



# OPERATION ENDURING SENTINEL

LEAD INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORT TO THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS



APRIL 1, 2023–JUNE 30, 2023

**On the cover:** The World Food Programme Afghanistan Country Director meets with farmers in Jawzjan province who have suffered from low harvests due to drought conditions over the past 5 years. (WFP photo)



We are pleased to present this Lead Inspector General (Lead IG) report to Congress on Operation Enduring Sentinel (OES). This report discharges our quarterly reporting responsibilities pursuant to section 419 of the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended.

In October 2021, the Department of Defense (DoD) initiated OES as the U.S. mission to conduct over-the-horizon counterterrorism operations against threats emanating from Afghanistan and to engage with Central Asian and South Asian regional partners to combat terrorism and promote regional stability.

This quarterly report describes the activities of the U.S. Government in support of OES, as well as the work of the DoD, the Department of State (State), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to further the U.S. Government's policy goals in Afghanistan during the period of April 1 through June 30, 2023. This report also discusses the planned, ongoing, and completed oversight work conducted by the Lead IG agencies—the DoD, State, and USAID Offices of Inspector General (OIG)—and our partner oversight agencies.

Handwritten signature of Robert P. Storch in black ink.

**Robert P. Storch**  
Lead Inspector General  
for OES  
Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Defense

Handwritten signature of Diana R. Shaw in black ink.

**Diana R. Shaw**  
Associate Lead Inspector General  
for OES  
Acting Inspector General  
U.S. Department of State

Handwritten signature of Nicole L. Angarella in black ink.

**Nicole L. Angarella**  
Acting Deputy Inspector General,  
Performing the Duties of the  
Inspector General  
U.S. Agency for International  
Development





An Afghan village in Balkh province.  
(World Food Programme photo)

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U.S. Army paratroopers honor the 77 fallen paratroopers who made the ultimate sacrifice during deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq on May 24, 2023. (U.S. Air Force photo)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K) conducted a series of small-scale attacks against the Taliban this quarter while focusing on reorganization following the loss of experienced personnel in Taliban raids.**<sup>1</sup> The Taliban improved its capacity to disrupt ISIS-K this quarter, conducting at least six raids against ISIS-K leaders and attack plotters.<sup>2</sup> These included an operation that killed the senior ISIS-K leader responsible for planning the August 2021 attack on the Kabul airport.<sup>3</sup> Despite this drop in terrorist activity, ISIS-K's improvised explosive devices remained the leading cause of civilian deaths in Afghanistan, according to a UN report.<sup>4</sup> While the Taliban demonstrated some success in countering ISIS-K this quarter, it was unable to prevent attacks on low-security targets, including an attack that killed an acting Taliban governor in June.<sup>5</sup>

**The Taliban worked to expand and deepen diplomatic relations with limited success, as no country has formally recognized the Taliban as the government of Afghanistan.**<sup>6</sup> State said that the Taliban's continued human rights abuses, particularly the increased restrictions on women and girls, remain a major obstacle to more normalized relations with the United States and the international community.<sup>7</sup> Neighboring countries engaged with the Taliban while expressing various concerns about the administration of Afghanistan.<sup>8</sup>

## Lead IG Oversight Activities

The Lead IG agencies published one management advisory and completed nine oversight projects related to OES during the quarter, including reports on DoD screening Afghan evacuees; DoD management of the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund; DoD management of funds in support of Operation Allies Welcome; State's efforts to resettle Afghans under the special immigrant visa (SIV) program; and USAID's monitoring of health development programs in Afghanistan. As of June 30, 2023, the Lead IG agencies had 18 oversight projects related to OES ongoing and 1 project planned.

During the quarter, Lead IG investigations resulted in one sentencing related to an investigation into fraud allegations involving military contracts and State visas in Afghanistan. The investigative branches of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies initiated 2 new investigations and coordinated on 34 open investigations related to OES. The investigations involve a variety of alleged crimes, including procurement fraud, corruption, grant fraud, theft, program irregularities, computer intrusions, and human trafficking.

Each Lead IG agency maintains its own hotline to receive and service complaints specific to its agency. The DoD OIG has an investigator to coordinate the hotline contacts among Lead IG agencies and others, as appropriate. During the quarter, the investigator referred six cases to Lead IG agencies or other investigative organizations.

**The U.S. Government continued to meet with Taliban representatives both in Doha and at a peace conference in Oslo.** Discussions focused on promoting U.S. national interests and reiterating the need for the Taliban to end its restrictive policies on women and girls and to meet international community expectations.<sup>9</sup>

**The humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan continued to worsen this quarter, with the number of people in need reaching 28.8 million in May 2023.** This is more than a 400 percent increase from the 6.3 million requiring aid in 2019.<sup>10</sup> More than 15 million Afghans are acutely food insecure, with 2.8 million people experiencing emergency levels of hunger. Domestic food production has been reduced by natural disasters, including droughts and locust outbreaks. USAID provided more than \$422 million to the World Food Programme for food assistance in Afghanistan in FY 2023, including \$78.5 million this quarter.<sup>11</sup> USAID food assistance efforts include the provision in-kind food assistance, cash transfers for food, and food vouchers.<sup>12</sup>

**On April 4, the Taliban extended its ban on women working with nongovernmental organizations (NGO) to include a prohibition on women working with UN programs.**<sup>13</sup> This will negatively impact aid operations throughout Afghanistan.<sup>14</sup> The Taliban's decrees undermine the ability of humanitarian organizations to reach the estimated 11.6 million women and girls who need humanitarian assistance, as restrictions on female staff caused several USAID implementers to suspend operations in Afghanistan.<sup>15</sup>



**A U.S. Soldier surveys Kabul from the back of a CH-47 Chinook helicopter in March 2020. (U.S. Army Reserve photo)**



## About Operation Enduring Sentinel

On October 7, 2001, the United States launched combat operations in Afghanistan under Operation Enduring Freedom to topple the Taliban regime and eliminate al-Qaeda, the terrorist organization responsible for the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States. The Taliban regime fell quickly, and on May 1, 2003, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld announced an end to major combat operations in Afghanistan. Subsequently, the United States and international coalition partners transitioned to a mission designed to combat terrorism in Afghanistan while helping the then-nascent Afghan government defend itself and build democratic institutions in the country.

While the new Afghan government developed, the Taliban launched increasingly deadly attacks to recapture lost territory, killing more than 800 U.S. Service members and wounding more than 4,200 between the 2003 announcement and a 2009 change in strategy. To combat a resurgent Taliban, the United States increased the number of U.S. troops deployed to Afghanistan, surging to a force of 100,000 troops in 2010 and 2011. The U.S. troop increase was initially successful in reestablishing security within much of Afghanistan, but as the United States withdrew the surge forces, concerns remained about the ability of the Afghan forces to maintain security.

Operation Freedom's Sentinel began on January 1, 2015, when the United States formally ended its combat mission, Operation Enduring Freedom, and joined with other nations as part of the NATO Resolute Support Mission. In 2018, the United States increased its

diplomatic efforts to reach an accord with the Taliban, culminating in a February 29, 2020 agreement. Under the agreement, the United States committed to reduce its troop levels to 8,600 by July 2020, and to withdraw all military forces of the United States, its allies, and coalition partners from Afghanistan by May 1, 2021. The Taliban committed to, among other things, not allowing any of its members, other individuals, or groups, including al-Qaeda, to use the territory of Afghanistan as a base from which to threaten the security of the United States and its allies. In April 2021, President Biden announced that U.S. troops would not meet the agreed upon May withdrawal deadline but would begin their final withdrawal in May, with the goal of removing all U.S. military personnel, DoD civilians, and contractors by September 11, 2021.

In August 2021, U.S. military forces completed their final withdrawal soon after the Taliban seized control of most of Afghanistan's territory, including Kabul, leading to the collapse of the U.S.-supported Afghan government and military on August 15. The U.S. Embassy staff in Kabul was evacuated during the airlift of U.S., allied, and certain Afghan personnel and their families, and the final flight departed Kabul on August 30. On October 1, 2021, the DoD terminated Operation Freedom's Sentinel and initiated Operation Enduring Sentinel (OES). The objective of OES is to ensure that terrorist groups do not launch attacks against the United States from Afghanistan. In January 2022, the State Department opened the Afghanistan Affairs Unit at the U.S. Embassy in Doha, Qatar, which serves as the U.S. diplomatic mission to Afghanistan.





The main warehouse in Jalalabad where food commodities are stored and further dispatched across Afghanistan. (World Food Programme photo)

## MISSION UPDATE

*This section, “Mission Update,” describes U.S. activities under the OES mission and related activities that affects the OES mission. The following section, “U.S. Policy Objectives in Afghanistan,” describes diplomatic, political, humanitarian assistance, and development activities in Afghanistan.*

### U.S. ACTIVITY

The DoD did not provide publicly releasable information about U.S. military activity related to OES during the quarter. All DoD information on this topic from this quarter can be found in the classified appendix. State reported that the U.S. Government continued to press the Taliban to meet its counterterrorism commitments and prevent any individual or group, including al-Qaeda and ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K), from using the soil of Afghanistan to threaten the security of the United States and its allies.<sup>16</sup>

### ISIS-K ACTIVITY

The Joint Staff reported that it did not assess that there were any threats directed against the U.S. homeland stemming from Afghanistan this quarter. The intelligence community continues to assess that if ISIS-K prioritized an attack against the U.S. homeland, it would take the group 6 to 12 months to develop the capability to conduct such an attack.<sup>17</sup>

#### **THE U.S. GOVERNMENT HAS NOT YET DECIDED WHETHER TO RECOGNIZE THE TALIBAN OR ANY OTHER ENTITY AS THE GOVERNMENT IN AFGHANISTAN**

The U.S. Government has not yet made a decision whether to recognize the Taliban or any other entity as the government of Afghanistan. Accordingly, any references in this report to so-called “Taliban governance,” the “Taliban’s ministries” and “officials,” a “former” Afghan government, and similar phrases are not meant to convey any U.S. Government view or decision on recognition of the Taliban or any other entity as the government of Afghanistan.

## ISIS-K Targets the Taliban with Smaller Scale Attacks

According to the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), ISIS-K continued to carry out small-scale attacks against the Taliban while focusing on reorganization following the loss of experienced leadership personnel due to Taliban raids in March and April. ISIS-K maintains its intent to conduct attacks against Western interests in Europe and, probably, to use established facilitation nodes in Turkey as a transit hub to move operatives, recruits, funds, and weapons from Afghanistan to Europe.<sup>18</sup>

According to the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), ISIS-K conducted at least 16, mostly small-scale, attacks in Afghanistan this quarter. In early June, ISIS-K claimed a suicide car bombing against the Taliban's acting governor of Badakhshan province. Also in June, ISIS-K conducted a suicide bombing at the deceased governor's funeral. About a dozen attendees, including Taliban officials, were killed.<sup>19</sup>

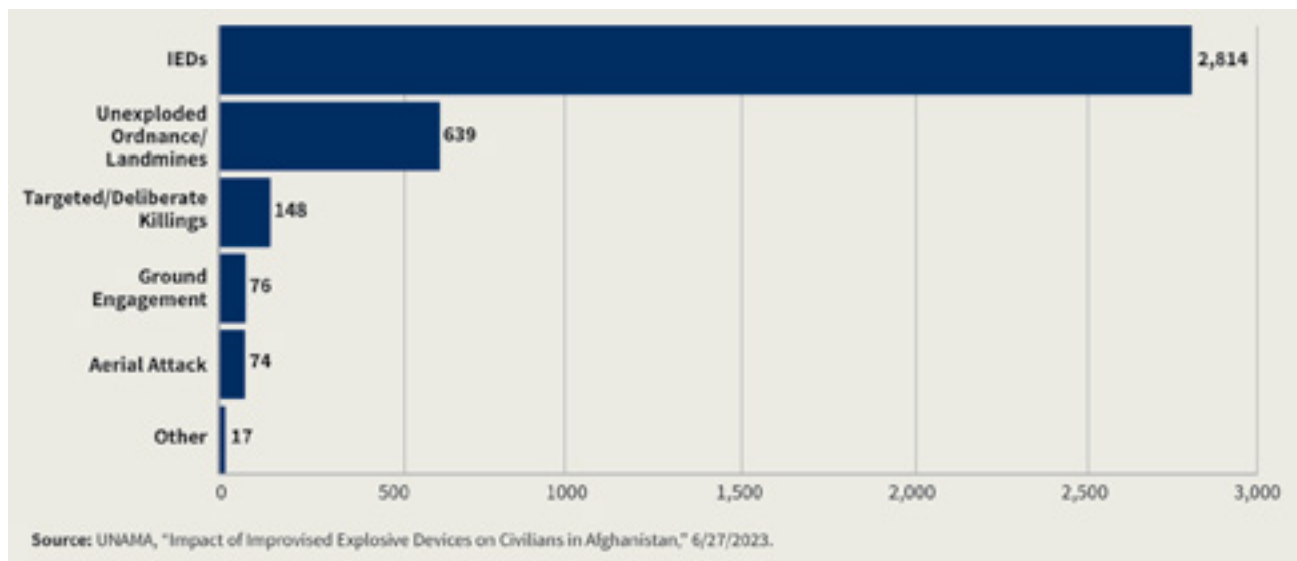
The DIA reported that ISIS-K maintains its intent to direct or enable an attack against the U.S. homeland, but the DIA had no indication of a specific ISIS plot to attack the United States from Afghanistan. ISIS-K will probably use English-language media to encourage sympathizers to attack the United States.<sup>20</sup>

## United Nations: ISIS-K's IEDs Are the Leading Cause of Civilian Casualties

According to a report released by the UN Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) this quarter, there have been 3,774 civilian casualties in Afghanistan since the 2021 Taliban takeover through May 2023. The leading cause of civilian harm during this period was improvised explosive devices (IED), followed by landmines and other unexploded ordnance.<sup>21</sup> (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1.

### Causes of Civilian Casualties in Afghanistan, August 15, 2021–May 30, 2023



**A recently declassified National Intelligence Council assessment predicted that al-Qaeda would likely prioritize preserving its sanctuary over conducting operational activity in Afghanistan through at least 2024.**

UNAMA attributed the majority of these attacks to ISIS-K and stated that the terrorist group significantly increased its violent activity after the Taliban takeover. The report includes ISIS-K's suicide attacks—which often target Shia Muslim places of worship—in its IED total.<sup>22</sup>

### **ISIS-K Propaganda Continues to Target the Taliban**

According to the DIA, ISIS-K probably had about 2,000 fighters in Afghanistan this quarter—consistent with last quarter's numbers—and was attracting Central Asian recruits and supporters from Europe despite the Taliban's counterterrorism efforts.<sup>23</sup> ISIS-K is probably relying on some Afghans' dissatisfaction with the Taliban to attract new recruits.<sup>24</sup> The Taliban has engaged in acts of brutality against members of the former Afghan military and security forces as well as human rights violations against Afghan civilians, potentially making these populations more inclined to support ISIS-K.<sup>25</sup>

A think tank report published in May reported that pro-ISIS-K propaganda outlets continued their ideological campaign against the Taliban, criticizing its actions domestically and internationally. ISIS-K propaganda aimed to portray the Taliban as a pawn of Iran with regard to water disputes and of the People's Republic of China with regard to development agreements and participation in the Belt and Road Initiative. (See page 10.) The report noted that ISIS-K-linked propaganda outlets had ceased to report on their attacks in Afghanistan unless they were of significant size or symbolic importance. For instance, the ISIS-linked al-Naba newsletter did not feature any attacks by ISIS-K between May 4 and 25.<sup>26</sup>

## **AL-QAEDA ACTIVITY**

### **UN: Taliban Shelters Al-Qaeda While Reining in Terrorist Activity**

Al-Qaeda's core leadership likely has fewer than a dozen members in Afghanistan, and al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent has about 200 members in Afghanistan. The DIA said that it has not observed any significant changes in the number of al-Qaeda or affiliated fighters in Afghanistan compared to the past quarter. Al-Qaeda's compliance with the Taliban's directives not to conduct external terrorist operations has likely hindered the group's recruitment and retention efforts.<sup>27</sup>

In early June, a UN monitoring team reported that the Taliban is providing sanctuary to al-Qaeda affiliates.<sup>28</sup> Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid rejected the report's findings and claimed that the Taliban is complying with its counterterrorism obligations under the U.S.-Taliban agreement signed in 2020, also known as the "Doha agreement."<sup>29</sup> The DIA said it did not observe any indicators of al-Qaeda senior leaders providing guidance, funding, or propaganda support to its regional affiliate, al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent, or other global affiliates this quarter.<sup>30</sup>

A recently declassified National Intelligence Council assessment originally written in September 2022 predicted that al-Qaeda would likely prioritize preserving its sanctuary over conducting operational activity in Afghanistan through at least 2024. The assessment said that al-Qaeda does not currently have the personnel, infrastructure, or unique capabilities to pose a threat to the United States from Afghanistan.<sup>31</sup>

## One Year Later, Al-Qaeda Has not Named a Successor to Ayman al-Zawahiri

Al-Qaeda has not yet publicly named a successor to its late emir, Ayman al-Zawahiri, who was killed in a U.S. airstrike in July 2022. However, the DIA said that Sayf al-Adel, the group's overall military commander and Zawahiri's former second in command, is likely the leading contender. Adel, who is currently based in Iran, helped found al-Qaeda and played a role in planning the 1998 U.S. embassy attacks in East Africa. Given his experience and tactical acumen, Adel would be al-Qaeda's most tactically proficient emir and would likely pose the greatest threat to the West of any potential successor, according to the DIA.<sup>32</sup>

The DIA said the fact that al-Qaeda has not publicly named Adel as Zawahiri's successor probably speaks to the group's recognition of the difficulties inherent in having the organization's leader being based in Iran, and it raises questions of how effective Adel would be in the role as al-Qaeda's emir. It is also plausible that the group could have covertly reverted to a committee style of leadership in which its branches decide strategy via consensus, according to the DIA.<sup>33</sup>

Al-Qaeda has not yet publicly named a successor to its late emir, Ayman al-Zawahiri, who was killed in a U.S. airstrike in July 2022.

## TALIBAN ACTIVITY

Under the Doha agreement, the Taliban committed not to allow terrorists to use the soil of Afghanistan to threaten the security of the United States and its allies.<sup>34</sup> The U.S. Government does not cooperate with the Taliban on counterterrorism operations.<sup>35</sup> However, the United States maintains a vested interest in the Taliban's commitment to prevent any individual or group, including al-Qaeda and ISIS-K, from launching attacks from Afghanistan.<sup>36</sup>

### Taliban Forces Clash with Iranian Border Guards

On May 27, Iranian and Taliban forces exchanged heavy gunfire and mortar rounds along the border amid a dispute over water rights. Worsening drought conditions have exacerbated tensions between the two countries over the Helmand River, which flows from Afghanistan into Iran, according to media reporting.<sup>37</sup> The Iranian government accused the Taliban of initiating the armed clash, and the Taliban said that Afghanistan does not want to fight its neighbors.<sup>38</sup> According to media reporting, one Taliban soldier and two Iranian border guards were killed in the fighting.<sup>39</sup>

### Taliban Demonstrates Some Counterterrorism Progress Against ISIS-K

This quarter, the Taliban conducted several raids against ISIS-K leaders in Afghanistan and has almost certainly improved its capacity to disrupt ISIS-K, according to the DIA. Since April, Taliban forces conducted at least six raids and captured or killed at least two ISIS-K leaders and attack plotters. The DIA reported that, as of mid-June, ISIS-K claimed only 2 attacks in Afghanistan this quarter, down from 12 attacks last quarter and 62 attacks during the same quarter 1 year ago.<sup>40</sup>

While the Taliban was generally successful in countering ISIS-K this quarter, it was unable to prevent attacks on low-security targets, including an attack that killed the acting governor of Badakhshan province and a subsequent attack at his funeral. (See page 8.)

**In April, the DoD confirmed reports that the Taliban had killed the senior ISIS-K leader responsible for planning the August 2021 attack on the Kabul airport that killed 13 U.S. Service members and killed or wounded hundreds of Afghan civilians.**

Although the Taliban has employed unmanned aerial vehicles for intelligence and surveillance in the past, the DIA said that it had seen no reports of aircraft in counterterrorism operations this quarter, and that the Taliban has almost certainly never employed airstrikes in its operations against ISIS-K.<sup>41</sup>

### **Taliban Kills ISIS-K Leader Responsible for August 2021 Abbey Gate Attack**

In April, the DoD confirmed reports that the Taliban had killed the senior ISIS-K leader responsible for planning the August 2021 attack on the Kabul airport that killed 13 U.S. Service members and killed or wounded hundreds of Afghan civilians. The DoD said the United States was not involved in this operation and did not provide any information, intelligence, or assistance to the Taliban.<sup>42</sup>

A National Security Council spokesperson quoted in a media report described the Taliban operation as one in a series that resulted in high-profile ISIS-K leadership losses this year.<sup>43</sup> According to State, the Taliban has made efforts to publicize its campaign against ISIS-K, including successes such as the killing of high-profile leaders. While the Taliban has made progress combatting ISIS-K, State said that it struggles to dismantle ISIS-K's clandestine urban cells and prevent attacks on soft targets.<sup>44</sup>

### **Taliban Accused of Human Rights Violations in Operations Against the National Resistance Front**

Since taking power in August 2021, the Taliban has continued efforts to combat the National Resistance Front, an anti-Taliban armed opposition group based in Panjshir province. In June, Amnesty International released a report alleging serious war crimes and violations of international humanitarian law in the Taliban's conduct of its counter-opposition campaign. These violations include torture, executions, hostage-taking, the intentional burning of civilian homes, and arbitrary detention. The report claimed that these acts constitute collective punishment aimed at instilling fear in the citizens of Panjshir province.<sup>45</sup>

According to State, the National Resistance Front did not appear to threaten the Taliban's control of the country during this quarter.<sup>46</sup>

### **TTP Continues to Threaten Pakistan from Afghan Safe Havens**

Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Pakistani branch of the Taliban, has an estimated 4,000 to 5,000 members, most of whom reside in Afghanistan, though the group does not hold territory in any nation. As of May, the TTP maintained its cohesion, and its leadership retained centralized control of the group, according to the DIA.<sup>47</sup> TTP's activities are outside the scope of OES.<sup>48</sup>

This quarter, the TTP continued its strategy of attacking Pakistani security targets from the group's safe haven in Afghanistan. The TTP considers the Pakistani state as its primary target and generally seeks to avoid civilian casualties. The DIA said that the TTP does not directly threaten Western interests because its primary target is the Pakistani government.<sup>49</sup> However, the TTP's attacks against Pakistan security forces may present an indirect, collateral risk to

U.S. interests in Pakistan. Since April, the TTP has attacked Pakistani military and security targets, and Pakistani security forces have continued to kill TTP militants in response.<sup>50</sup>

Following engagements between senior Pakistani officials and the Afghan Taliban, including a February 2023 visit to Kabul by Defense Minister Khawaja Asif and the Director General of Inter-Services Intelligence, Lieutenant General Nadeem Anjum, media reports predicted that the Taliban might take steps to reduce cross-border attacks by the TTP.<sup>51</sup> Press reports in early June 2023 indicated that the Taliban started to relocate Pakistani refugees away from Khost, Kunar, and other border provinces in Afghanistan to ensure they were not involved in attacks or other acts of violence in Pakistan.<sup>52</sup>

In early June, a UN monitoring team report said that the Afghan Taliban and al-Qaeda work together to shelter, support, and train the TTP.<sup>53</sup> According to the report, the relationship between the Afghan Taliban and the TTP, like the Taliban's relationship with al-Qaeda, is tightly bonded and unlikely to deteriorate. The report said that the Taliban does not consider the TTP a threat to Afghanistan but rather considers it a part of the emirate.<sup>54</sup>

In April, Pakistani officials expressed concern about the TTP's capabilities, which it assessed had been augmented by U.S. equipment acquired in Afghanistan, including weapons equipped with night vision capabilities. This quarter, the DIA observed no change in al-Qaeda's or ISIS-K's use of materiel that the United States provided to former Afghan government forces. Additionally, the DIA said it had no indications that state actors had attempted to acquire or reclaim U.S.-origin military materiel from Afghanistan during this quarter.<sup>55</sup>

**The DIA said it had no indications that state actors had attempted to acquire or reclaim U.S.-origin military materiel from Afghanistan during this quarter.**







U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken participates in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS Ministerial Closing Session in Riyadh on June 7, 2023. (State photo)

## U.S. POLICY OBJECTIVES IN AFGHANISTAN

The U.S. Government’s objectives in Afghanistan include pressing the Taliban to ensure the safety of Americans in Afghanistan (including releasing hostages); holding the Taliban to its counterterrorism commitments under the Doha agreement; safe passage for those who wish to leave Afghanistan; respect for the human rights of all Afghans; establishing a credible process to deliver representative governance for the people of Afghanistan; and providing humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people—assistance that is channeled through the UN and NGOs, not the Taliban.<sup>56</sup>

### DIPLOMACY AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

#### U.S. ACTIVITY

##### U.S. Government Continues Diplomatic Focus on Security

In June, foreign ministers of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS met in Saudi Arabia and committed to ensuring that Afghanistan does not become a safe haven again for terrorist groups, underscoring the need to align efforts and to monitor ISIS-K.<sup>57</sup> Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken said that the U.S. Government would continue to focus on its core national security interests in preventing the resurgence of terrorism emanating from Afghanistan, and if necessary, “take action to deal with it.”<sup>58</sup>

Also at the meeting, Department of the Treasury representatives met with their Counter ISIS Finance Group counterparts. The group warned that ISIS is attempting to use ISIS-K’s

**UN Secretary-General António Guterres briefs reporters on Afghanistan in Doha, Qatar on April 2, 2023. (UN photo)**



base in Afghanistan to increase its transnational operational, fundraising, and recruitment capabilities and to conduct terrorist attacks worldwide, and that ISIS networks in Afghanistan continue to receive ISIS funds and represent a particular threat to global security.<sup>59</sup>

In May, U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Thomas West participated in a meeting hosted by the Qatari government and convened by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to reinvigorate international engagement on common objectives in Afghanistan and to discuss how best to support the Afghan people, State said.<sup>60</sup> More than 20 special envoys participated in the closed-door session. They agreed on the need to develop a common approach to the stabilization of Afghanistan, sharing concerns about the presence of terrorist organizations, diminished human rights, and drug trafficking.<sup>61</sup> Special Representative West said after the meeting that political dialogue among Afghans is an important part of the solutions to these challenges.<sup>62</sup>

During the quarter, the U.S. Government continued to meet with Taliban representatives based in Doha, State said. Discussions focused on promoting U.S. national interests and calling for the Taliban to respect expectations of the international community.<sup>63</sup> In June, U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan West met with mid-level Taliban officials at a peace conference in Oslo, Norway where he reiterated the need for the Taliban to end its restrictive policies on women and girls and to meet international community expectations, State said.<sup>64</sup>

### **UN Security Council Unanimously Condemns the Taliban's Restrictions on Women**

In April, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution condemning the Taliban's restrictions on women.<sup>65</sup> More than 90 countries cosponsored the resolution, including 27 countries from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, State said.<sup>66</sup> According to media reporting, Muslim-majority countries are publicly questioning the Taliban's rationale for the restrictions.<sup>67</sup> During the quarter, the U.S. Government continued outreach to Muslim-majority countries to build international support on this issue, State said.<sup>68</sup>

Since taking control of the country, the Taliban has undertaken systemic gender-based discrimination, according to a report released in June by the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Afghanistan.<sup>69</sup> According to the report, depression and suicide have become widespread, especially among teenage girls, who have been prevented from pursuing an education. Every woman with whom the special rapporteur’s team spoke during the on-ground mission expressed serious concerns about the mental health of women and girls.<sup>70</sup>

During the quarter, the Taliban issued a decree forcing all beauty salons in the country to close.<sup>71</sup> According to media reporting, the Taliban’s Ministry of Virtue and Vice said that the salons do not align with Islamic law.<sup>72</sup> The ruling directly affects the livelihoods of Afghans, especially female entrepreneurs and their employees. Secondary schools, universities, parks, gyms, bathhouses, and other public places have also been closed to women and girls since the Taliban gained power, further restricting their movement and role in public life.<sup>73</sup>

**U.S. Government Continues to Prioritize Afghan SIV, Asylum, and Refugee Applicants**

State reported that it continued to improve the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) process during the quarter. (See Figure 2.) In June, State’s Bureau of Consular Affairs implemented a new process to electronically forward case data and associated documents to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for all Afghan SIV cases.<sup>74</sup> This allows USCIS to efficiently process admission of Afghan SIV holders at ports of entry and removes the need for visa holders to travel with a physical packet of documents in hand, streamlining processing by Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and allowing for timely and accurate production of green cards after admission.<sup>75</sup>

Figure 2.  
Special Immigrant Visa Issuances, August 2022–June 2023

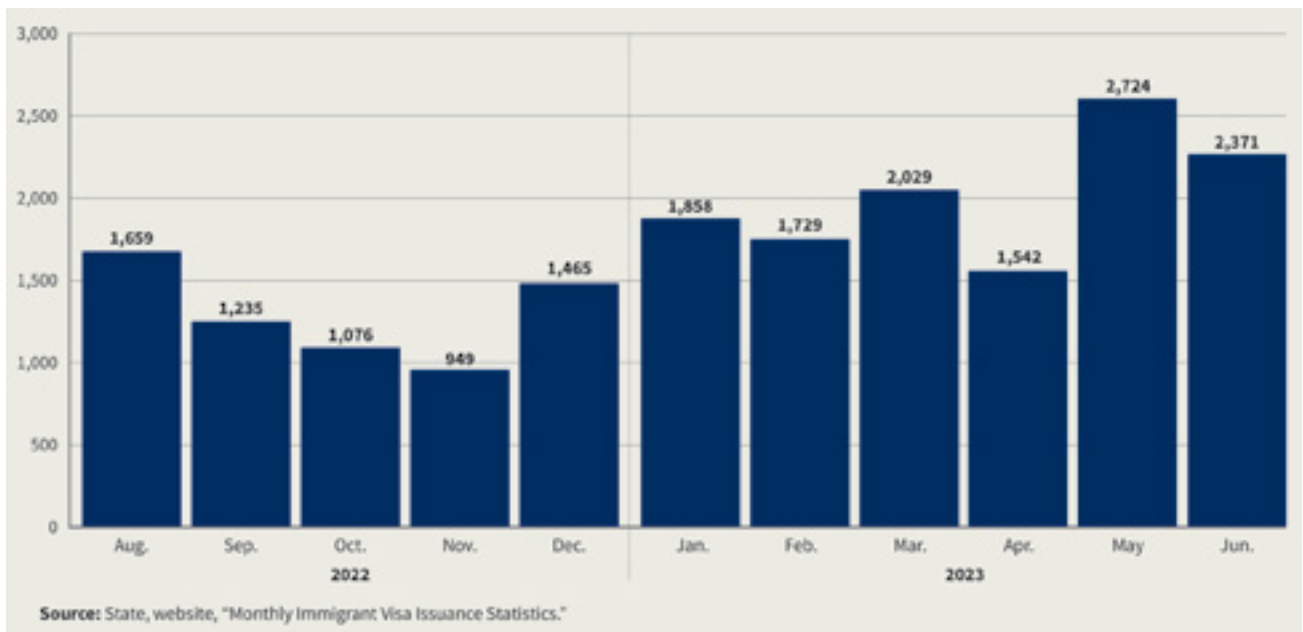
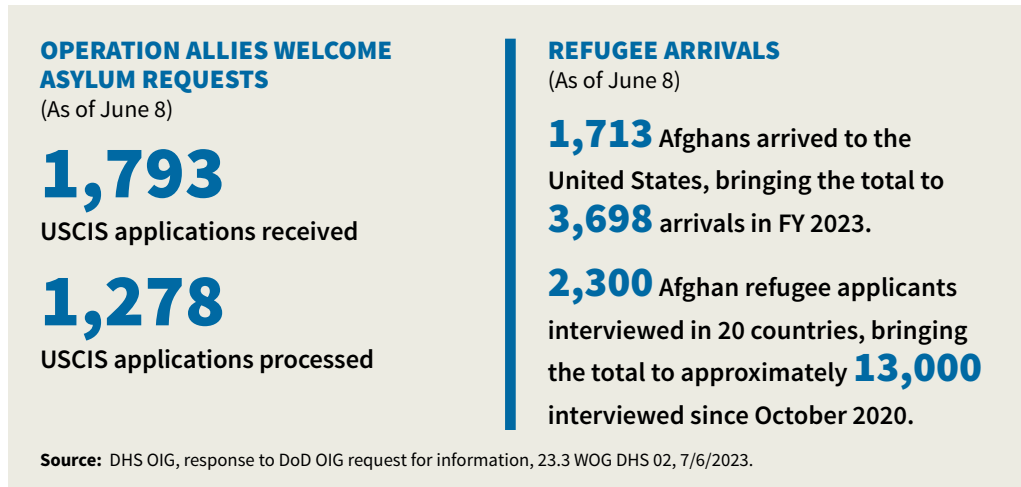


Figure 3.

**SIV, Asylum, and Refugee Applicants During the Quarter**

USCIS reported that it continues to prioritize asylum applications filed by Afghan nationals related to Operation Allies Welcome. (See Figure 3.) USCIS also held multiple public engagements to share information with Afghan parolees and service providers on how to access various immigration benefits.<sup>76</sup>

In addition, USCIS continues to work closely with DoD partners at Camp As-Sayliyah in Doha, Qatar, where Afghan refugee applicants are interviewed and processed. As part of this effort, the DoD's National Ground Intelligence Center provides information to the vetting organizations to support Afghan SIV and refugee applicants processed through Camp As-Sayliyah.<sup>77</sup>

**Afghan Fund Board of Trustees Holds Third Meeting**

The Board of Trustees of the Fund for the Afghan People (Afghan Fund), established in September 2022, is responsible for the management of \$3.5 billion of Afghanistan's central bank reserves, which were held in the Federal Reserve Bank of New York at the time of the Taliban takeover in 2021.<sup>78</sup> As of the end of the quarter, the fund had not disbursed any money, State said.<sup>79</sup> On June 26, the Afghan Fund board met for a third time, unanimously approving two new board co-chairs and welcoming its new executive secretary.<sup>80</sup> During the meeting, the board agreed to form a single international advisory committee made up of Afghan citizens, other government representatives, and international experts in order to deepen and diversify Afghan and international support for the Afghan Fund, State said.<sup>81</sup>

In addition, the board approved measures to continue to operationalize the Fund, including allocating a small portion of the Afghan Fund's interest earnings toward operating costs while simultaneously continuing to pursue external financing to cover administrative costs incurred by the Afghan Fund—a step in keeping with the goal of protecting and preserving these assets on behalf of the Afghan people, State said.<sup>82</sup>

## White House and State Department Release Reports on Afghanistan Withdrawal

This quarter, the White House announced that it had delivered to Congress a series of department- and agency-level after action reviews (AAR) on the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. While many of these reviews are classified, the White House released a public summary of the administration's perspective and lessons learned from that event.<sup>83</sup>

The summary says that President Biden was committed to ending the war in Afghanistan during his term in office and that the Trump administration set conditions that were unfavorable for an orderly withdrawal. The White House summary specifically cites the precipitous drawdown of U.S. forces in Afghanistan during 2019 and 2020 as having weakened the U.S. position. It also notes concerns that the Doha agreement resulted in the release of 5,000 Taliban prisoners, including senior commanders.<sup>84</sup>



**The White House summary and State's Report on the Afghanistan withdrawal.**

According to the White House summary, U.S. intelligence estimates in the months prior to the withdrawal incorrectly predicted that the Afghan military would be able to effectively defend the country without U.S. troops supporting them on the ground. Citing significant advantages in troop numbers, equipment, training, and support, the summary says there was an intelligence and military consensus that the Afghan forces would be able to hold back the Taliban on their own for at least a year or two. As of May 2021, the assessment was still that Kabul would probably not come under serious pressure until late 2021, after U.S. troops departed. However, the summary indicates that these estimates may not have assessed psychological factors, such as the Afghan security forces' willingness to fight.<sup>85</sup>

The White House summary says that the experience of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan produced lessons learned, which the administration applied to its activity in support of Ukraine prior to Russia's full-scale invasion. These included running simulation exercises based on worst case scenarios, proactively releasing intelligence with trusted partners, and erring on the side of aggressive communication with the public, even when this carries the risk of sparking panic. The report also describes post-withdrawal counterterrorism operations around the world aimed at defeating an increasingly diverse and diffuse terrorist threat.<sup>86</sup>

The DoD's AAR is classified, but State released an unclassified version of its AAR, which focuses on State's role in the process of ending the U.S. military mission in Afghanistan, covering the time period from January 2020 to August 2021.<sup>87</sup> The report says that State personnel responded admirably in an extremely challenging operating environment, given reduced security and the COVID-19 pandemic, but it identifies several areas of concern.<sup>88</sup> For example, State's planning was hindered because it was not clear which senior official had the lead.<sup>89</sup> The report says that a complicated task force structure confused staff members and hindered communication among and across various lines of effort.<sup>90</sup> Additionally, the AAR says that planning was inhibited by

*(continued on next page)*

## White House and State Department Release Reports on Afghanistan Withdrawal *(continued from previous page)*

State's concern that preparing for an evacuation could signal a loss of confidence in the Afghan government and thus contribute to its collapse.<sup>91</sup>

The AAR makes several recommendations, such as strengthening State's core crisis management capabilities and ensuring that senior leaders hear a range of views—including from those who may challenge key assumptions or policy decisions. Additional recommendations include establishing an emergency response plan notwithstanding concerns about host government reaction and improving crisis communications. State says it is already applying these recommendations in countries experiencing complex emergencies.<sup>92</sup>

### USAID Continued Plans to Reconstitute Its Afghanistan Mission in Astana, Kazakhstan, by September 2023

USAID Afghanistan established workspaces for 24 staff at the U.S. Embassy in Astana, Kazakhstan, and intends to reconstitute the Mission by the end of FY 2023.<sup>93</sup> As of the end of the quarter, USAID Afghanistan maintained six personnel in Astana: the Mission Director, Deputy Mission Director, Supervisory Executive Officer, Health Officer, Controller and Contracting Officer.<sup>94</sup> The Mission expects to fill most of the 20 authorized positions it maintains by the end of the calendar year, bringing the Mission to full staffing for U.S. direct hires.<sup>95</sup> The Mission also maintains three personnel at the U.S. Embassy in Doha, Qatar, in alignment with State's Afghanistan Affairs Unit: a Deputy Mission Director, a Program Officer, and a temporary duty Humanitarian Officer.<sup>96</sup> USAID expects the level of its staffing in Doha to stay at three personnel for the remainder of the calendar year.<sup>97</sup>

### TALIBAN ACTIVITIES

During the quarter, the Taliban continued to advocate for international recognition, sanctions relief, and assistance, State said.<sup>98</sup> Despite clear messaging to the Taliban by the United States and the broader international community, the Taliban continued to defend its human rights abuses in the name of its interpretation of Shariah law.<sup>99</sup>

### Taliban Consolidates Power in Kandahar

A UN monitoring team said that the Taliban continues to maintain and consolidate power under its emir, Haibatullah Akhundzada, who exerts growing influence over governing decisions at the national and subnational levels, including through the establishment of provincial ulema councils, official appointments, and direct influence over security forces.<sup>100</sup> The team's report said that although cabinet members govern from Kabul, overarching policy decisions are attributed to and emanate from the leader in Kandahar and that the Taliban leadership prioritizes unity under the increasing authority of Akhundzada. This geographic shift in the political center of gravity reflects a consolidation of the emir's authority, not a shift in priorities, which remain focused on security and full implementation of the emir's vision for Islamic governance, according to State.<sup>101</sup>

According to State, no country has formally recognized the Taliban as the government of Afghanistan as of this quarter.

## Taliban Continues to Face Major Obstacles in Quest for Normalized Relations

According to State, no country has formally recognized the Taliban as the government of Afghanistan as of this quarter.<sup>102</sup> During the quarter, the Taliban worked to expand and deepen diplomatic relations with limited success. State said that the Taliban's continued human rights abuses, particularly the increased restrictions on women and girls, remain a major obstacle to more normalized relations with the United States and others in the international community.<sup>103</sup>

**Pakistan:** Pakistan has not recognized the Taliban as the government of Afghanistan. However, the Pakistani government continued its public engagement with the Taliban during the quarter, State said. During an April 13 meeting in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, Pakistani Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar stressed the need for a sustained regional approach to Afghanistan, focused on economic integration, humanitarian assistance, and engagement.<sup>104</sup> On May 7, the Taliban's Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi visited Islamabad to meet with his Pakistani and Chinese counterparts. Public readouts of the meetings noted themes of increased political engagement, counterterrorism cooperation, and economic connectivity and trade.<sup>105</sup>

**Kazakhstan:** Media reported that Kazakhstan's Foreign Ministry confirmed on April 17 that it would receive Taliban diplomats but also clarified that Kazakhstan does not recognize the Taliban as Afghanistan's government.<sup>106</sup>

**Turkmenistan:** According to media reporting, Turkmenistan appointed Taliban member Mohammad Haroon Savedi as the commercial attaché in Ashgabat on May 27. The Taliban touted the appointment as a way to boost Afghanistan's relations in the region.<sup>107</sup>

**India:** Media reports suggested a power struggle between individuals representing the former Afghan government and the Taliban at the Afghan Embassy in India in May. India has not stated a formal position on the matter, State said.<sup>108</sup> News organizations reported that although India does not recognize the Taliban as Afghanistan's government, India did reopen its embassy in Kabul to coordinate humanitarian assistance in 2022.<sup>109</sup>

**Iran:** In February, Iran accepted new Taliban-appointed representatives, including a chargé d'affaires, at the Afghan Embassy in Tehran.<sup>110</sup> During the quarter, Iran continued to participate in regional platforms with Afghanistan's neighbors that promote pragmatic engagements with the Taliban. Despite these moves, Tehran did not formally recognize the Taliban as a government. Iran has called on the Taliban to allow Afghan girls' access to education and for a more inclusive government that represents all ethnic groups, according to State.<sup>111</sup>

**Qatar:** According to media reporting, Qatar's Prime Minister, Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, traveled to Kandahar for talks with Haibatullah Akhunzada in May. This was reportedly Akhunzada's first meeting with a foreign leader since the Taliban takeover of Kabul.<sup>112</sup>

## Recruitment of Child Soldiers Increases Under Taliban Rule

In its annual Trafficking in Persons Report issued in June, State noted that recruitment of child soldiers in Afghanistan increased drastically since the Taliban takeover in 2021, with both the Taliban and ISIS-K using children in combat roles. Anti-trafficking laws remain in place but unenforced with no formal system of accountability.<sup>113</sup> The Taliban often recruits children through coercion, fraud, and false promises, although it denied doing so. Both the Taliban and ISIS-K imprison children associated with other armed groups without regard to their age. ISIS-K uses children in direct hostilities, to plant and detonate improvised explosive devices, carry weapons, spy, and guard bases. The Taliban stated that its code of conduct prohibits boys with no facial hair from being allowed onto the battlefield or military bases, but it did not verify that recruits were older than age 18. State reported that the Taliban has not made efforts to meet the minimum standards for the elimination of human trafficking, including measures to prevent children from unlawful recruitment or use in combat and support roles.<sup>114</sup>

## U.S.-Central Asia Partnerships Bolster Region and Help Counter Threats

During the quarter, the United States and its partners in Central Asia continued to cooperate on shared interests of countering terrorism and drug trafficking and enhancing border security in support of regional stability. These programs help counter a wide range of threats to the region, international partners and allies, and the U.S. homeland, State said.<sup>115</sup> During the June meeting of Global Defeat ISIS Coalition, foreign ministers welcomed the participation of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as observers and emphasized the need for members to increase engagement with Central Asian countries to enhance their counterterrorism capacities.<sup>116</sup> Secretary of State Blinken said that the U.S. Government is working with Afghanistan's neighbors to strengthen the capacity to deal with terrorism that may be located in Afghanistan and emanating from there.<sup>117</sup>

As previously reported, the governments of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have acknowledged U.S. ownership of all the Afghan aircraft that were flown to both countries in August 2021 during the collapse of the Afghan government, and they continue to secure these aircraft, while rejecting Taliban claims to them.<sup>118</sup> On July 3, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency formally notified Congress that the DoD plans to transfer certain former Afghan aircraft to the governments of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.<sup>119</sup>





The World Food Programme Afghanistan Country Director meets with farmers in Jawzjan province who have suffered from low harvests due to drought conditions over the past 5 years. (World Food Programme photo)

## HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

The U.S. Government’s humanitarian objectives in Afghanistan are to advocate for the independence of humanitarian partners in facilitating aid; support and provide appropriate protection assistance to vulnerable Afghans; and improve protection and living conditions of Afghan internally displaced people, refugees, and new Afghan arrivals in neighboring host countries, according to State.<sup>120</sup>

The number of people in need in Afghanistan has increased each year for the past 4 years, from 6.3 million in 2019 to 28.8 million in May 2023.<sup>121</sup> According to the latest international estimates, more than 15 million people are acutely food insecure, with 2.8 million people experiencing emergency levels of hunger.<sup>122</sup> Following 3 years of drought, the World Food Programme projects a 30 to 35 percent reduction in wheat production in Afghanistan.<sup>123</sup> An overall improvement in wheat production compared to previous years is threatened by an ongoing locust outbreak, while below-average harvests are projected in western provinces.<sup>124</sup> (See page 23.) Acute vulnerabilities are compounded by economic decline, recurrent natural disasters, and the Taliban’s decision to ban women from working with NGOs and the United Nations, State said.<sup>125</sup>

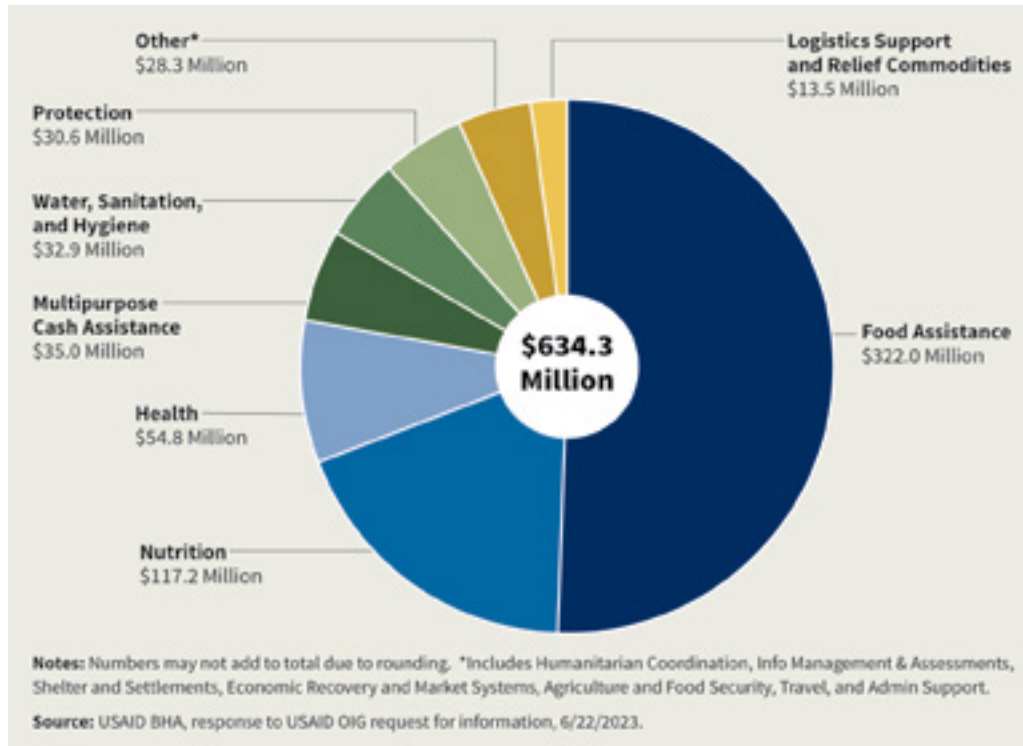
### U.S. Government Continues Funding for Assistance, Development Activities

The United States is the largest single provider of humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan and has contributed \$1.9 billion in programing since August 2021.<sup>126</sup>

USAID reported that it supports food assistance efforts through the provision in-kind food assistance, cash transfers for food, and food vouchers.<sup>127</sup> With USAID funding, the

Figure 4.

**USAID Humanitarian Assistance Funding by Sector, FY 2023**



World Food Programme provided food assistance and nutrition services; the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and international NGO implementers provided seeds and livestock feed in at-risk areas; and UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and other implementers delivered nutrition services to children and pregnant women throughout Afghanistan.<sup>128</sup> USAID provided the World Food Programme with more than \$422 million for food assistance in Afghanistan in FY 2023, including \$78.5 million this quarter.<sup>129</sup>

State’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) reported that it continues to implement nearly \$494 million obligated for humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan and neighboring countries since August 2021.<sup>130</sup> This assistance supports the scaled-up humanitarian response in Afghanistan and neighboring countries through independent humanitarian organizations, including the UN Refugee Agency, International Organization for Migration, UN Population Fund, and the UN Children’s Fund, State said. Specific activities include provision of emergency cash, shelter, and reintegration assistance to internally displaced people and returnees, protection and gender-based violence prevention services, and multisector assistance to refugee populations in Afghanistan and neighboring countries.<sup>131</sup>

Table 1.

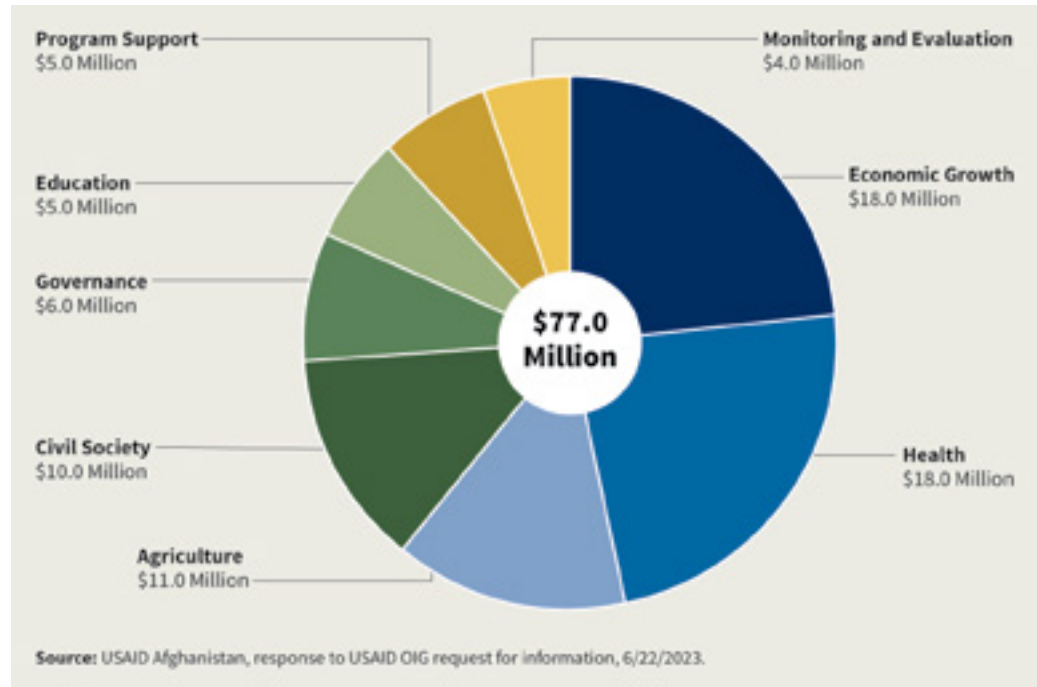
**U.S. Government Humanitarian Funding for the Afghanistan Response in FY 2023**

USAID BHA Funding	\$634,326,034
State PRM Funding	\$158,300,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$792,626,034</b>

**Note:** Funds committed or obligated in FY 2023, as of June 9, 2023.

**Source:** USAID, “Afghanistan—Complex Emergency Humanitarian Update #90,” 6/27/2023.

Figure 5.

**USAID Development Funding by Sector, FY 2023, Q1–Q3**

In addition to humanitarian assistance, USAID supported 24 development activities in Afghanistan during the quarter.<sup>132</sup> USAID Afghanistan obligated approximately \$77 million during the first quarter of FY 2023, of which approximately \$44 million were funds that were appropriated from FY 2012 through FY 2016.<sup>133</sup> Approximately \$232 million remained unobligated.<sup>134</sup>

On June 5, the UN released the revised 2023 Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan, which included \$3.2 billion in assistance, down from \$4.6 billion earlier in the year, State said.<sup>135</sup> As of this quarter, the plan was only 14 percent funded as a result of the Taliban's edicts and a growing number of competing global crises that have further reduced available funding for humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan, including climate change, the war in Ukraine, earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria, and the worsening conflict in Sudan, according to State.<sup>136</sup>

**Locust Swarms Threaten Wheat Production**

A quarter of this year's wheat harvest in Afghanistan is at risk of loss due to an ongoing Moroccan Locust outbreak in northern Afghanistan, according to a report released during the quarter by the World Food Program.<sup>137</sup> The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) noted that the large-scale outbreak across eight provinces in north and northeast Afghanistan, which account for approximately 35 percent of the country's wheat production, represented a serious threat to farmers and communities across the entire country.<sup>138</sup> FAO estimated that mechanical control measures in northern provinces have been effective and that approximately 600,000 MT of wheat may be impacted. This is a significant reduction from

initial scenario planning which estimated that up to 1.2 million metric tons of wheat could be destroyed.<sup>139</sup> The 2023 harvest forecast projected the best harvest in 3 years, but this outbreak threatens to erase recent gains and increase food insecurity later this year and into 2024, according to FAO.<sup>140</sup> Additionally, peas, sesame, and cumin crops are also adversely affected.<sup>141</sup> If the locusts are not prevented from laying eggs, the infestation will be greater next year, according to USAID.<sup>142</sup>

USAID reported that its implementer FAO conducted mechanical control measures in seven provinces to mitigate the locust outbreak.<sup>143</sup> FAO noted that the locusts are swarming in some districts and that chemical control was necessary to fully contain the outbreak.<sup>144</sup> However, the FAO assessed that the Taliban authorities are unlikely to provide the necessary approvals and aircraft needed to conduct chemical control through aerial spraying of crops.<sup>145</sup> FAO is reportedly exploring alternative options such as using vehicle-towed sprayers, although this method is less efficient in Afghanistan's mountainous terrain.<sup>146</sup> In addition to the Moroccan Locust outbreak, FAO also detected Italian Locusts attacking pistachio forests in Badghis province in early May.<sup>147</sup> The full impact of the locust outbreak on food security has yet to be determined.<sup>148</sup> FAO warned that extensive control measures may also be required in 2024 due to the scale of the current outbreak, as locust breeding has already occurred.<sup>149</sup>

USAID also reported monitoring the situation through its Afghan Value Chains award.<sup>150</sup> The annual plan for this program for 2024 will include control measures and the procurement of chemicals deltamethrin and diflubenzuron and other necessary inputs for the 2024 campaign, should the swarms increase in severity.<sup>151</sup> USAID noted that mechanical control methods are effective, but not for large swarms.<sup>152</sup>

### **Ban on Women in NGOs Continues to Inhibit Delivery of Assistance**

Following the Taliban takeover in the summer of 2021, they have since banned women and girls from attending high school and university, restricted movement and employment of women, and issued an edict in December 2022 that banned Afghan women from working with most NGOs.<sup>153</sup> On April 4, the Taliban extended the ban to women working with UN programs.<sup>154</sup> As a result, the UN initially ordered all of its staff not to report to the office, with the exception of crucial tasks, while an operational review was carried out.<sup>155</sup> The ban will have a significant negative impact on UN aid operations throughout Afghanistan, including the delivery of basic services to the most vulnerable populations, according to a resolution passed by the UN Security Council.<sup>156</sup> The Taliban has enforced these decrees by refusing to allow women to register their NGOs and grants and by preventing women, through security checkpoints, from entering NGO and UN offices.<sup>157</sup>

Women and children made up more than 77 percent of the 28.8 million people in need in Afghanistan this quarter, an increase from the 28.3 million in need at the beginning of 2023.<sup>158</sup> According to USAID, the Taliban decrees undermine the ability of humanitarian organizations to reach the estimated 11.6 million women and girls in Afghanistan who need humanitarian assistance.<sup>159</sup> Female-headed households, which account for approximately 10 percent of the population, face increased risk of losing access to humanitarian assistance and protection services.<sup>160</sup> The ban also prevents NGOs and UN agencies from providing access to services that prevent and respond to violence against women and

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girls, support women-led civil society organization and networks to advance women’s rights in Afghanistan, and support livelihoods of vulnerable women through training, entrepreneurship support, and cash-based interventions.<sup>161</sup> The Taliban’s abolishment of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and the refusal of any other ministry to accept responsibility for protection and other activities that require direct contact with vulnerable women and girls deprives NGOs authorization to implement those activities, State said.<sup>162</sup>

Afghan women NGO staff play a significant role in the implementation of USAID activities mission-wide, including supporting assessments, implementing project activities, and monitoring and evaluation reporting, according to USAID.<sup>163</sup> USAID reported that it continued to support delivery of assistance in sectors and geographic areas where women can receive assistance and meaningfully be part of the delivery of assistance.<sup>164</sup> This quarter, more State and USAID implementers were able to change their status from “partially paused” to “continue operations” through local exemptions to these bans or through other workarounds.<sup>165</sup>

Enforcement of the ban on women in NGOs varied throughout the country, according to USAID.<sup>166</sup>

Taliban attempts to interfere at the provincial or local level include pressure to establish partnerships with local NGOs or hire individuals favored by the Taliban as well as restrictions on certain types of programs, including protection, gender-based violence, and mobile health services.<sup>167</sup> The Taliban has also demanded that organizations sign memoranda of understanding, some of which contain clauses that impede operating independence for humanitarian organizations or include lengthy negotiation processes where Taliban representatives make requests that would violate the humanitarian principles of independence, impartiality, and neutrality.<sup>168</sup> USAID and State have provided guidance to NGO partners on the issue of these memoranda and abstaining from entering agreements that violate the terms and conditions of their federal awards.<sup>169</sup>

NGOs fear that the Taliban aims to fabricate a narrative of NGO interference in Taliban governance as justification for future restrictions on their operations, State said.<sup>170</sup>

As of late May, 6 USAID humanitarian assistance implementers were fully operational and providing humanitarian assistance with the meaningful participation of female staff while 13 implementers were partially operational, and 5 implementers continued to fully suspend operations due to prolonged negotiations with Taliban authorities to secure required approvals.<sup>171</sup>

Both the UN and NGOs continued to provide development assistance in areas where women were involved throughout the aid delivery cycle and where women could continue to participate meaningfully, according to USAID.<sup>172</sup> However, where this could not be done, implementers—with USAID’s support—partially paused programming.<sup>173</sup> Three USAID development implementers continued to partially suspend activities.<sup>174</sup>

State continues to monitor the increasingly restrictive environment and advise partners to avoid practices that normalize lower-quality working conditions or pressure implementing partners to implement programs when contracted activities conflict with their principled humanitarian policies.<sup>175</sup>

The ban on female education has not yet had an impact on the health sector in terms of the availability or number of female healthcare staff, according to USAID.<sup>176</sup> However, over time, restrictions on education by the Taliban will limit the number of females that are trained to serve in the health sector.<sup>177</sup> A decrease in the availability of female healthcare providers in coming years would have dire implications for female patients, who receive the majority of health services from women providers.<sup>178</sup>

According to the UN, the ban on women in NGOs does not apply to female health workers.<sup>179</sup> World Health Organization and UNICEF health activities are operating normally despite the ban.<sup>180</sup> Both the USAID Urban Health Initiative and the USAID Assistance for Families and Indigent Afghans to Thrive programs obtained written permission from the Taliban's provincial public health directors to allow female staff to physically return to work and female staff to carry a copy of the letter when they travel.<sup>181</sup> USAID implementers also provided financial support for the male escorts for female staff, gender segregated transportation, and creation of separate office workspaces for male and female staff.<sup>182</sup>

### Health Facilities Continued to Operate in Afghanistan amid Personnel Shortages

USAID's health assistance in Afghanistan focuses on three primary objectives: preserve the health gains made in Afghanistan over the past 20 years, stabilize the healthcare system, and improve Afghans' overall health.<sup>183</sup> Declining donor support and a more unpredictable operating environment are causing strains on an already fragile health system, according to USAID.<sup>184</sup> USAID reported that in the current environment, in the absence of the Health Emergency Response program managed by the Afghanistan Reconstruction Fund (funded by USAID and other donors), the health sector would be severely impaired and the functionality of health facilities would drop precipitously.<sup>185</sup> Health sector gains are largely being sustained by international donors and not the Taliban's Ministry of Public Health.<sup>186</sup>

According to a World Bank survey conducted in September and October 2022, Afghanistan's health facilities continued to operate and provide services.<sup>187</sup> Staffing shortages exist for specialist positions such as general practitioners and female pediatricians.<sup>188</sup> The World Bank noted that 74 percent of 405 surveyed health facilities met requirements for the number of nurses, 65 percent had sufficient staffing of general practitioners, and only 12 percent had sufficient numbers of anesthetists.<sup>189</sup> The survey also indicated shortages of female healthcare workers.<sup>190</sup> Fewer than 40 percent of health facility staff are women, including just over one third of vaccinators and nurses.<sup>191</sup> Health facilities also experienced shortages of female pediatricians and general practitioners. Only 21 percent of general practitioners are women, according to the World Bank.<sup>192</sup> While the availability of medicine remained consistent, health facilities also faced shortages of certain medicines.<sup>193</sup>

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After the closure of the U.S. Embassy in August 2021, USAID paused all programming, including health sector programming, to reevaluate its next steps.<sup>194</sup> Mission leadership reviewed their activities, interventions, goals, and the extent to which they provided direct technical or financial support to the Taliban. USAID resumed some programming in November 2021.<sup>195</sup> (See Appendix D.)

USAID reported that it restructured its activities to avoid giving direct assistance to the Taliban prior to resuming the implementation of any activity in late 2021. It modified activity goals and objectives to remove direct support to the Taliban-run Ministry of Public Health, and aligned interventions and work plans with Office of Foreign Assets Control sanctions, and required Public International implementers to submit USAID risk assessment and management plans.<sup>196</sup> USAID OIG is conducting an ongoing evaluation to determine to what extent USAID performed expected due diligence over funding to selected public international organizations. USAID is also developing an information brief that will summarize USAID's due diligence practices for ensuring proper oversight and use of funding to PIOs, including in Afghanistan. While USAID previously provided technical and staffing support to the Afghan Ministry of Health, this support ended after the Taliban takeover. Prior to August 15, 2021 the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, funded by USAID and other donors, also provided a coordinated financing mechanism for the Government of Afghanistan priority health programs. Using Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund resources, the Afghan government contracted directly with local and international non-government organizations to support the delivery of basic health services in hospitals and health facilities across the country. While non-government organizations continue to manage and run health facilities through the country, after August 2021 financing for those facilities no longer goes through the defacto Government of Afghanistan. Currently, USAID implementers operate in health facilities in the public sector that are run by NGOs, although officially under the control of the Taliban's Ministry of Public Health. In addition, USAID's Urban Health Initiative operates in public and private health facilities.<sup>197</sup> In addition, USAID's Urban Health Initiative operates in private health facilities.<sup>198</sup>







U.S. Army Soldiers support State-led relocation activities at Camp As-Sayliyah, Qatar. (U.S. Army photo)

## OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

This section of the report provides information on Lead IG and partner agencies' strategic planning efforts; completed, ongoing, and planned oversight work related to audits, inspections, and evaluations; investigations; and hotline activities from April 1, 2023, through June 30, 2023.

### STRATEGIC PLANNING

Pursuant to the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, the Lead IG develops and implements a joint strategic plan to guide comprehensive oversight of programs and operations for each overseas contingency operation. This effort includes reviewing and analyzing completed oversight, management, and other relevant reports to identify systemic problems, trends, lessons learned, and best practices to inform future oversight projects. The Lead IG agencies issue an annual joint strategic oversight plan for each operation.



**FY 2023 Comprehensive Oversight Plan for Overseas Contingency Operations.**

### FY 2023 JOINT STRATEGIC OVERSIGHT PLAN ACTIVITIES

In October 2021, upon designation of the DoD IG as the Lead IG for Operation Enduring Sentinel (OES), the Lead IG agencies developed and implemented a joint strategic oversight plan for comprehensive oversight of OES. The Lead IG agencies update the oversight plan annually.

The *FY 2023 Joint Strategic Oversight Plan for OES* was published on October 3, 2022, as part of the *FY 2023 Comprehensive Oversight Plan for Overseas Contingency Operations*. The *FY 2023 Joint Strategic Oversight Plan for OES* is organized by three strategic oversight areas: 1) Military Operations; 2) Diplomacy, Development, and Humanitarian Assistance; and 3) Support to Mission.

## Lead IG Strategic Oversight Areas

### MILITARY OPERATIONS

*Military Operations* focuses on determining the degree to which the contingency operation is accomplishing its security mission. Activities that fall under this strategic oversight area include:

- Conducting unilateral and partnered counterterrorism operations
- Providing security assistance
- Training and equipping regional partner security forces
- Advising, assisting, and enabling regional partner security forces

### DIPLOMACY, DEVELOPMENT, AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

*Diplomacy, Development, and Humanitarian Assistance* focuses on countering some of the root causes of violent extremism. Activities that fall under this strategic oversight area include:

- Promoting inclusive and effective democracy, civil participation, and empowerment of women
- Providing emergency relief, assistance, and protection to displaced persons, refugees, and others affected by crisis
- Countering trafficking in persons and preventing sexual exploitation and abuse

### SUPPORT TO MISSION

*Support to Mission* focuses on U.S. administrative, logistical, and management efforts that enable military operations and non-military programs. Activities that fall under this strategic oversight area include:

- Ensuring the security of U.S. personnel and property
- Providing for the occupational health and safety of personnel
- Administering U.S. Government programs
- Managing U.S. Government grants and contracts
- Inventorying and accounting for equipment

The Overseas Contingency Operations Joint Planning Group serves as a primary venue to coordinate audits, inspections, and evaluations of U.S. Government-funded activities supporting overseas contingency operations, including those relating to Afghanistan and the Middle East. The Joint Planning Group meets quarterly to provide a forum for coordination of the broader Federal oversight community, including the Military Service IGs and audit agencies, the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), and the OIGs of the Departments of Justice (DoJ), the Treasury, Energy, and Homeland Security (DHS), and of the Intelligence Community. Additionally, the DHS OIG hosts the Afghanistan Project Coordination Group to provide a forum for IG community representatives to coordinate ongoing and planned oversight work stemming from the August 2021 U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.

In May 2023, the Overseas Contingency Operations Joint Planning Group held its 62nd meeting. Guest speaker Brigadier General Jeffrey Schreiner, the Chief of Staff for Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve, led a classified discussion on the fight against ISIS in Iraq and Syria.

## AUDIT, INSPECTION, AND EVALUATION ACTIVITY

The Lead IG agencies use dedicated, rotational, and temporary employees, as well as contractors, to conduct oversight projects, investigate fraud and corruption, and provide consolidated planning and reporting on the status of overseas contingency operations.

DoD OIG oversight and investigative personnel continued to work on OES-related cases from the United States, Germany, Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain. State OIG personnel performed their oversight duties from Washington, D.C., and Frankfurt, Germany. USAID OIG personnel continued oversight work from the USAID Asia Regional Office in Bangkok, Thailand, and from Washington, D.C.

The Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies published one management advisory and completed nine oversight projects related to OES during the quarter, including on DoD screening Afghan evacuees; DoD management of the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund; DoD management of funds in support of Operation Allies Welcome (OAW); State’s efforts to resettle Afghans under the special immigrant visa (SIV) program; and USAID’s monitoring of health development programs in Afghanistan. As of June 30, 2023, 18 projects related to OES were ongoing and 1 project related to OES was planned.

### FINAL REPORTS BY LEAD IG AGENCIES

#### DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

##### ***Evaluation of DoD Support to Other Agencies’ Requests for Screening of Displaced Persons from Afghanistan***

DODIG-2023-088; June 23, 2023

The DoD OIG conducted this evaluation to determine the extent to which the DoD supported other agencies’ requests for screening Afghan evacuees. In addition, the DoD OIG reviewed DoD guidance for the deletion of biometrics information from DoD databases, and removal of identities from the DoD Biometrically Enabled Watch List (BEWL) to determine the extent to which the DoD followed appropriate guidance. The DoD OIG initiated this evaluation following receipt of a letter from two U.S. Senators expressing concerns based on allegations raised by a DoD whistleblower.

The DoD OIG found that DoD personnel supported other Federal agencies’ requests for screening Afghan evacuees by conducting biometric enrollments and counterintelligence screening interviews. In addition, National Ground Intelligence Center (NGIC) analysts conducted biometric assessments of all watch list encounters, biographic analysis of more than 84,000 Afghan evacuee records, and sent notifications to a wide distribution

list to identify those who may pose a threat to national security. However, NGIC did not consistently follow the BEWL guidance and NGIC standard operating procedures when deciding to retain or remove some Afghan evacuees from the BEWL. As a result, NGIC might have removed some Afghan identities that should have been retained on the BEWL.

The DoD OIG made four recommendations to the NGIC commander and the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security, which included to update BEWL guidance and standard operating procedures to incorporate specific criteria for removal of theater only requirements; and to revise DoD policy to reflect the transition of responsibilities to the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security for the management, support, and requirements of the BEWL. Management agreed with the recommendations, which will remain open until the DoD OIG receives adequate documentation showing that all agreed-upon actions are completed.

### ***Audit of the DoD's Financial Management of the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund***

DODIG-2023-082; June 9, 2023

The DoD OIG conducted this audit to determine whether the DoD managed the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund (ASFF) appropriated funds in the Foreign Military Sales Trust Fund in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

This audit was performed due to previously identified risks related to the DoD's transfer of ASFF appropriated funds to the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) Trust Fund and the sudden collapse of the Afghan government.

The DoD OIG found that the DoD did not manage ASFF appropriated funds in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. This mismanagement occurred because the DoD did not design and implement effective controls over building partnership capacity funds. As a result, the DoD increased the risk of violating the Antideficiency Act by using a process that was inefficient, provided inaccurate appropriation data for quarterly reports to Congress, and reported ASFF-related financial activity inaccurately in the DoD, Army, and Security Assistance Accounts financial statements.

The DoD OIG made 17 recommendations to the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)/Chief Financial Officer (OUSD(C)/CFO), which included to issue policies that require the DoD to only use the FMS Trust Fund for its established purposes; and to develop and implement policies that require the DoD to fully use U.S. Treasury funds controls.

Management agreed with the recommendations. However, the comments for 10 of the recommendations lacked sufficient detail describing the actions that the OUSD(C)/CFO would take to implement the recommendations. Therefore, those recommendations remain unresolved. The remaining seven recommendations are resolved, but will remain open until the DoD OIG receives adequate documentation showing that all agreed-upon actions are completed.

***Audit of the Tracking and Reporting of DoD-Owned Shipping Containers***

DODIG-2023-081; June 8, 2023

The DoD OIG conducted this audit to determine to what extent the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps complied with DoD and Service requirements to track and report information related to DoD owned shipping containers, and to account for those shipping containers in an accountable property system of record.

Personnel at the six installations the DoD OIG visited did not accurately track or report location or condition information related to 32 of 190 (17 percent) DoD-owned shipping containers as required by DoD and Service policies. This was because the installation personnel did not prioritize updates in a timely manner. In addition, Surface Deployment and Distribution Command officials did not use an accountable property system of record to account for 19 of 62 (31 percent) DoD-owned shipping containers with an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more as required by DoD Instruction 5000.64.

The DoD OIG made recommendations to each of the commanders of the six installations, and one to the Surface Deployment and Distribution Command commander. First, the DoD OIG recommended that the commanders of the six installations develop procedures to ensure prioritization of compliance with the tracking and reporting of information related to DoD-owned shipping containers. Second, the DoD OIG recommended that the Surface Deployment and Distribution Command Commander provide the DoD OIG results of the 2022 biennial inventory and take actions to ensure that the Surface Deployment and Distribution Command reports shipping containers that have an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more in an accountable property system of record.

Army, Navy, and Marine Corps officials agreed with and described actions planned and taken to address the recommendations directed to the six installation commanders; therefore, four recommendations are resolved and open and two recommendations are closed. The Surface Deployment and Distribution Command Commanding General provided the results of the 2022 biennial inventory; however, the Commanding General's comments did not identify actions taken to ensure that the Surface Deployment and Distribution Command reports shipping containers with an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more in an accountable property system of record. Therefore, three recommendations are unresolved.

***Management Advisory: DoD Accounting and Reporting for Funds Used in Support of Operation Allies Refuge and Operation Allies Welcome***

DODIG-2023-071; May 18, 2023

The DoD OIG issued this management advisory to inform DoD leadership of the conditions found related to the accounting and reporting of funds used in support of Operation Allies Refuge and Operation Allies Welcome (OAW). These findings were identified during the DoD OIG's ongoing audit to determine whether DoD funds expended in support of OAW were reported in accordance with DoD policy and directives.

The DoD OIG determined that DoD components did not properly record OAW obligations and expenditures in the February 1, 2022, report to Congress. Additionally, officials from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)/Chief Financial Officer did not

establish a uniform process for DoD components to report the execution of OAW funding in weekly flash reports. This management advisory contains four recommendations which the DoD OIG considers resolved, and which will remain open until the DoD OIG receives adequate documentation showing that all agreed-upon actions are completed.

The DoD OIG made three recommendations to the OUSD(C)/CFO, including a recommendation to establish policy requiring the use of specific data analytic software to capture and accurately report the cost of operations or other supplemental funding. The DoD OIG also recommended that the U.S. Marine Corps headquarters reconcile unmatched disbursements for OAW to the appropriate obligations in the Defense Agencies Initiative system. The OUSD(C)/CFO and U.S. Marine Corps headquarters agreed to address all the recommendations, which will remain open until the DoD OIG receives adequate documentation showing that all agreed-upon actions are completed.

### ***Audit of the Oversight of Operation Allies Welcome Global Contingency Services Contract at Marine Corps Base Quantico***

DODIG-2023-066; April 25, 2023

The DoD OIG conducted this audit to determine whether DoD contracting personnel performed contract administration procedures for supplies and services supporting the relocation of Afghan evacuees at DoD installations in support of OAW in accordance with Federal requirements and DoD regulations.

The DoD OIG determined that Navy contracting personnel did not fully execute contract administration responsibilities at Marine Corps Base Quantico. Specifically, Navy contracting personnel provided adequate oversight of contractor performance for dining, medical, and facilities sustainment services supporting the relocation of Afghan evacuees, but did not adequately review all contractor invoices.

The DoD OIG recommended that the Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Director of Contracting, People, and Processes ensure that the administrative contracting officer request a refund from the contractor for any excess payments or arrange for payment to the contractor for any under-billed costs. Management agreed with the recommendation, which will remain open until the Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command provides documentation showing that the action has been completed.

### ***Audit of Operation Allies Welcome Contract Oversight at DoD Installations-Logistics Civil Augmentation Program V Contract***

DODIG-2023-064; April 18, 2023

The DoD OIG conducted this audit to determine whether DoD contracting personnel performed contract administration procedures for supplies and services supporting the relocation of Afghan evacuees at DoD installations in support of OAW in accordance with Federal requirements and DoD regulations.

The DoD OIG determined that Army contracting personnel complied with Federal and DoD guidance for contract oversight by ensuring that contracting officer's representatives were officially appointed, completed required COR training, performed contract oversight

procedures, and ensured the contractor took corrective actions to address deficiencies. However, the procuring contracting officer did not ensure invoices were reviewed before payment to verify contractor-reported costs.

The DoD OIG made three recommendations to the Army Contracting Command – Rock Island, Executive Director, including a recommendation that the Defense Contract Audit Agency review the allowability, allocability, and reasonableness of the \$1.6 billion paid to the contractor, and a recommendation to request a refund from the contractor for any excess payment. Management agreed with the recommendations and took action to meet their intent. The recommendations will remain open until the DoD OIG receives adequate documentation showing that all agreed-upon actions are completed.

## **DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL**

### ***National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2023, Section 5275 Interim Joint Report***

No report number; June 23, 2023

State OIG issued this joint report with the DHS OIG to provide a consolidated accounting of U.S. Government completed, ongoing, and planned oversight work on the vetting, processing, and resettlement of Afghan evacuees and the Afghan SIV Program while responding to requirements in section 5275 of the FY 2023 NDAA.

### ***Relocation and Resettlement Outcomes of Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Holders***

AUD-MERO-23-21; June 6, 2023

The Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009 established a SIV program to resettle Afghans who had worked on behalf of the United States in Afghanistan and had experienced an ongoing and serious threat as a result of their employment with the U.S. Government.

During its ongoing review of several aspects of the Afghan SIV program, State OIG published an information brief regarding relocation and resettlement outcomes of the Afghan SIV holders. In this information brief, State OIG provided information regarding: 1) State's contingency plans for the safe relocation of Afghan SIV holders from Afghanistan; 2) Afghan SIV holders remaining in Afghanistan; 3) resettlement outcomes, including housing, school enrollment, and employment within the United States for Afghan SIV holders; and 4) the number of Afghan SIV holders becoming naturalized U.S. citizens. The information brief contained no recommendations.

### ***Review of Emergency Action Planning Guiding the Evacuation of U.S. Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan***

AUD-MERO-23-15; May 8, 2023

State OIG conducted this review to determine whether the U.S. Embassy in Kabul followed established Department of State guidance in preparation for the evacuation of U.S. Government personnel, private U.S. citizens, Afghans at risk, and others from Afghanistan prior to and following the suspension of operations at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul. The report is classified. More details are available in the classified annex to this report.

## FINAL REPORTS BY PARTNER AGENCIES

### SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION

#### ***Healthcare in Afghanistan: USAID Did Not Perform All Required Monitoring, But Efforts Reportedly Contributed to Progress in Vital Services***

SIGAR 23-24 AR; May 31, 2023

SIGAR conducted this audit to review USAID's Urban Health Initiative (UHI) and the Assistance for Families and Indigent Afghans to Thrive (AFIAT) programs.

Although USAID briefly paused the majority of its assistance to Afghanistan following the collapse of the Afghan government in August 2021, in April 2023, SIGAR reported that USAID had 13 ongoing health programs accounting for an estimated total cost of just about \$309.3 million. USAID's UHI and the AFIAT activities share goals of improving reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health. UHI is implemented by Jhpiego Inc. and AFIAT is implemented Management Sciences for Health. Together, UHI and AFIAT make up approximately 76 percent of the USAID healthcare investment in Afghanistan. At the time of the awards, the estimated total cost of UHI and AFIAT were \$104 million and \$117 million, respectively.

SIGAR determined that USAID did not consistently conduct or document its required oversight of UHI and AFIAT activities in Afghanistan, as required by USAID's Mission for Afghanistan Mission Order 201.05. The mission order requires that agreement officials make periodic site visits, review performance reports, corroborate information from site visits or report reviews, and document their oversight. SIGAR determined that USAID officials did not conduct adequate site visits, did not adequately review the performance reports and performance data, and there was no documentation of any information in a database where key findings from monitoring are required to be documented.

SIGAR made three recommendations to the USAID Afghanistan Mission Director to improve USAID's monitoring of the UHI and AFIAT activities. These included a recommendation that the USAID Afghanistan Mission Director enforce monitoring requirements, and a recommendation to enforce or develop procedures to ensure that documentation of monitoring activities are uploaded into the appropriate tracking database.

Management agreed with all three recommendations and is taking action to meet the intent of the recommendations.



## ONGOING OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

As of June 30, 2023, the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies had 18 ongoing projects related to OES. Figure 6 describes the ongoing projects by strategic oversight area.

Tables 2 and 3, contained in Appendix E, list the titles and objectives for each of these projects. The following sections highlight some of these ongoing projects by strategic oversight area.

### Military Operations

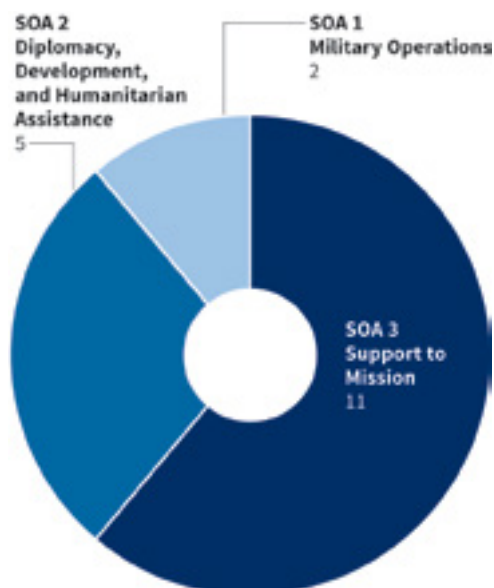
- The **GAO** is conducting an audit to examine the challenges the DoD faces, and the extent to which the DoD has taken actions to protect civilians in U.S. military operations.
- The **Intelligence Community IG** is conducting a review to determine whether the Intelligence Community's support to screening and vetting of persons from Afghanistan was adequate.

### Diplomacy, Development and Humanitarian Assistance

- **State OIG** is conducting a multipart review related to the Afghan SIV program, covering SIV application processing times, adjustments to the SIV application process, the status of previous recommendations, the status of SIV recipients, and the status of SIV and refugee screening and vetting since August 2021. The final report will cover the totality of State OIG reporting on the SIV program. Four of the reports have been issued.

Figure 6.

#### Ongoing Projects by Strategic Oversight Area



- **USAID OIG** is conducting an evaluation to determine whether USAID was prepared for its evacuation of implementing partners from Afghanistan.

### Support to Mission

- The **DoD OIG** is conducting an evaluation to determine the extent to which the combatant commands have effectively conducted military deception planning in support of ongoing OES operations.
- **State OIG** is conducting an audit to determine whether State manages the use of temporary structures at overseas posts in compliance with applicable physical security standards and procedures.
- **The DHS OIG** is reviewing DHS efforts to track Afghan evacuees departing U.S. military bases without assistance from resettlement agencies, and how these departures affect Afghan evacuees' immigration status.

## PLANNED OVERSIGHT PROJECT

As of June 30, 2023, the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies had one planned project related to OES.

Table 4, contained in Appendix F, lists the titles and objectives for this project. The following sections highlight some of these planned projects by strategic oversight area.

### Diplomacy, Development, and Humanitarian Assistance

- **USAID OIG** intends to conduct an audit of USAID/Afghanistan and USAID/BHA’s oversight of implementer efforts to manage security and safety risks and mitigate Taliban interference in programs in Afghanistan

### Support to Mission

- **State OIG** intends to conduct an audit to determine whether State’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research adequately provided intelligence analysis and information to the appropriate decision-makers in preparation for the evacuation of the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan.

## INVESTIGATIONS AND HOTLINE ACTIVITY

### INVESTIGATIONS

The investigative components of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies continued to conduct investigative activity related to OES during the quarter. The DoD OIG’s criminal investigative component, the Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS), and investigative components of other Lead IG agencies worked on OES-related cases from offices in Bahrain, Germany, Kuwait, Qatar, El Salvador, Israel, South Africa, Thailand, and the United States.

Figure 7.

Types of Allegations and Primary Offense Locations, April 1–June 30, 2023

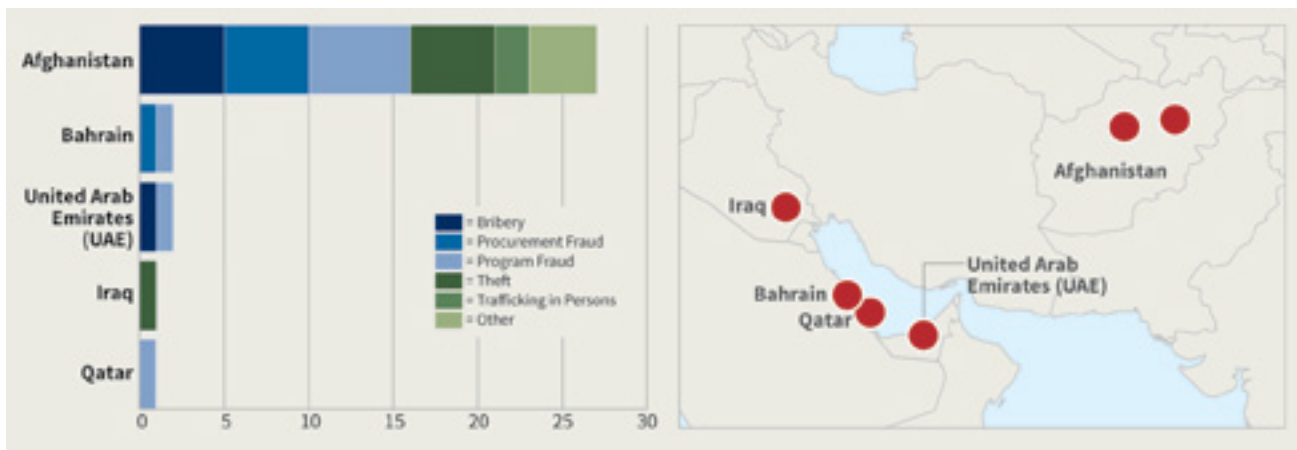
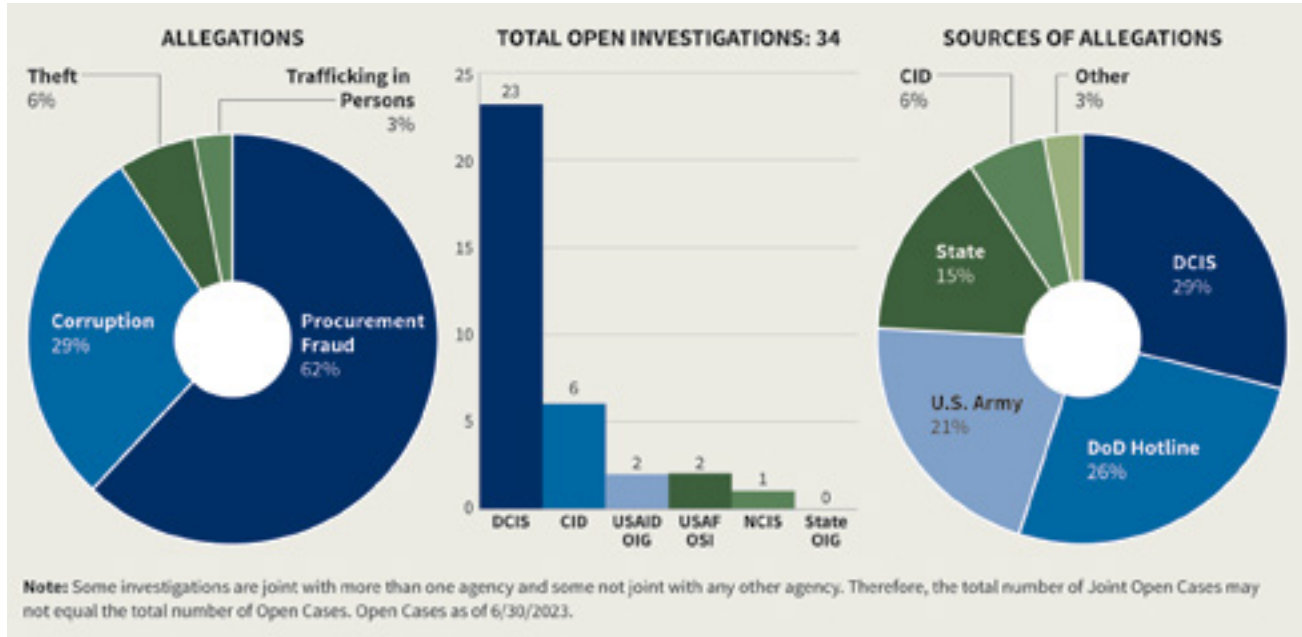


Figure 8.

**Open Investigations and Sources of Allegations, April 1–June 30, 2023**



**Investigative Activity Related to OES**

During the quarter, Lead IG investigations resulted in one sentencing related to an investigation into fraud allegations involving military contracts and State Department visas in Afghanistan. The case is discussed below.

The investigative branches of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies initiated 2 new investigations, and coordinated on 34 open investigations related to OES. The open investigations involve grant and procurement fraud, corruption, theft, computer intrusions, program irregularities, and human trafficking allegations. As noted in Figure 7, the majority of primary offense locations and allegations related to OES originated in Afghanistan.

The Lead IG agencies and partner agencies continued to coordinate their investigative efforts through the Fraud and Corruption Investigative Working Group, which consists of representatives from DCIS, State OIG, USAID OIG, the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, and the Air Force Office of Special Investigations. During the quarter, the Fraud and Corruption Investigative Working Group conducted 16 fraud awareness briefings for 145 attendees. Figure 8 depicts open investigations related to OES and sources of allegations.

**DEFENDANT TOOK BRIBES TO STEER CONTRACTS MEANT TO AID RECONSTRUCTION IN AFGHANISTAN**

Based on a joint DCIS, Naval Criminal Investigative Service, and SIGAR investigation, a Georgia man was sentenced on April 12 to 3 years and 10 months in prison for his roles in

two bribery conspiracies—one related to a U.S. military contracts fraud scheme and one related to a Department of State visa fraud scheme.

According to court documents, Orlando Clark, 57, of Smyrna, was a project manager who deployed to Afghanistan to evaluate bids for U.S.-funded reconstruction contracts awarded by the U.S. military in 2011 and 2012. At that time, Clark and co-conspirator Todd Coleman, an analyst at a different U.S. company who also deployed to Afghanistan, received approximately \$400,000 in bribes from an Afghan company. The bribes were paid in return for Clark and Coleman assisting the company in obtaining millions of dollars through at least 10 contracts that involved the construction of an Afghan police station and a security checkpoint for U.S. forces.

Clark also received bribes to sign false letters of recommendation for visas authorized for Afghan nationals who worked as translators with U.S. forces in Afghanistan. Clark signed over 10 letters in which he falsely claimed to have supervised the applicants and in which he stated, without any factual basis, that he had no reason to believe that they posed a threat to U.S. national security.

### Investigative Activity Related to Legacy Cases

The Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies have 12 ongoing “legacy” investigations related to crimes involving the OES area of operations that occurred prior to the designation of OES.

### HOTLINE

Each Lead IG agency maintains its own hotline to receive complaints specific to its agency. The hotlines provide a confidential, reliable means for individuals to report violations of law, rule, or regulation; mismanagement; gross waste of funds; or abuse of authority.

During the quarter, the DoD OIG hotline investigator received two allegations on criminal matters and referred six cases to Lead IG agencies and other investigative organizations. In some instances, a case may contain multiple subjects and allegations.



# APPENDIXES

## APPENDIX A

### **Classified Appendix to this Report**

A classified appendix to this report provides additional information on Operation Enduring Sentinel, as noted in several sections of this report. The appendix will be delivered to relevant agencies and congressional committees.

## APPENDIX B

### **About the Lead Inspector General**

The Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended (5 U.S.C. Section 419, previously found at 5 U.S.C. App, Section 8L) established the Lead Inspector General (Lead IG) framework for oversight of overseas contingency operations. The primary Lead IG agencies are the Offices of Inspector General (OIG) of the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of State (State), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Section 419 requires the Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to appoint a Lead Inspector General from among the inspectors general of the primary Lead IG agencies upon the commencement or designation of a military operation that exceeds 60 days as an overseas contingency operation; or receipt of notification thereof.

Lead IG oversight of the operation “sunset” at the end of the first fiscal year after commencement or designation in which the total amount appropriated for the operation is less than \$100,000,000.

The Lead IG agencies collectively carry out the Lead IG statutory responsibilities to:

- Submit to Congress on a quarterly basis a report on the contingency operation and to make that report available to the public.
- Develop a joint strategic plan to conduct comprehensive oversight of the operation.
- Ensure independent and effective oversight of programs and operations of the U.S. Government in support of the operation through either joint or individual audits, inspections, investigations, and evaluations.

## APPENDIX C

# Methodology for Preparing this Lead IG Report

This report covers the period from April 1, 2023, through June 30, 2023. The three Lead IG agencies—DoD OIG, State OIG, and USAID OIG—and partner oversight agencies contributed the content of this report.

To fulfill the congressional mandate to report on OES, the Lead IG agencies gather data and information from Federal agencies and open sources. The sources of information contained in this report are listed in endnotes or notes to tables and figures. Except in the case of audits, inspections, investigations, and evaluations referenced in this report, the Lead IG agencies have not verified or audited the information collected through open-source research or from Federal agencies, and the information provided represents the view of the source cited in each instance.

### INFORMATION COLLECTION FROM AGENCIES AND OPEN SOURCES

Each quarter, the Lead IG agencies gather information from the DoD, State, USAID, and other Federal agencies about their programs and operations related to OES. The Lead IG agencies use the information provided by their respective agencies for quarterly reporting and oversight planning.

This report also draws on current, publicly available information from reputable sources. Sources used in this report may include the following:

- U.S. Government statements, press conferences, and reports
- Reports issued by international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and think tanks
- Media reports

The Lead IG agencies use open-source information to assess information obtained through their agency information collection process and provide additional detail about the operation.

### REPORT PRODUCTION

The DoD IG, as the Lead IG for OES, is responsible for assembling and producing this report. The DoD OIG, State OIG, and USAID OIG draft the sections of the report related to the activities of their agencies and then participate in editing the entire report. Once the report is assembled, each OIG coordinates a two-phase review process within its own agency. During the first review, the Lead IG agencies ask relevant offices within their agencies to comment, correct inaccuracies, and provide additional documentation. The Lead IG agencies incorporate agency comments, where appropriate, and send the report back to the agencies for a second review prior to publication. The final report reflects the editorial view of the DoD OIG, State OIG, and USAID OIG as independent oversight agencies.

## APPENDIX D

## USAID Health Sector Activities During the Quarter

Program	Activities
<p><b>Rural Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (Ru-WASH)</b> \$35.8 million award</p> <p>Ru-WASH addresses the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acute water and sanitation needs in underserved, rural, peri-urban, and select urban areas of Afghanistan</li> <li>• Unequal sanitation facilities for girls and boys in schools</li> <li>• Lack of adequate WASH facilities in healthcare facilities</li> <li>• Service delivery and operations support to sustain critical WASH structures including community level structures</li> <li>• The transmission of the COVID-19 virus in schools and their surrounding catchment communities in high-risk COVID-19 areas, as well as reducing morbidity in the population, by protecting the health and wellbeing of children, women and the most vulnerable people in those target areas</li> </ul>	<p>USAID is awaiting reporting from the implementer on 2023 activities.</p>
<p><b>National Disease Surveillance Response (NDSR)/Polio Eradication</b></p> <p><b>Urban Health Initiative (UHI)</b> \$104 million award</p> <p>The goal of UHI is to improve health outcomes for people living in urban areas, with a special focus on women, children and other vulnerable populations to improve health equity and strengthen the overall health system. The UHI operates in the five cities of Mazar-i-Sharif, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, and Nangarhar to strengthen the health service delivery ecosystem in urban areas to deliver high quality services to the most vulnerable, improve access for vulnerable populations to critical primary and life-saving secondary and referral care health services in urban areas, improve the quality of critical primary and life-saving secondary and referral care services in urban areas, and improve awareness, demand and care-seeking for key services and referral.</p>	<p>In 76 UHI-supported public and private health facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 44,741 women had their first antenatal care visit</li> <li>• 134,673 women were counseled on family planning</li> <li>• 23,226 children received their first dose of the measles-containing vaccine by 12 months of age</li> <li>• 16,699 presumptive TB patients were identified, of these, 2,320 (14 percent) were diagnosed as TB cases</li> <li>• Activated 30 COVID vaccination mobile teams in three cities (Kabul, Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif)</li> <li>• Supplied 2,639 cylinders of oxygen to target hospitals and health facilities</li> </ul> <p>Through 159 UHI-supported community health posts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 36 community midwives provided 4,100 women with antenatal care and 7,268 women with family planning counseling of whom 3,035 accepted a family planning method</li> <li>• Over 15,670 children, 2 to 5 years old, were screened to assess their nutritional status.</li> </ul>

Program	Activities
<p><b>Assistance for Families and Indigent Afghans to Thrive (AFIAT)</b></p> <p>\$117 million award</p> <p>The goal of AFIAT is to improve the health outcomes of the Afghan people, particularly women of childbearing age and preschool children, in rural and peri-urban parts of Afghanistan. AFIAT work is accomplished in 14 target provinces to improve the quality of primary and secondary health and nutrition services in targeted rural areas, increase access to high-impact and evidence-based health and nutrition services, enhance the adoption of optimal health and nutrition behaviors by communities and households, and collaborate with partners to plan, finance, and manage the public health system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working across 165 target health facilities and 373 health posts, AFIAT provided 1,725 mentoring/training visits to 1,670 healthcare providers and 1,347 community health workers. These visits focused on building technical skills and competencies in the following areas: nutrition, tuberculosis, maternal and child health, family planning, infection prevention, and routine immunization.</li> <li>• Number of women giving birth in a health facility receiving AFIAT support: 18,406</li> <li>• Number of Antenatal care visits in AFIAT supported facilities: 62,361</li> <li>• Number of children who received Penta 3 by 12 months of age in AFIAT-targeted provinces: 60,555</li> <li>• Number of children under 5 reached with nutrition-specific interventions in AFIAT supported facilities: 138,562</li> </ul>
<p><b>Local Health System Sustainability (LHSS)</b></p> <p>\$8 million award</p> <p>The goal of LHSS is to increase the use of priority health services through strategic expansion of private sector approaches within the health system. Through a partnership with the Afghanistan Social Marketing Organization, LHSS promotes affordable, socially marketed health products focused on women and children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 19,419 couple years of protection generated through the sales of family planning methods</li> <li>• 768,400 liters of water disinfected through the sale of chlorinated water treatment solution</li> <li>• 2,894 diarrheal episodes treated</li> <li>• 6,108 patients (70 percent women, 30 percent men) reached with social and behavioral change messages through private clinics and hospitals</li> <li>• 19,756 couple years of protection (USAID standard indicator)through the sales of family planning method</li> <li>• 31,330,000 liters of water disinfected through the sale of chlorinated water treatment solution</li> <li>• 950 diarrheal episodes treated through the sale of zinc and oral rehydration salts</li> <li>• 6,709 patients (78 percent women, 22 percent men) patients reached with social and behavioral change messages through 700 sessions in 141 private clinics and hospitals.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Global Health Supply Chain Management (GHSCM-PSM)</b></p> <p>Global USAID award in which a mission can choose to “buy-in” for select commodity needs. The amount USAID/Afghanistan puts into this award each year depends on forecasted commodity needs. USAID/Afghanistan will not be putting money into this award during FY2023.</p>	<p>USAID/Afghanistan procures both family planning products and O2 durables and consumables for the COVID response</p>



Program	Activities
<p><b>WHO Consolidated Grant/Afghanistan Activity</b> \$6 million award</p> <p><b>Polio Eradication:</b> community and environmental surveillance and laboratory/sample management for testing.</p> <p><b>National Disease Surveillance Reporting (NDSR):</b> indicator and event-based surveillance which tracks and reports on 17 priority infectious diseases from 519 sentinel sites.</p> <p><b>COVID-19 Response:</b> infection prevention and control through provision of personal protective equipment, expansion of lab capacity for testing/detecting COVID, and expansion of COVID-specific case detection in communities under the NDSR.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Five public health laboratories in Kabul, Nangarhar, Herat, Balkh and Paktia provinces are capable of testing epidemic-prone infectious diseases under surveillance, including COVID-19, measles, Crimean Hemorrhagic Fever, dengue and cholera. The needed reagents and supplies are delivered to these labs for proper functions.</li> <li>• Training has been conducted for 40 laboratory technologists in five regional reference labs and infectious diseases hospital labs on diagnosing COVID-19, Cholera and other acute-watery diarrhea causing pathogens.</li> <li>• A total of 613 surveillance sentinel sites are functional, out of which 97.2 percent are actively submitting epidemiological reports on a weekly basis.</li> <li>• A total of 390 outbreaks of infectious diseases were detected, reported, confirmed, and responded to.</li> <li>• A total of 250 surveillance support team members conducted active outbreak investigation and response in 34 provinces.</li> <li>• 100 new community health supervisors, private sector providers and pharmacists trained on community signal detection and reporting procedures.</li> <li>• Acute respiratory infection and acute watery diarrhea case management training has been conducted for all 34 provinces, targeting 783 healthcare workers.</li> <li>• 95,000 ABBOT ID tests, for confirmation of COVID-19, have been distributed to central public health laboratories and five regional reference laboratories.</li> <li>• 1,300 COVID-19 rapid test kits have been supplied to WHO sub-offices in 8 regions and 1,500 have been supplied to all 34 provinces.</li> </ul>
<p><b>ARTF–Health Emergency Response (HER)</b> \$221.9 million in USAID contributions</p> <p>The HER represents the largest donor investment in Afghanistan’s Health Sector, at \$333 million, of which \$314 million comes from the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF). The ARTF is a multi-donor trust fund, administered by the World Bank (with USAID as one of the three largest donors). HER is an 18-month project, which began June 2022 that contracts to UNICEF who sub-contracts to local and international NGOs to support the delivery of the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) and the Essential Package of Hospital Services (EPHS) in hospitals and health facilities across the country. In total, the HER (led by UNICEF and WHO) supports over 2,300 public health facilities across Afghanistan’s 34 provinces.</p>	<p>USAID is waiting on reporting from the World Bank on activities for 2023</p>

**Source:** USAID Afghanistan, response to USAID OIG request for information, 6/22/2023.

## APPENDIX E

# Ongoing Oversight Projects

Tables 2 and 3 list the titles and objectives for Lead IG and partner agencies' ongoing oversight projects related to OES.

Table 2.

### Ongoing Oversight Projects Related to OES by Lead IG Agency, as of June 30, 2023

#### DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

##### ***Evaluation of Combatant Command Military Deception Planning***

To determine the extent to which the combatant commands have effectively conducted military deception planning in support of ongoing OES operations.

##### ***Audit of DoD Afghanistan Contingency Contracts Closeout***

To determine whether DoD contracting officials closed out contingency contracts supporting Afghanistan operations in accordance with applicable Federal laws and DoD regulations.

#### DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

##### ***Review of the Department of State Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Program***

To assess the number of SIV applications received and processed and their processing times; adjustments made to processing SIV applications between 2018 and 2021; the status and resolution of recommendations made by State OIG in its reports "Quarterly Reporting on Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Program Needs Improvement" (AUD-MERO-20-34, June 2020) and "Review of the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Program" (AUD-MERO-20-35, June 2020); the status of SIV recipients; and the totality of State OIG reporting on the SIV Program in a capping report.

##### ***Audit of the Disposition of Defensive Equipment and Armored Vehicles in Advance of Evacuations of U.S. Embassies Kabul and Kyiv***

To determine whether U.S. Embassies Kabul and Kyiv managed, safeguarded, and disposed of sensitive security assets in advance of the evacuation and suspension of operations at each post in accordance with State guidance.

##### ***Audit of Physical Security Standards for Department of State Temporary Structures at Selected Overseas Posts***

To determine whether the Department of State managed the use of temporary structures at overseas posts in compliance with applicable physical security standards and procedures, including maintaining an accurate and complete inventory of temporary structures used for residential and office purposes.

##### ***Audit of the Department of State's Efforts to Identify and Terminate Unneeded Contracts Related to Afghanistan***

To determine whether State identified and terminated contracts impacted by the withdrawal of U.S. operations in Afghanistan in accordance with U.S. Government and State requirements.

#### U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

##### ***Evaluation of USAID's Role in the Evacuation of Implementing Partners from Afghanistan***

To review USAID's role in the evacuation of implementing partners from Afghanistan and determine whether USAID's risk management procedures effectively prepared it for its role in the evacuation of implementing partner staff.

##### ***Audit of USAID's Oversight of Activities in Afghanistan***

To assess USAID oversight of implementer efforts to manage security/safety risks and mitigate Taliban interference with assistance in Afghanistan.

Table 3.

**Ongoing Oversight Projects Related to OES by Lead IG Partner Agencies, as of June 30, 2023****GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE*****DoD Civilian Harm in Military Operations***

To determine what, if any, challenges DoD faces in protecting civilians in U.S. military operations; the extent to which the DoD has incorporated relevant recommendations from studies related to civilian harm in U.S. military operations; and the extent to which the DoD has taken actions to protect civilians in U.S. military operations.

**DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL*****Review of DHS Preparations to Provide Long-Term Legal Status to Paroled Afghan Evacuees***

To assess DHS preparations to receive and expedite requests from Afghan evacuees for long-term legal status.

***DHS Tracking of OAW Population with Potential Derogatory Records***

To assess DHS' identification and resolution for OAW member with potentially derogatory records.

**INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL*****Special Review of Intelligence Community Support to Screening and Vetting of Persons from Afghanistan***

To review the Intelligence Community's support to screening and vetting of persons from Afghanistan.

**DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL*****Federal Bureau of Investigation's Participation in Operation Allies Refuge and Operation Allies Welcome***

To assess the effectiveness of the FBI's coordination with its federal partners to support Operation Allies Refuge and Operation Allies Welcome.

**SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL*****Processing Non-Citizens' Original Social Security Numbers Electronically through Enumeration Programs***

To determine whether the Social Security Administration is complying with its policies and procedures when enumerating noncitizens, including Afghans, who apply for original Social Security numbers through the Enumeration at Entry and Enumeration Beyond Entry processes.

**SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION*****Evaluation of the Status of Afghanistan Reconstruction Funding and U.S.-Funded Programs in Afghanistan as of March 1, 2022***

To review the current status of U.S. Government funding appropriated or obligated for reconstruction programs in Afghanistan, as of March 1, 2022.

***Audit of U.S. Funds Directly Benefiting the Taliban***

To assess the extent to which U.S. government funds intended to respond to humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan have been provided to the Taliban to pay taxes, fees, import duties, or for the purchase or receipt of permits, licenses, or public utility services since August 2021.

***Evaluation of the Purchase, Transfer, Conversion, and Use of U.S. Currency in Afghanistan***

To examine the purchase, transfer, conversion, and use of U.S. currency for humanitarian and development assistance in Afghanistan.

***Audit of U.S. Agencies' Oversight of Funds Provided to Public International Organizations for Activities in Afghanistan***

To assess the extent to which U.S. agencies and PIOs conduct oversight of U.S. funds provided for assistance to Afghanistan.

## APPENDIX F

# Planned Oversight Projects

Table 4 lists the title and objective for Lead IG and partner agencies' planned oversight project related to OES.

Table 4.

### Planned Oversight Project Related to OES by Lead IG Agency, as of June 30, 2023

#### DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

***Audit of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research's Execution of Activities Supporting the Evacuation of U.S. Embassy Kabul***

To determine whether the Bureau of Intelligence and Research executed its responsibilities by providing all source intelligence analysis and information to the appropriate decision-makers in preparation of the evacuation of the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan.



## ACRONYMS

Acronym	
AAR	after action review
AFIAT	USAID’s Assistance for Families and Indigent Afghans to Thrive
ASFF	Afghanistan Security Forces Fund
BEWL	DoD Biometrically Enhanced Watch List
DCIS	Defense Criminal Investigative Service
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
DoD	Department of Defense
DoJ	Department of Justice
FAO	UN Food and Agriculture Organization
FMS	Foreign Military Sales
FY	fiscal year
GAO	Government Accountability Office
IED	improvised explosive device
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISIS-K	ISIS-Khorasan
Lead IG	Lead Inspector General
Lead IG agencies	DoD, State, and USAID OIGs
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
NGIC	National Ground Intelligence Center
NGO	nongovernmental organization
OAW	Operation Allies Welcome
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Acronym	
ODASD(RUE)	Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia
OES	Operation Enduring Sentinel
OFS	Operation Freedom’s Sentinel
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OSCA	Office of the Special Coordinator for Afghanistan
OUSD(C)/CFO	Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)/ Chief Financial Officer
PRM	Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
SCA	Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs
SIGAR	Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
SIV	Special Immigrant Visa
State	Department of State
Treasury	Department of the Treasury
TTP	Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan
UHI	USAID’s Urban Health Initiative
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNICEF	UN Children’s Fund
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USCENTCOM	The U.S. Central Command
USCIS	U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services



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TO REPORT FRAUD, WASTE, OR ABUSE RELATED TO  
OVERSEAS CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS  
AND PROGRAMS, CONTACT:



**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE HOTLINE**

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