

The U.S. Government along with its international partners has made large investments in the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan over the last eight years and the number of civilian and military stakeholders involved requires significant coordinating efforts. Funding and personnel support is likely to increase in the near term, resulting in additional reconstruction and development projects for Afghanistan. However, U.S. Government leadership and stakeholders do not share a common management information system to plan, coordinate, monitor, and report on reconstruction activities in an accurate, timely, and integrated way. The U.S. Government needs to develop an appropriate means to share integrated information in a timely manner across all U.S. Government stakeholders and decision-makers to effectively manage the assistance provided to the Government and people of Afghanistan. An integrated management information system, or comparable integrated information solution, for all U.S. Government implementing agencies and commands in Afghanistan, would provide essential information to decision-makers to assist in their planning and coordination of activities supporting the U.S. strategy for Afghanistan. Any solution for the integration of reconstruction information must account for the different methodologies for collecting data by the various agencies and commands. Senior officials from the key U.S. agencies and commands responsible for reconstruction agreed that having a system that generates a common operating picture would enhance their initiatives and provide additional benefits of accountability and transparency for project funds. USAID has taken the first steps towards the development of an integrated management information system. Additional effort, coordinated among key U.S. Government reconstruction implementers, is now needed to jointly assess current information systems and develop the requirements for an integrated management information system or comparable integrated information solution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The development of an integrated management information system will require the participation and coordination of multiple agencies and commands. Therefore, we are addressing the three recommendations below to each of the key agencies and commands, so that they, together, will commit to developing an integrated information solution.

- To provide a common operating picture of U.S. reconstruction programs and projects in Afghanistan, SIGAR recommends that the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and the Acting Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (in coordination with the U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan and the Commanding General, U.S. Central Command) work together to jointly develop an integrated management information system, or comparable integrated information solution, for Afghanistan reconstruction activities.

- SIGAR also recommends that the reconstruction stakeholders appoint an executive agent to coordinate the overall interagency development and implementation of an integrated management information system or comparable integrated information solution, including responsibilities for progress and issue resolution.

- SIGAR recommends that the executive agent, once appointed, should work with stakeholder entities to, at a minimum, determine interagency requirements for an integrated management information system or comparable integrated information solution that takes into account the

various systems and methods currently used to collect reconstruction data; develop a plan to ensure that data integrity, consistency, accuracy, and completeness are taken into consideration in any system development; and identify funding and resource requirements to implement the development and sustainment of the system.

COMMENTS

USAID, U.S. Central Command, and CSTC-A provided written comments on a draft of this report, which are included in appendixes II-IV. We also received comments from the State Department that stated that the Coordinating Director for Development and Economic Assistance at the U.S. Embassy Kabul concurred that the development of an integrated management information system is a laudable objective, but that it would be difficult to realize. USAID also provided technical comments which we incorporated in this report, as appropriate.

USAID, U.S. Central Command, and CSTC-A generally concurred with the report's recommendations. USAID stated that an integrated management information system is needed, but it would be time-consuming to establish such a system considering the constraints of the operating environment. USAID discussed steps taken to meet specific information requirements and standards and said it will continue to work with other agencies to determine what system or systems would best enable the sharing of information for decision-making. U.S. Central Command partially concurred with our recommendations and suggested the consideration of existing systems or systems under development as a possible solution. The Command also suggested that sharing reconstruction data with non-governmental organizations working in Afghanistan would provide transparency to the international community and reduce duplication of efforts. In addition, U.S. Central Command stated that the term "common operating picture" is used to refer to a specific program and therefore suggested alternative wording. We have noted in this report that we are using the term common operating picture to refer to the entire Afghanistan reconstruction program across all U.S. agencies and commands to include their past, present, and planned future projects and programs. CSTC-A concurred with our recommendations and stated that it will support their implementation. CSTC-A also suggested that U.S. Central Command serve as the executive agent to implement policies that will address the findings and recommendations identified in the report.

We acknowledge that the development of an integrated information management system, or comparable integrated information solution, for all U.S. agencies and commands in Afghanistan presents challenges and will need to account for the different methodologies used for collecting data by the various agencies and commands. However, we believe that an integrated information solution is essential to providing information in a timely manner to all U.S. Government stakeholders and decision-makers to effectively manage the assistance provided to the Government and people of Afghanistan; enhance their initiatives; and provide additional benefits of accountability and transparency for project funds.

Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

We examined management information systems and how they are used by U.S. government agencies and commands to plan, execute, monitor, and report on reconstruction in Afghanistan and the extent to which these systems are integrated to provide a complete operating picture of reconstruction activities.

During our audit we met with key U.S. Government agencies and commands conducting reconstruction and development efforts in Afghanistan. We reviewed and discussed the various management information systems—financial and project—used to track and report on reconstruction activities and projects. We did not evaluate the accuracy or completeness of those management information systems.

We conducted our audit from March to July 2009, in Kabul, Afghanistan. We conducted our work at the U.S. Embassy, the U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. Forces–Afghanistan and its sub-commands, the Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan and the Combined Joint Task Force 101, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Afghanistan Engineer District where we reviewed documents and interviewed officials responsible for operations, management, and reporting of reconstruction information. We also interviewed officials at the International Security Assistance Force to discuss their collection, management, and reporting of reconstruction information.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. The audit was conducted by the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction under the authority of Public Law 110-181, and the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended.

Appendix II: Comments the U.S. Agency for International Development

USAID | AFGHANISTAN
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

INFORMATION MEMO

TO: John Brummet, Assistant Inspector General for Audits,
Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR)

FROM: for USAID/Afghanistan Mission Director, William M. Frej

DATE: July 22, 2009

SUBJECT: SIGAR Audit 09-3 Management Information Systems

REFERENCE: Draft report dated 07/07/09

Thank you for providing USAID/Afghanistan the opportunity to review the subject draft audit report. We would like to express our gratitude for the professionalism exhibited by the audit team during the performance of the field work.

SIGAR AUDIT RECOMMENDATION

"The development of an integrated management information system will require the participation and coordination of multiple agencies and commands. Therefore, we are addressing our recommendations to each of the key agencies and commands, so that they, together, will commit to developing an integrated information solution. To provide a common operating picture of U.S. reconstruction programs and projects in Afghanistan, SIGAR recommends that the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and the Acting Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (in coordination with the U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan and the Commanding General, U.S. Central Command) work together to jointly develop an integrated management information system for Afghanistan reconstruction activities. SIGAR also recommends that the reconstruction stakeholders appoint an executive agent to coordinate the overall interagency development and implementation of an integrated management information system or comparable integrated information solution, including responsibilities for progress and issue resolution."

MISSION RESPONSE TO AUDIT RECOMMENDATION

USAID/Afghanistan agrees with this recommendation in principle. We believe that, while an integrated management information system is needed, it would be very difficult to achieve in the current operating environment. One of the underlying conditions needed for an interagency system to be developed and deployed is that all agencies operate under the same information policies and information standards. Those policies and standards, however, have yet to be established. Even when established, an integrated system will be time-consuming and difficult to develop and deploy, which would impact our ability to focus on the core counter-insurgency mission. USAID has already completed a 'Joint Management Information System' assessment as an initial first step in analyzing the specific information standards and requirements. In addition, USAID is working with the Department of Defense to develop a database of reconstruction contracts for Afghanistan and

Iraq, as required by Section 861 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (P.L. 110-181). We will continue to work with the other Agencies to determine what system or systems will best enable us to share information needed to make decisions, subject to the constraints of our operating environment.

Furthermore, the State Department and USAID have enhanced our coordination of reconstruction activities with the Department of Defense. In June 2009, Ambassador Tony Wayne deployed to Afghanistan as the U.S. Coordinating Director for Development and Economic Affairs. In this role, Ambassador Wayne oversees all U.S. foreign assistance for Afghanistan; coordinates civilian assistance activities with assistance provided by the U.S. military; and coordinates U.S. assistance with international donors and, most importantly, the government of Afghanistan. Furthermore, the State Department and USAID are working closely with the U.S. military as part of integrated civil-military teams in Embassy Kabul, on Provincial Reconstruction Teams, and on District Stabilization Teams. Integrated civil-military working groups have been established that focus on the most critical sectors that will contribute to our counter-insurgency efforts. As a result, the U.S. Government is becoming increasingly effective in building a unified and integrated assistance program.

Appendix III: Comments from the U.S. Central Command

UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF
7115 SOUTH BOUNDARY BOULEVARD
MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE, FLORIDA 33621-5101

28 July 09

TO: SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCION (SIGAR)

SUBJECT: Review of Draft SIGAR Audit Report "SIGAR AUDIT-09-3 MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM: A Better Information Management System Is Needed to Promote Information Sharing, Effective Planning, and Coordination of Afghanistan Reconstruction Activities", (SIGAR Project 001)

1. Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the recommendations presented in the GAO draft report.

2. Attached are the USCENTCOM Staff (TAB A) and USFOR-A / CSTC-A (TAB B) responses to the recommendations. As you will see in our response, we want to ensure that new systems are not designed and fielded where existing systems can provide a solution.

3. The Point of Contact is Colonel Mario V. Garcia, Jr., USCENTCOM Inspector General, (813)827-6660.

JAY W. HOOD
Major General, U.S. Army

Attachments:
TAB A: CENTCOM Responses
TAB B: CSTC-A Responses

SIGAR DRAFT REPORT – DATED JULY X, 2009
SIGAR 09-3 (Project 001)
"SIGAR AUDIT-09-3 MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM: A Better Information Management System Is Needed to Promote Information Sharing, Effective Planning, and Coordination of Afghanistan Reconstruction Activities"

CENTCOM COMMENTS TO THE DRAFT REPORT

RECOMMENDATION 1. (page 8, SIGAR Draft)
To provide a common operating picture of U.S. reconstruction programs and projects in Afghanistan, SIGAR recommends that the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and the Acting Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (in coordination with the U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan and the Commanding General, U.S. Central Command) work together to jointly develop an integrated management information system for Afghanistan reconstruction activities.

CENTCOM RESPONSE: CENTCOM partially concurs with the recommendation.
1. Recommend that SIGAR take out any reference to common operating picture and add common situational awareness. "Common operating picture" is used to refer to a specific program, which is not the same as what SIGAR is recommending.
2. Recommend that SIGAR consider existing systems, or systems already under development before recommending development of a new system. Development of a new information management system is a long-term project, as acknowledged in the SIGAR report. Requirement development, system design, testing, integration, validation, verification, and certification take time. System deployment, training, change management and maintenance add time and complexity. Rather than develop a new system from scratch, information management of U.S. reconstruction programs and projects in Afghanistan would be more quickly served by utilizing TSCMIS, and ultimately G-TSCMIS, as the information management system of choice. Consolidating information management system demands strengthens DOD and Interagency wide efforts to improve collaboration and information sharing, leading to reduction in overlapping or duplicative efforts.

RECOMMENDATION 2. (page 8, SIGAR Draft)
SIGAR also recommends that the reconstruction stakeholders appoint an executive agent to coordinate the overall interagency development and implementation of an integrated management information system or comparable integrated information solution, including responsibilities for progress and issue resolution.

CENTCOM RESPONSE: CENTCOM partially concurs with the recommendation.
Appointing a new executive agent to coordinate overall interagency development and implementation appears to be redundant, considering the availability of systems currently in process. See CENTCOM response to Recommendation 1 (above).

RECOMMENDATION 3. (page 8, SIGAR Draft)
SIGAR recommends that the executive agent, once appointed, should work with stakeholder entities to, at a minimum, determine interagency requirements for an integrated management information system or comparable integrated information solution that takes into account the various systems and methods currently used to collect reconstruction data; develop a plan to ensure that data integrity, consistency, accuracy, and completeness are

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taken into consideration in any system development; and identify funding and resource requirements to implement the development and sustainment of the system.

CENTCOM RESPONSE: CENTCOM partially concurs with the recommendation. See CENTCOM response to Recommendation 1, above.

GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE REPORT

CENTCOM recommends, when looking at possible baseline solutions, that the Combined Information Data Network Exchange (CIDNE) already in place on SIPR, NIPR and soon to be U.S. Battlefield Information Collection and Exploitation Systems (USBICES) be considered. CIDNE can rapidly fill this requirement. Some thought should also be given to allowing a sanitized view of reconstruction data to be shared with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) who are working in Afghanistan. This report makes its recommendations to prevent, "...an increased chance of duplication of efforts, conflicting ventures and wasted resources." To ensure that we get the most effective and efficient utilization of all resources, we should allow NGOs to see the work that is being done by the US and the Coalition. While the NGOs will probably not share their information with us, this would provide more transparency to the international community and prevent US, Coalition and NGOs duplication of efforts.

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Appendix IV: Comments from the Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
COMBINED SECURITY TRANSITION COMMAND – AFGHANISTAN
OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM
KABUL, AFGHANISTAN
APO AE 09356

CSTC-A-DCG

July 26, 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR United States Department of Defense, Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 400 Army Navy Drive, Arlington, VA 22202-4704

SUBJECT: CSTC-A Response to SIGAR Draft Report No. 09-3 (Project 001) Management Information Systems used for Tracking and Reporting on Reconstruction Activities in Afghanistan

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to respond to the three recommendations in SIGAR's July 2009 Draft Report No. 09-3 (Project 001) on the Audit of Management Information Systems used for tracking and reporting on reconstruction activities in Afghanistan. The Command has enclosed a response which expresses concurrence with all 3 recommendations.

2. The point of contact for this Command is Mr. Jessie Charlie Ridley at DSN (318) 237-1166 or NIPR email jessie.c.ridley@afghan.swa.army.mil.

Encls.

ANTHONY R. IERARDI
Brigadier General, U.S. Army
Deputy Commanding General

SIGAR DRAFT REPORT – DATED JULY X, 2009
SIGAR 09-3 (Project 001)
"SIGAR AUDIT-09-3 MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM: A Better Information Management System Is Needed to Promote Information Sharing, Effective Planning, and Coordination of Afghanistan Reconstruction Activities"

CSTC-A COMMENTS TO THE DRAFT REPORT

RECOMMENDATION 1. (page 8, SIGAR Draft)
To provide a common operating picture of U.S. reconstruction programs and projects in Afghanistan, SIGAR recommends that the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and the Acting Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (in coordination with the U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan and the Commanding General, U.S. Central Command) work together to jointly develop an integrated management information system for Afghanistan reconstruction activities.

CSTC-A RESPONSE: CSTC-A concurs with Recommendation Number 1 and will fully support its implementation.

RECOMMENDATION 2. (page 8, SIGAR Draft)
SIGAR also recommends that the reconstruction stakeholders appoint an executive agent to coordinate the overall interagency development and implementation of an integrated management information system or comparable integrated information solution, including responsibilities for progress and issue resolution.

CSTC-A RESPONSE: CSTC-A concurs with Recommendation Number 2. CSTC-A recommends that CENTCOM (United States Central Command) serve as the executive agent responsible for developing a common Information Management System and implementation policy that will address the findings identified in the report. CSTC-A considers CENTCOM as being in the best position to coordinate, influence change, and implement lessons learned from Iraq.

RECOMMENDATION 3. (page 8, SIGAR Draft)
SIGAR recommends that the executive agent, once appointed, should work with stakeholder entities to, at a minimum, determine interagency requirements for an integrated management information system or comparable integrated information solution that takes into account the various systems and methods currently used to collect reconstruction data; develop a plan to ensure that data integrity, consistency, accuracy, and completeness are taken into consideration in any system development; and identify funding and resource requirements to implement the development and sustainment of the system.

CSTC-A RESPONSE: CSTC-A concurs with Recommendation Number 3 and will fully support its implementation.

GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE REPORT

CSTC-A has no general comments on the report.

PREPARED BY:

JEFFREY L. KENT
COL, SF, USA
COMMAND INPSECTOR GENERAL
CSTC-A, DSN 318-237-1076

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(This report was conducted under the audit project code SIGAR-001A)

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