

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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November 7, 2022

The Honorable John F. Sopko
Special Inspector General for
Afghanistan Reconstruction
2530 Crystal Drive
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Inspector General Sopko:

On October 25, 2022, we wrote to you requesting a briefing on your continuing oversight efforts of the United States' botched withdrawal from Afghanistan and any obstacles put in place by the Biden Administration. You had previously notified the Committee that the Department of State (State) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) are obstructing the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction's (SIGAR) work by not providing fulsome or—in some cases—any responses to your inquiries.¹ On October 28, 2022, your staff provided the requested briefing.² Based on that briefing, we are following up to request documents and information regarding the Biden Administration's efforts to avoid oversight of its disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan.

During the October 28 staff briefing, your office shared the following facts:

1. A current State employee informed SIGAR they had been instructed to no longer comply with SIGAR's oversight mission.
2. In addition to State and USAID, the Department of Treasury (Treasury) is also now refusing to provide requested information.
3. The Biden Administration began refusing to share information with SIGAR in November 2021. The Administration's obstruction may be linked to Committee Republicans' letter on August 19, 2021, requesting a briefing on the collapse of Afghanistan and the

¹ Letter from Hon. James Comer, et. al., Ranking Member, H. Comm. On Oversight & Reform, to Hon. John Sopko, Special Inspector Gen. for Afghanistan Reconstruction (Oct. 26, 2022).

² Briefing from Special Inspector Gen. for Afghanistan Reconstruction Staff to H. Comm. On Oversight & Reform Staff (Oct. 28, 2022).

Committee's bipartisan September 10, 2021, letter requesting SIGAR's review of the collapse of Afghanistan as well as a review of the circumstances of the withdrawal.³

4. SIGAR staff confirmed that the evaluations and reports it planned on doing—including some congressionally requested and others statutorily required—are being obstructed by State, USAID, and Treasury. Furthermore, SIGAR staff clarified it has coordinated with those agencies' respective Office of Inspectors General and there is no duplication of ongoing work – leaving a gap in oversight.
5. When asked if the Biden Administration's efforts are obstructing ongoing oversight of Afghan reconstruction, SIGAR staff responded, "yes."⁴

The Biden Administration's ongoing obstruction is unacceptable and potentially illegal. The Biden Administration is seeking to avoid transparency, and therefore, accountability for its deadly withdrawal from Afghanistan. SIGAR has always had an important mission. But its work is especially important now. Congress—and therefore the American people—need to understand the Administration's decisions surrounding the withdrawal and the consequences of those decisions.

To further assist the Committee in its ongoing investigation into the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Biden Administration's pattern of obstructing oversight, we request the following documents and information, for the time period August 15, 2021 through present, as soon as possible but no later than November 21, 2022:

1. All documents and communications referring or relating to any instruction from State, USAID, or Treasury for their employees to longer comply with and/or cooperate with SIGAR's oversight mission, including but not limited to any documents or communications between and amongst SIGAR employees;
2. All documents and communications referring or relating to any employee at State, USAID, or Treasury refusing or declining to provide information requested by SIGAR, including but not limited to e-mails, letters, or other correspondence;
3. All requests for information or interrogatories sent by SIGAR, in support of a congressionally requested or statutorily required report, to State, USAID, or Treasury and the agencies original responses;
4. All documents and communications between or among employees of State, USAID, or Treasury referring or relating to agency official(s) claim(s) SIGAR no longer has oversight jurisdiction;

³ Letter from Hon. James Comer, et. al., Ranking Member, H. Comm. On Oversight & Reform, to Hon. John Sopko, Special Inspector Gen. for Afghanistan Reconstruction (Aug. 19, 2021); Letter from Hon. Carolyn Maloney, et. al., Chairwoman, H. Comm. On Oversight & Reform, to Hon. John Sopko, Special Inspector Gen. for Afghanistan Reconstruction (Sept. 10, 2021).

⁴ Briefing, *supra* note 2.

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5. All documents and communications demonstrating SIGAR officials were denied meetings with officials from State, USAID, or Treasury, including but not limited to all meeting request records and the agency's response or a note referencing a lack thereof; and
6. All documents and communications demonstrating SIGAR officials were denied travel, either domestically or internationally, to conduct oversight activities by State or USAID, or any other agency, including but not limited to travel request records and the agency's response or a note referencing a lack thereof.

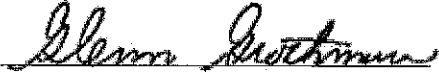
SIGAR is critically important in examining the whole-of-government issues regarding U.S. engagements in Afghanistan. Historically, State and USAID have honored SIGAR's mission. Their current lack of cooperation with SIGAR—in the wake of the United States' deadly withdrawal from Afghanistan—is alarming. Without SIGAR's oversight, the American people lack answers on how taxpayer dollars were and continued to be used and what impact the withdrawal has had on our national security.

The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X.

Thank you for your attention to this very important matter.

Sincerely,


James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform


Glenn Grothman
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Security

cc: The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney, Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch, Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security