

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 26, 2023

The Honorable Richard Verma
Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Deputy Secretary of State Verma,

We write regarding the Department of State's refusal to comply with requests from the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), as SIGAR carries out its congressionally mandated obligations to the taxpayer.

Before your confirmation by the Senate, the Department of State and USAID determined that ongoing cooperation with SIGAR on activities and funds provided for Afghanistan after the U.S. withdrawal in August 2021 was no longer necessary. Such a determination is for Congress—and Congress alone—to make. SIGAR retains its statutory obligation to conduct oversight of the taxpayer dollars provided to Afghanistan since the Taliban's takeover of the country. The Department is likewise obligated to cooperate with SIGAR inquiries and requests for information.

It is our understanding that in recent months, some level of cooperation with SIGAR has resumed. However, by many accounts—including Special Inspector General Sopko's testimony before the House Oversight and Accountability Committee on April 19, 2023—it remains uneven and does not resemble the full cooperation by the Department mandated by SIGAR's authorizing statute and the Inspector General Act. SIGAR's *2023 High-Risk List* from April of this year details the ongoing risks to U.S. assistance and oversight in Afghanistan, made all the more challenging because of the State Department and USAID's unwillingness to fully cooperate with SIGAR audits, inquiries, and requests for information since the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Americans are rightfully concerned that, because of this lack of cooperation, SIGAR cannot guarantee that U.S.-funded assistance to Afghanistan is not benefiting the Taliban. The Taliban has a horrific human rights record, particularly in the case of

women and girls, and it is imperative that not a single U.S. tax dollar benefit them. The transparency provided by SIGAR's oversight will, we hope, assuage these concerns.

To that end, we respectfully request that you respond in writing with a list of actions taken since your confirmation to improve cooperation with SIGAR's work. We also request a briefing to provide a forum for members of our staff to discuss these actions. We expect the Department to recommit to compliance with SIGAR's requests for information, interviews, and other materials regarding ongoing State and USAID programs in Afghanistan.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Rand Paul
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator