

INTEGRITY WATCH AFGHANISTAN AND GLOBAL WITNESS RESPONSE TO MAJOR REPORT ON US SUPPORT FOR AFGHAN MINING

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In response to the new report by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) on US support to the mining sector in the country, Stephen Carter, Global Witness's Afghanistan Campaign Leader said:

"We welcome the report, and share SIGAR's concerns over US taxpayer funds being wasted on projects which had inadequate planning and oversight. However, our greatest concern is the fundamental strategic direction of US support to the Afghan mining sector.

The biggest threat to the promise of Afghan mining is not a lack of investment but a lack of governance. Illegal mining and exploitation of mining by armed groups means that mining currently contributes more to corruption and conflict than it does to Afghanistan's development. Yet the primary focus on US support to the sector has been on commercial concerns such as supporting tenders, on which the Task Force for Business Stability Operations (TFBSO) alone spent \$46.5m."

Ikram Afzali, Executive Director of Integrity Watch Afghanistan, said:

"Supporting investment is a laudable goal, but without much stronger governance, revenues from mining are likely to remain limited, and far outweighed by the damage from abuses in the sector

There is a pressing need for reforms to laws and regulations, greater transparency, and building up the ability of the Ministry of Mines to effectively oversee mining and prevent abuses. There is a particular opportunity to strengthen the Afghan Mining Law, which is currently undergoing revisions. While the challenges of reforming the sector are considerable, American spending on the Afghan mining sector can much more to support the Afghan government in this effort.

As a first step, we applaud SIGAR's recommendations that USAID focus its future efforts on supporting structural reforms within the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum (MOMP), and that future on budget assistance to that ministry be conditioned on achieving reform milestones. We urge the US and Afghan government to work together to implement these recommendations, and to put in place the strongest possible framework against abuses in the mining sector."

Notes for editors:

The Afghan government is currently revising the 2014 Afghan Mining Law, a process due to be completed in 2016. Mining Watch Afghanistan, Integrity Watch Afghanistan and Global Witness have suggested detailed reforms to the Law in order to protect against abuses. See: <https://www.globalwitness.org/ru/campaigns/afghanistan/suggested-amendments-afghan-mining-law/>

On these and other, wider recommendations for reforms to the sector, see also: <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/afghanistan/building-long-term/>

For a copy of the SIGAR report "For Afghanistan's Oil, Gas, and Minerals Industries: \$488 Million in U.S. Efforts Show Limited Progress Overall, and Challenges Prevent Further Investment and Growth" see <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/audits/SIGAR-16-11-AR.pdf>

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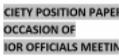
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