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## SIGAR: Billions could be lost to waste, abuse in Afghanistan

February 14, 2013

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) said Billions of U.S. taxpayer dollars are being wasted in Afghanistan on fruitless reconstruction projects that are awash in corruption and have little government oversight.

“The impending end of the combat mission in Afghanistan has led some to erroneously believe that the Afghan reconstruction effort is waning,” said John Sopko, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, or SIGAR.

“The Afghan government does not appear to have the capacity to manage the amount of funding envisioned in the international community’s pledges of direct assistance,” Sopko told a House Committee in testimony prepared for a House of Representatives hearing.

He said oversight provisions, such as doling out funds incrementally instead of in large lump sums, should be built into direct aid programmes “to protect the American taxpayer.”

Sopko said Sigar would be monitoring the use of US aid, including whether programmes made clear contributions to US interests, and whether Afghans needed or even wanted them.

As the U.S. begins to withdraw 34,000 troops from Afghanistan it continues to pump billion of dollars in direct assistance to the government, which is free to spend the money in any way it sees fit.

The lack of oversight has potentially allowed the Afghan government to spend millions of U.S. dollars purchasing Iranian oil. Such expenditures would constitute a violation of economic sanctions, according to lead inspector John Sopko, who told Congress Wednesday that the Obama administration has failed to account for how funds are spent.

The administration plans to increase spending in Afghanistan in the coming years as it reduces troop levels despite these concerns, a move that has sparked numerous concerns about security.