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## Afghan Corruption Soars: Bribes Twice as Much as Tax Revenue

By Jason Ditz

February 7, 2013

Afghanistan's near-legendary levels of corruption continue to worsen, with the latest UN report putting the bribery industry at \$3.9 billion, twice what the Afghan government actually collects in above-the-table revenue.

Cronyism and just absurd amounts of bribery demands for all levels of government employees have been a long-standing issue for the NATO-installed regime, and even something as simple as getting electricity or running water installed requires navigating a whole array of officials, each with their hand out for a "tip" to facilitate the process.

UN figures showed roughly half of the population was forced to pay at least one bribe over the course of the past year, and many paid a lot more than one. Perhaps the most disturbing revelation, however, was a poll showing roughly two thirds of Afghans find the practice acceptable.

With official "revenues" relatively low, Afghan government employees aren't paid particularly well and it is an accepted fact that they will solicit bribes to "top up" their earnings to a higher level.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has repeatedly blamed NATO for the levels of corruption in his country, and while NATO officials throwing cash around willy-nilly they are certainly an aspect

of it, but corruption has become such an ingrained part of Afghan society that it goes far beyond the occupation forces.