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Afghanistan Justice Program found to have ‘Serious deficiencies’

July 26, 2013

Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction on Thursday announced that a contract award to promote the rule of law in Afghanistan does not appear to contain basic provisions that would allow the State Department to ensure proper oversight worth \$50 million.

John Sopko, Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction in a letter to Secretary of State John Kerry said “senior deficiencies” were noted in the government’s contract award for the Afghanistan Justice Training Transition Program, to the Romed based non-governmental organization — International Development Law Organization.

Sopko in his letter to Kerry further added that the award does not contain enough oversight requirements — a possible indication that the State Department’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs is scaling back oversight of a program central to U.S. efforts to promote the rule of law in Afghanistan.

In the meantime State Department said there are oversight procedures in place to track it’s implementation, while the program is new.

The Italian organization was offered \$47.8 million on December 27, in exchange for on the latest iteration of the regional justice sector training efforts that it began in Afghanistan with the Justice Sector Support Program.

Pacific Architects & Engineers of Arlington, Va. implemented the program, however International Development Law Organization (IDLO) was called by the new contract to replace the Virginia based firm as the provder of regional training services to the afghan justice sector.

John Sopko in his letter said that his office “was disturbed to learn” that the International Development Law Organization (IDLO) agreement contained even fewer oversight requirements than the Pacific Architects & Engineers contract.

Deputy spokeswoman for State Department, Marie Harf said that the department shares the inspector general’s goals of implementing programs that are free from waste, fraud and abuse.

Mari Harf further added that the letter that established the program to be implemented by International Development Law Organization (IDLO) is accompanied by a 50- page addendum that includes a robust monitoring and evaluation plan.

She said, “While this program is new, there have been no allegations or evidence of fraud, waste or mismanagement of the Justice Training Transition Program, and there is a robust oversight in place for it ... through our daily contact with the implementers on the ground.”

“The program’s only been in place about six months, but all of the oversight programs are currently on track,” Marie quoted by Associated press said.

Meanwhile The International Development Law Organization (IDLO) denied the report of SIGAR, and said that the inspector general’s letter to Kerry contained factual errors and assertions based on incomplete information.

IDLO in a statement said it has a track record of delivering rule-of-law programs in Afghanistan, as well as other parts of the world, on time and within budget.

The statement further added that IDLO takes “responsible use of taxpayer dollars very seriously.”