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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

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September 10, 2015

The Honorable Ashton Carter
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary:

On May 20, 2015, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) issued a report on a headquarters facility constructed at Camp Leatherneck that was never used or occupied and was a waste of taxpayer dollars.¹ I am writing to request that the Department of Defense (DOD) provide documentation that supports its decision to build this facility, as well as any other information which supports its views of the project.

SIGAR found that while field commanders requested that the construction of the facility be cancelled, those requests were rejected by then-Major General Peter Vanjgel, who believed that it would not be “prudent” to cancel a project for which funds had already been appropriated by Congress. SIGAR also found that his failure to follow the advice of field commanders resulted in the waste of about \$36 million.²

According to SIGAR, the military’s own investigation into the construction of the headquarters, conducted by Major General James Richardson, failed to hold anyone accountable for the waste of taxpayer dollars. Additionally, SIGAR found that military officials, notably Colonel Norman Allen, the Afghanistan command’s legal advisor, discouraged cooperation with the inspector general’s investigation. For these reasons, SIGAR recommended that DOD take disciplinary or administrative action not only against General Vanjgel, but also against General Richardson and Colonel Allen. DOD rejected these recommendations.³

¹ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *\$36 Million Command and Control Facility at Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan: Unwanted, Unneeded, and Unused* (May 20, 2015) (SIGAR-15-57-SP).

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

As a result of SIGAR's report and my previous concerns with this facility,⁴ DOD briefed Subcommittee staff on June 25, 2015. At the briefing, DOD took issue with SIGAR's finding that there was no evidence of the "strategic vision" that was General Vanjgel's purported basis to reject requests to cancel construction. DOD stated that there was evidence, albeit classified and in draft form at the time, in the Theater Posture Plan. DOD also stated that negative performance evaluations might be more appropriate than disciplinary or administrative action for the three named officers. However, DOD staff did not have access to these evaluations and could not confirm whether these officers' conduct was, in fact, evaluated negatively. Finally, DOD argued against SIGAR's claim that the DOD Inspector General (DOD IG) had never reviewed or investigated these issues. DOD indicated that an official within DOD IG had conducted a review of the construction of the headquarters facility, and that DOD had an email communication with this official as evidence.⁵

Since this briefing, my staff has repeatedly requested that DOD provide this evidence to the Subcommittee. To date no information has been provided. As a result, I am writing to request that DOD provide the following information:

- (1) The draft Theater Posture Plan that provided the basis for the "strategic vision" that justified General Vanjgel's approval of the headquarters facility;
- (2) The relevant performance evaluations for General Vanjgel, General Richardson, and Colonel Allen for the time periods of their conduct described in the SIGAR report; and,
- (3) The relevant email communication identifying the DOD IG official who reviewed the construction of the headquarters facility.

I also welcome any additional material you wish to provide to support DOD's rejection of SIGAR's findings, including its recommendation that DOD take disciplinary or adverse action against these officers. I request that you provide these documents and information as soon as possible, but by **no later than Thursday, October 1, 2015**.

⁴ Letter from Senator Claire McCaskill to Secretary Chuck Hagel (Jan. 9, 2014). Briefing by U.S. Army Criminal Investigative Command to Financial and Contracting Oversight Subcommittee Staff (Jan. 15, 2014).

⁵ Briefing by Department of Defense to Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations Staff (June 25, 2015).

I appreciate your assistance. Please contact Jackson Eaton with the Subcommittee at (202) 224-9872 with any questions. Please send any official correspondence relating to this request to Kelsey_Stroud@hsgac.senate.gov.

Sincerely,



Claire McCaskill
Ranking Member
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations

cc: Rob Portman
Chairman
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations