

LEAD INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORT TO THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS



**OPERATION
ENDURING SENTINEL
AND OTHER U.S. GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES RELATED TO
AFGHANISTAN**



JULY 1, 2024–SEPTEMBER 30, 2024



On the cover: World Food Programme aid distribution in the Idlib province of Afghanistan. (WFP photo)



We are pleased to present this Lead Inspector General (Lead IG) report to Congress on Operation Enduring Sentinel (OES). This report discharges our quarterly reporting responsibilities pursuant to Section 419 of the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended.

In October 2021, the Department of Defense (DoD) initiated OES as the U.S. mission to conduct over-the-horizon counterterrorism operations against threats emanating from Afghanistan. The DoD also engages in security cooperation activities with Central Asian and South Asian regional partners to build their border security and counterterrorism capacity.

This quarterly report describes the activities of the U.S. Government in support of OES, as well as the work of the DoD, the Department of State (State), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to further the U.S. Government's policy goals in Afghanistan during the period of July 1 through September 30, 2024. This report also discusses the planned, ongoing, and completed oversight work conducted by the Lead IG agencies—the DoD, State, and USAID OIGs—and our partner oversight agencies.

Handwritten signature of Robert P. Storch in black ink.

Robert P. Storch
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for OES
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Development





Workers build terracing structures as part of a World Food Programme initiative in Badakhshan province. (WFP photo)

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World Food Programme aid distribution in the Idlib province of Afghanistan. (WFP photo)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K) maintains the intent and capability to strike outside of its traditional area of operations in South Asia, according to the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA).¹

Additionally, a UN Security Council report questioned the Taliban’s counterterrorism capabilities and warned of continued ISIS-K recruitment and dispersal.²

Security conditions in Pakistani provinces bordering Afghanistan remained high, with attacks by the Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Baloch Liberation Army, and affiliated groups.³ State reported that this quarter the TTP killed 722 people in terrorist attacks.⁴

The apparent ability of the TTP to operate from Afghanistan is a major source of tension between the Taliban and the Pakistani government.⁵

The Taliban issued a new morality edict to govern personal conduct. The edict particularly affects women, including forbidding female voices in public.⁶ USAID and State’s humanitarian partners fear the morality edict could further limit aid to women, hinder aid agencies’ ability to deliver principled assistance, worsen the country’s mental health crisis, and lead to additional emigration.⁷ In September, members of the UN Security Council almost universally condemned the Taliban’s “vice and virtue” edict. Pakistan blamed the Taliban for “doubling down” on misogyny.⁸

Humanitarian needs in Afghanistan have risen significantly since the Taliban took over in August 2021.⁹ While the U.S. Government remains the largest humanitarian donor, funding falls short of declared need.¹⁰ The United Nations reported that as of August 30, the Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan for 2024 had received 25 percent of the required \$3.1 billion in needed funding.¹¹

State issued more than 33,000 Afghan Special Immigrant Visas in FY 2024, including more than 9,000 during the quarter.¹² In FY 2025, State plans to continue Afghan relocation operations in Albania, Pakistan, and Qatar and recently completed an agreement with the Philippine government to open an additional relocation facility under Enduring Welcome, the U.S. Government’s long-term relocation and resettlement program.¹³



MISSION UPDATE

This section, “Mission Update,” describes U.S. activities under the OES mission and related activity that affects the OES mission. The following section, “U.S. Policy Objectives in Afghanistan,” describes diplomatic, political, humanitarian assistance, and development activities in Afghanistan that are integral to the OES mission.

U.S. ACTIVITY

The mission of Operation Enduring Sentinel (OES) is to contain terrorist threats emanating from Afghanistan and to protect the homeland by maintaining pressure on those threats. The DoD also engages in security cooperation activities with Central Asian and South Asian regional partners to foster counterterrorism partnerships.¹⁴

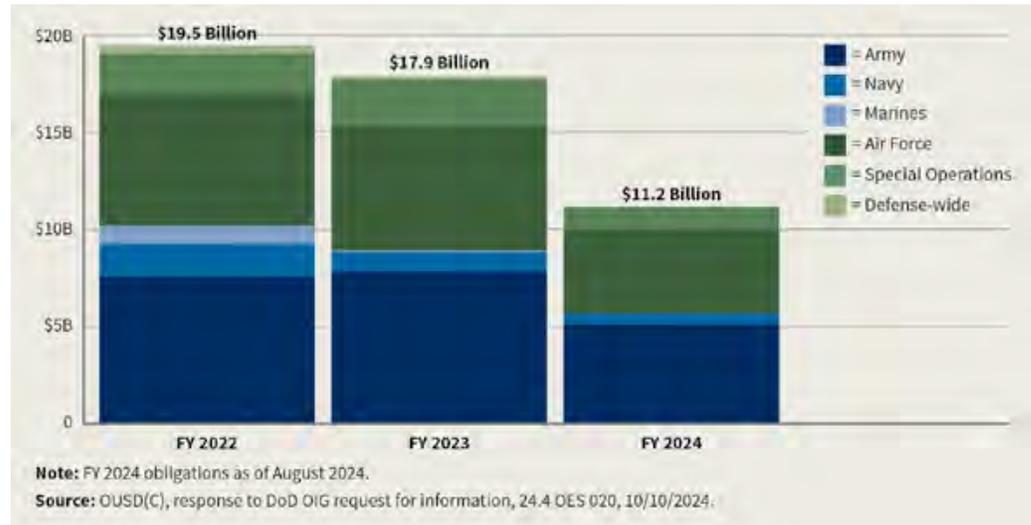
Beyond the DoD’s counterterrorism activities conducted under OES, the U.S. Government also cooperates with partners and allies to prevent the re-emergence of external threats from Afghanistan and counteract terrorist recruitment efforts.¹⁵ For example, State supports

Newly arrived Afghans arrive begin at State’s Office of the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts (CARE) in Qatar, which handles the planning and logistics of relocating eligible Afghans. (DoD OIG photo.)

THE U.S. GOVERNMENT HAS NOT YET MADE A DECISION TO RECOGNIZE A GOVERNMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

The U.S. Government has not yet made a decision whether to recognize the Taliban or any other entity as the government of Afghanistan. Accordingly, any references in this report to so-called “Taliban governance,” the “Taliban’s ministries” and “officials,” a “former” Afghan government, and similar phrases are not meant to convey any U.S. Government view or decision on recognition of the Taliban or any other entity as the government of Afghanistan.

Figure 1.

DoD Obligations for OES, FY 2022–FY 2024, in \$ Billions

counterterrorism programs with countries in the region. State said it continued to urge the Taliban to ensure that terrorist attacks are no longer launched from Afghan soil and called publicly and privately on the Taliban to fulfill its counterterrorism commitments.¹⁶ The DoD provided limited publicly releasable information about U.S. military activity related to OES during the quarter.

DoD funding for OES has declined since the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan in 2021. (See Figure 1.) The DoD Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) stated operational costs for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) flights are captured by region and not by overflight of a specific country.¹⁷ The overall U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) cost for ISR activities was \$111.9 million during the quarter.¹⁸

The U.S. Government further addressed the terrorist threat in Afghanistan by increasing focus, coordination, and collaboration with members of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. Core components of the U.S. strategy to address the Islamic State–Khorasan (ISIS-K) threat in the region are strengthening law enforcement, providing border security assistance, and supporting reintegration initiatives in Central and South Asia.¹⁹

TERRORIST THREATS EMANATING FROM AFGHANISTAN

According to the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), ISIS-K maintains the intent and capability to conduct attacks outside its traditional area of operations in South Asia. For example, on August 23, a group of ISIS-affiliated inmates took hostages at a detention center in Volgograd, Russia, and killed at least one guard.²⁰ Additionally, ISIS-K issued propaganda to publicize an August 23 knife attack at a festival in Solingen, Germany, that killed three people and injured eight others, according to the DIA, citing press reporting.²¹

Non-admissible Afghan Arrivals at Southern Border Increase

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) reported that Customs and Border Protection encountered 68 Afghan “inadmissible non-citizens” at the U.S. Southwest Border Ports of Entry in FY 2022, 342 in FY 2023, and 1,893 non-admissible Afghans in FY 2024.²²

According to the DHS, encounters with individuals who are on terrorist watchlists at U.S. borders are uncommon.²³ The DHS works to secure U.S. borders through a combination of highly-trained personnel, ground and aerial monitoring systems, and robust intelligence and information sharing networks.²⁴ This includes cross-checking biometric and biographic information against several classified and unclassified databases to determine whether an individual is a threat to national security or public safety, the DHS reported.²⁵

According to the DHS, there were 367 encounters with terrorist watch-listed individuals of all nationalities at land border ports of entry during FY 2024, with the majority (321) occurring at the northern border.²⁶

United Nations: ISIS-K Threat Has Grown

A July 19 UN Security Council report stated that the threat posed by ISIS-K has grown, as have threat levels in Europe and other areas.²⁷ ISIS-K “remains the most serious threat in the region projecting terror beyond Afghanistan,” the report stated.²⁸ Another UN Security Council report, dated July 3, acknowledged Taliban efforts to counter the ISIS-K threat but also questioned the Taliban’s counterterrorism capabilities and warned of continued ISIS-K recruitment and dispersal.²⁹

Force Size: The DIA, judging from open-source reports, assessed with low confidence that ISIS-K has roughly 2,000 fighters and probably failed to increase in strength because of Taliban counterterrorism pressure.³⁰ (See Table 1.)

Leadership: Sanaullah Ghafari remains the ISIS-K leader.³¹

External Reach: Logistical and financial support remain available to ISIS-K operatives arriving from Afghanistan and Central Asia, according to the July 19 UN Security Council report. ISIS-K’s capability to strike in other countries depends upon the extent its resident networks can access weapons, their level of military training, their ability to evade counterterrorism measures, and whether they can identify viable targets. More unsophisticated plots are anticipated in Europe over the next year, according to the July 19 Security Council Committee report.³²

Facilitation Networks: ISIS-K relies on networks of facilitators between Afghanistan and Türkiye to move operatives from Central Asia and Afghanistan toward Europe to conduct external operations.³³ The July 19 Security Council report also suggested the presence of clandestine ISIS-K “super-connectors” that exploit Türkiye to form networks and cells in Europe.³⁴ Strong connections have been observed between networks communicating in Russian and Central Asian languages with logistical hubs in Türkiye and in transit countries, such as Ukraine.³⁵

Table 1.

Estimated Number of VEO Fighters in Afghanistan and Region

Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP)	4,000-6,000
ISIS-K	2,000
Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS)	200
Al-Qaeda	Fewer than a dozen core members

Source: DIA, response to DoD OIG request for information, 24.4 OES 030, 10/9/2024.

Recruiting: ISIS-K targets Afghan and Central Asian diasporas in Europe—as well as those trying to travel to Europe to seek asylum or refugee status—for recruiting. Ismatullah Khalozai, an Afghan national, oversees the group’s finances in Europe for migrant smuggling, according to the July 19 UN Security Council report.³⁶

Propaganda: ISIS-K released videos threatening foreigners and UN personnel in Afghanistan and ridiculed the Taliban’s claims of successfully maintaining security. One video criticized Taliban engagement with the international community and named specific faith-based NGOs and UN entities. ISIS-K declared that all foreign and Afghan NGOs working with the Taliban are legitimate targets, the UN Secretary-General reported on September 9.³⁷

Treasury and State: ISIS-K Funding Sources Shifting

ISIS-K has improved its financial and logistical capabilities, according to the July 19 Security Council report.³⁸ State said that ISIS-K generates funds through local donations, taxation, and extortion of local population and businesses.³⁹

ISIS-K receives some financial support from ISIS Core, the main ISIS terrorist organization, State said.⁴⁰ Treasury reported that ISIS’s al-Siddiq Office (ASO) has adapted how it generates revenue, due to counterterrorism pressure. ISIS-K’s financial facilitation network probably recovered from the arrests and deaths of key officials and facilitators in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Syria, and Türkiye in 2023 and early 2024. However, recently the branch shifted from extortion, kidnapping-for-ransom, robbery, and external funding from other ISIS branches to relying primarily on international donations and ISIS Core funding, much of which has been provided via virtual assets, Treasury said.⁴¹

ISIS-K has relied on the informal “hawala” payment system to transfer funds and finance its activities and has been linked to digital currencies. As a result of these actions, ISIS-K has been able to finance weapons purchases, training, and terrorist operations.⁴² At least part of the March ISIS-K attack in Russia was funded using virtual assets transferred through various ISIS entities, including ISIS Core and ASO, Treasury said. ISIS-K reportedly transferred at least \$2,000 in virtual assets to the attackers, directly linking ISIS virtual assets to external operations.⁴³

Some ISIS branches opted to stop using cash transfers because of the risks associated with couriers being caught with cash. Instead, they turned to using virtual assets, which they assess to be more secure than traditional means of transferring money. Since 2023, ISIS has received thousands of dollars in donations from international supporters by advertising virtual asset addresses in ISIS-generated propaganda, such as in the ASO’s Voice of Khorasan. Treasury’s information indicates that ISIS-K is seeking to increase its English language capability, presumably to reach a wider audience.⁴⁴

In July, State’s Rewards for Justice program announced a reward of up to \$10 million for information leading to the disruption of the financial mechanisms of ISIS-K.⁴⁵

Al-Qaeda Maintains a Low Profile in Afghanistan

The DIA reported no changes in its assessments from previous quarters that al-Qaeda and al-Qaeda in the Sub-Continent (AQIS) are maintaining a low profile in Afghanistan.⁴⁶ After the U.S. withdrawal in 2021, al-Qaeda leaders probably decided to comply with the Taliban's 2020 pronouncement that Afghanistan would not serve as a base for transnational attacks, according to the DIA.⁴⁷ The leaders of AQIS almost certainly continue to abide by both the Taliban's restrictions and al-Qaeda leadership's decisions regarding attacks from Afghanistan. There are no credible indications that Afghanistan-based al-Qaeda or AQIS leaders sanctioned planning, training, or execution of external operations during the quarter, or that al-Qaeda is attempting to rebuild such a capacity there.⁴⁸

Operational Capability: State said that the U.S. Government had no clear indication that al-Qaeda was actively rebuilding an operational capability in Afghanistan.⁴⁹ The Taliban issued directives against conducting external operations from Afghanistan and against recruitment and said that al-Qaeda and AQIS appeared to be maintaining a low profile, presumably in accordance with Taliban directives, State said.⁵⁰ Al-Qaeda's capacity to conduct large-scale attacks continued to be limited, but the intent remained the same, according to the UN Security Council report dated July 3.⁵¹

Force Size: The DIA stated it had not observed any significant changes in the number of al-Qaeda and AQIS fighters in Afghanistan during the last quarter.⁵² (See Table 1.) Taliban restrictions on al-Qaeda and AQIS activity, including plotting external attacks from Afghan territory, probably hinder recruitment and retention efforts.⁵³

Leadership and Organization: The DIA stated that it did not observe any indicators of al-Qaeda senior leaders providing new guidance, funding, or propaganda support to AQIS or al-Qaeda's other global affiliates during the quarter.⁵⁴ The July 19 UN Security Council report stated that member states are concerned by some "well-established al-Qaeda figures" who recently traveled to Afghanistan.⁵⁵ The al-Qaeda members were believed to have been involved in training, recruitment, and reorganization activities. Continued reorganization and training are indicative of the group's longer-term intent.⁵⁶ In September, media outlets reported that Hamza bin Laden, son of al-Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden, is alive and directing the terror group from a hidden spot in northern Afghanistan.⁵⁷ In 2019, media outlets reported that Hamza bin Laden was killed in an airstrike in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region on an undisclosed date.⁵⁸

Relationship with the Taliban: The DIA stated it has not observed the Taliban regime exerting command and control over AQIS and other global affiliates.⁵⁹ Nor has the DIA seen reporting indicating that the Taliban, in coordination with al-Qaeda or AQIS, has sheltered, supported, or trained TTP during the quarter. Al-Qaeda exercises strategic patience, prioritizing its relationship with the Taliban, according to the July 19 UN Security Council report.⁶⁰ The Taliban has attempted to limit al-Qaeda activities. However, greater collaboration among al-Qaeda affiliates and the TTP could transform the TTP into an "extra-regional threat," the report stated.⁶¹

The DIA reported no changes in its assessments from previous quarters that al-Qaeda and al-Qaeda in the Sub-Continent are maintaining a low profile in Afghanistan.

During the quarter, the Taliban conducted raids against ISIS-K and probably maintained its capability to disrupt ISIS-K cells in Afghanistan when it expects ISIS-K attacks on major gatherings or holidays, the DIA reported.

AQIS: Despite publishing antisemitic videos in late June and mid-September praising Hamas' October 7 attacks on Israel, AQIS lacks the capability to carry out even independent attacks, much less attacks on the scale of the Hamas attacks, the DIA said.⁶²

TALIBAN ACTIVITY

Taliban Claim Successful Counterterrorism Operations

The Taliban continued to counter several terrorist threats, including by aggressively combatting ISIS-K, State reported.⁶³ During the quarter, the Taliban conducted raids against ISIS-K and probably maintained its capability to disrupt ISIS-K cells in Afghanistan when it expects ISIS-K attacks on major gatherings or holidays, the DIA reported.⁶⁴

In September, the Taliban claimed that its security forces had killed and captured several "key members" of ISIS-K, according to a media report. The captured individuals, the Taliban said, had crossed from Pakistan and were plotting recent terrorist attacks in Afghanistan.⁶⁵ A Taliban spokesperson said that the ISIS-K operatives in question had been involved in a suicide bombing in Kabul in September and a May gun attack in Bamyan, which killed three Spanish tourists.⁶⁶ In July, Taliban security forces claimed responsibility for killing a key ISIS-K commander, whom the Taliban identified as ISIS-K's military leader for Nangarhar's Achin district, media reported.⁶⁷

A Taliban spokesperson said that ISIS-K had established "new operational bases and training camps" in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan, after fleeing Afghanistan because of Taliban counterterrorism pressure.⁶⁸ He said that ISIS-K operatives use those bases to orchestrate attacks in Afghanistan and other countries. The press report stated that the Taliban's claims came 2 days after China, Iran, Pakistan, and Russia urged the Taliban to eradicate ISIS-K and other violent extremist organizations (VEO) from Afghanistan during a September 27 meeting in New York, according to a news report.⁶⁹

The Taliban very likely has the ability to deter high-profile ISIS-K attacks, the DIA reported.⁷⁰ In July, the Taliban disrupted ISIS-K plans to attack during the Ashura holiday, celebrated by Shiite Muslims, according to the DIA, citing press reporting. The Taliban continued to conduct raids to locate and arrest suspected ISIS-K members.⁷¹ However, media outlets reported that ISIS-K conducted two other large-scale attacks in September, one in a Shiite-majority area in central Afghanistan where gunmen killed 14 people, and a suicide bombing in Kabul that killed and injured 45 people, including Taliban members.⁷²

The DIA stated that it had no information on whether the Taliban used U.S.-origin equipment during the quarter. The DIA also stated it had not seen the Taliban use any aircraft in counterterrorism strikes. The DIA stated it had no information whether the Taliban targeted ISIS-K external operations plotters during the quarter.⁷³

Taliban Likely Capable of Maintaining Military Dominance

From July to September, the security and economic situation in Afghanistan did not change, the DIA stated. This suggests that the Taliban almost certainly will retain military and security dominance for at least the next 12 months.⁷⁴ Afghan returnees from Pakistan have probably exacerbated issues such as unemployment, poverty, and starvation in Afghanistan, the DIA stated, citing press reporting and UN statements.⁷⁵

Low-level Taliban members continued to conduct reprisals against former Afghan government and security personnel. During this quarter, at least 11 members of the former Afghan government were arrested, tortured, or killed by either Taliban or suspected Taliban members, according to the DIA, citing public reporting.⁷⁶ However, similar to previous quarters, the DIA reported that Taliban leadership is almost certainly not directing attacks against former Afghan government and military personnel.⁷⁷

The Taliban's spending on security and armed forces was not proportional, relative to the large domestic challenges and humanitarian needs in Afghanistan, and it is unclear whether the spending adequately addresses counterterrorism challenges, according to the Security Council Committee report dated July 3. Taliban authorities reportedly intend to acquire new military capabilities, and it is unclear whether they can or will adequately restrict terrorist access to weapons.⁷⁸

State reported that it continued to call on the Taliban to fully implement the general amnesty for former government officials and Afghan National Defense and Security Forces personnel announced in August 2021.⁷⁹

Armed Opposition Groups Continue to Claim Attacks Against the Taliban

State reported that the National Resistance Front and the Afghanistan Freedom Front both claimed armed anti-Taliban attacks during the quarter. The National Resistance Front claimed a July 2024 attack against a Taliban vehicle which killed four Taliban members. The Afghanistan Freedom Front claimed a July 2024 attack against a Taliban convoy which also killed four Taliban members.⁸⁰

However, armed opposition from anti-Taliban resistance groups continued to pose no significant challenge to the Taliban's hold on territorial control, according to the September 9 UN Security Council report.⁸¹

From July to September, the security and economic situation in Afghanistan did not change, the DIA stated.

During the quarter, Central Asian states promoted regional stability and addressed humanitarian concerns emanating from Afghanistan by encouraging investment in the country.

REGIONAL STABILITY

The DIA reported that neighboring countries stated their persistent concerns about terrorist threats emanating from Afghanistan.⁸²

Central Asian States: During the quarter, Central Asian states promoted regional stability and addressed humanitarian concerns emanating from Afghanistan by encouraging investment in the country. On September 6, the Kyrgyz Republic’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs officially removed the Taliban from its list of banned organizations to enhance regional stability and bolster ongoing dialogue with the Taliban.⁸³ Uzbekistan’s state security service said that countries in the region should “consolidate and coordinate” their efforts to fight ISIS, media reported.⁸⁴

People’s Republic of China (PRC): The DIA stated it has no evidence to suggest that the PRC conducted military or counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan this quarter. In September, the PRC and Tajikistan conducted a counterterrorism exercise on the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border which focused on countering terrorist infiltrations, according to the DIA, citing press reporting.⁸⁵

India: New Delhi held low-level engagements and made public statements about Indian humanitarian assistance provided to the Taliban at UN meetings in Doha and New York during the quarter, according to the DIA, citing press reporting. During the quarter, India joined two working groups in support of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan on counternarcotics and is enabling private sector growth in Afghanistan, according to the DIA, citing a press report.⁸⁶

Iran: Iran is concerned about terrorist groups—particularly ISIS-K and Jaysh al-Adi. As of September, ISIS-K probably continues planning large-scale attacks in Iran. Iran recently announced the completion of a 10-kilometer border wall in southeast Sistan and Baluchestan province to help curb illegal immigration and increase border security, the DIA stated.⁸⁷

Russia: Russia is continuing to deepen its relationships with the Taliban, expressing intent to grant formal recognition and further cooperation to thwart terrorism, according to the DIA, citing a press report.⁸⁸ Russia addresses terrorism emanating from Afghanistan through its Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organization forces as well as its border guard cooperation with Tajikistan, according to the DIA, citing a press report.⁸⁹

Additionally, on September 27, high-level foreign ministers from the PRC, Iran, and Russia, as well as Pakistan’s defense minister, met during the UN General Assembly and called on the Taliban to take “visible and verifiable” actions to dismantle terrorist groups operating from Afghan soil.⁹⁰ In a joint statement, the quadrilateral group refuted Taliban assertions that it did not harbor terrorist groups in Afghanistan. They claimed that terrorist groups including al-Qaeda, ISIS-K, and the TTP—as well as the Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement and Baloch Liberation Army—continued to operate from Afghanistan.⁹¹ Media reported that the quadrilateral group also emphasized the importance of strengthening counterterrorism cooperation and said that Afghanistan “should be supported” in taking comprehensive measures to address root causes of terrorism.⁹²

Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken meets with the Foreign Ministers of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan (C5+1) in New York City on September 27, 2024. (State photo)



State Announces Funding for Counterterrorism Operations and Border Security in Central Asia

On September 30, at a Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS conference hosted by the United States, Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken announced that the United States would provide \$148 million to enhance civilian-led border security and counterterrorism operations across Central Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.⁹³ Secretary Blinken warned that ISIS aims to make territorial gains and that ISIS-K poses a “distinctive challenge” waging a low-level insurgency in Central and South Asia and using online recruitment to mount attacks around the world, citing attacks in Iran and Russia.⁹⁴

Additionally, on the sidelines of the 79th United General Assembly session in September, Secretary Blinken met with foreign ministers and representatives from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan under the auspices of the C5 +1 platform and discussed steps toward enhanced regional security cooperation in Central Asia.⁹⁵ The C5+1 diplomatic platform represents the U.S. Government’s whole-of-government approach to Central Asia.⁹⁶

Pakistan-Afghanistan Tensions Remain High

Tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan remain high, often leading to conflict and skirmishes along the border, according to media reporting.⁹⁷ Experts say that the conflict is partly due to pressure from the PRC on Pakistan to increase security in the country in the interest of PRC infrastructure and economic projects.⁹⁸

State said that the apparent ability of the TTP to operate from Afghanistan continued to be a major source of tension between the Taliban and Pakistan’s government. Following a July 15 TTP attack on a Pakistani military cantonment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, State said that more than 70,000 protesters in Pakistan expressed frustration with the deteriorating security environment and perceptions that the Pakistani government’s response was heavy-handed.⁹⁹

In September, Taliban and Pakistani security forces clashed near border posts, resulting in the death of 8 Taliban fighters, and injuries to 16 Taliban and 5 Pakistani security forces, according to the DIA, citing a press report.

In September, Taliban and Pakistani security forces clashed near border posts, resulting in the death of 8 Taliban fighters, and injuries to 16 Taliban and 5 Pakistani security forces, according to the DIA, citing a press report.¹⁰⁰ These border skirmishes, paired with TTP cross-border attacks from Afghanistan into Pakistan, have almost certainly strained relations between Islamabad and the Taliban, the DIA stated.¹⁰¹ Pakistan’s Special Representative on Afghanistan Asif Durrani’s departure on September 10—and lack of a successor—may indicate Pakistan’s further frustration with engaging with the Taliban given continuing security threats from the TTP, State said.¹⁰²

Media reports quoted Pakistan Defense Minister Khawaja Asif saying that Pakistan would continue to launch attacks in Afghanistan as part of a new counterterrorism military operation. The Taliban said any strikes in Afghanistan would be in violation of its sovereignty, calling Asif’s statements “irresponsible,” and any cross-border attacks would have “consequences.”¹⁰³ In August, the Taliban claimed that it is committed to ensuring that Afghan soil is not used as a base to launch attacks against Pakistan or other nations, according to the DIA, citing a press report.¹⁰⁴

State reported that it continued to engage with Pakistan on Pakistan-Afghanistan issues of mutual concern, such as countering regional security threats and ensuring the relocation of Afghan allies. The TTP claims it does not target U.S. interests in Pakistan directly, but there is potential for collateral damage to U.S. persons or facilities, State said.¹⁰⁵

TTP Violence in Pakistan Intensified

The July 19 UN Security Council report stated that the TTP has intensified violence inside Pakistan. The TTP primarily targets military and police installations, and they collaborate with al-Qaeda in camps training local Afghan fighters and TTP operatives. According to the UN report, there is reportedly increased support and collaboration between the TTP, the Taliban, and AQIS. The groups reportedly share manpower and conduct attacks under the banner of the Tehrik-e Jihad Pakistan, which has been described as a TTP splinter group.¹⁰⁶

State reported this quarter that the TTP killed 722 people in terrorist attacks, including civilians and security personnel, and wounded another 615, a 90 percent increase in fatalities as compared to the previous quarter. TTP attacks typically occur close to the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and largely target Pakistani security and police forces.¹⁰⁷

According to the DIA, the TTP continues to use its safe haven inside Afghanistan to carry out attacks in Pakistan.¹⁰⁸ In August, militants carried out 29 attacks in Pakistan’s Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the TTP’s traditional area of operation. In late September, the TTP denied attacking a police convoy escorting foreign diplomats in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, suggesting that the TTP seeks to avoid drawing international criticism for attacking civilians, the DIA stated, citing press reporting.¹⁰⁹ The DIA stated it had no information on whether the TTP was exploiting the Afghan returnee situation during this quarter.¹¹⁰

Also in August, the TTP carried out a joint attack with the Hafiz Gul Bahadur group against Pakistani security forces, attempting to intercept militants crossing the Afghan border, the DIA reported, citing a press report.¹¹¹

VEO Use of U.S.-Origin Equipment Likely Limited

The DIA stated that VEOs in the region probably are using limited quantities of U.S.-origin weapons and equipment, including small arms and night vision devices, from stockpiles that were transferred to the former Afghan government.¹¹² Pakistani and Indian officials claimed that militants have employed U.S.-origin weapons obtained since the Taliban assumed power in Afghanistan, making their attacks more lethal by affording militants tactical advantages over security forces, the DIA stated, citing open-source reporting.¹¹³ The DIA stated it did not have information demonstrating Russian attempts to acquire U.S. weapons or equipment during the quarter.¹¹⁴

As of September, Pakistani officials claimed TTP fighters have used U.S.-origin small arms, night vision devices, and thermal optics during attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces, the DIA stated, citing open-source reporting.¹¹⁵ In July, Indian officials claimed militants in Jammu and Kashmir had been found using U.S.-origin small arms, and insinuated the weapons came from Afghanistan, according to the DIA, citing an open-source report.¹¹⁶

Iran Arrests 14 ISIS-K Members Across Several Provinces

Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence announced on August 23 that its security forces had arrested 14 people allegedly affiliated with ISIS-K for planning “terrorist attacks” in Iran, according to a media outlet. The arrests came after a series of raids around the country, but the Ministry did not release the detainees’ identities and nationalities.¹¹⁷

ISIS-K claimed its first operation in Iran in June 2017, when militants carried out simultaneous attacks in Tehran, killing 18, according to the media report.¹¹⁸ ISIS-K claimed responsibility for two deadly attacks in Kerman in January that targeted memorial services for Qasem Soleimani, the slain commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ Quds Force, media reported.¹¹⁹

The DIA stated that VEOs in the region probably are using limited quantities of U.S.-origin weapons and equipment, including small arms and night vision devices, from stockpiles that were transferred to the former Afghan government.





U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken delivers opening remarks with Ambassador Elizabeth Richard, Coordinator for Counterterrorism, at the D-ISIS Ministerial at the Department of State in Washington, D.C., on September 30. (State photo.)

U.S. POLICY OBJECTIVES IN AFGHANISTAN

The U.S. Government's most critical enduring interest in Afghanistan is ensuring that Afghanistan can never again be a launching pad for terrorist attacks against the United States, and to look after the well-being of U.S. citizens detained in Afghanistan, State said. At every opportunity, State said it urges the Taliban to respect the rights of all Afghans and reverse discriminatory decrees on women and girls. The U.S. Government also has an interest in preventing a humanitarian crisis that would destabilize the region.¹²⁰

DIPLOMACY AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The United States remained engaged on Afghanistan and committed to supporting the Afghan people, State said.¹²¹ The Afghanistan Affairs Unit (AAU) in Doha, Qatar, manages U.S. diplomacy with Afghanistan, including consular affairs, administering humanitarian assistance, and working with allies and partners to coordinate U.S. engagement and messaging to the Taliban.¹²² During the quarter, State announced that Chargé d'Affaires Karen Decker would lead U.S. diplomacy on Afghanistan from Doha and in Washington, Ambassador John Mark Pommersheim, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Central Asia, would lead policy development, replacing Special Representative Thomas West.¹²³

U.S. Government Officials Continue Technical Talks with the Taliban

U.S. and Taliban senior representatives and technical professionals continued their ongoing dialogue in support of the Afghan people. During the quarter, they held bilateral technical talks on critical interests and confidence-building areas to address economic stabilization and counternarcotics.¹²⁴ In addition, State reported a high-level conversation about counternarcotics during the UN-convened Doha III meeting of Afghanistan Special Envoys that occurred from June 30 to July 1.¹²⁵

The United States held three meetings since July 2023 with Taliban technical professionals to discuss economic stabilization issues. The most recent round of talks was in September 2024, State reported.¹²⁶

State officials pressed the Taliban to release all American detainees “at every opportunity.”¹²⁷ Bringing Americans home continued to be a top priority for the United States as it worked to obtain their release and State said it would continue to use every resource to bring the detainees home from Afghanistan.¹²⁸ Since 2021, the U.S. Government has brought home 50 Americans unjustly detained around the world, according to State.¹²⁹ Taliban authorities reported to local media that approximately 60 foreigners were in prison, out of 20,000 prisoners in the country.¹³⁰

State said that it also continued to press the Taliban to uphold the rights of women and girls, and that the United States does not support steps toward normalization until the rights are restored.¹³¹ The Taliban has failed to uphold promises it made in August 2021 to respect the rights of women and girls and continued to revert to the repressive policies it espoused in the 1990s, State said.¹³² While the Taliban appeared sensitive to criticism, they have not demonstrated any willingness to alter domestic policies in response to international pressure, State reported.¹³³

U.S. Ambassador Urges Pakistan to Ensure Safety and Well-being of Afghan Refugees

In September, U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome met with Pakistan’s Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister to discuss the urgent need for coordinated efforts to manage Afghan refugees in Pakistan and ensure their safety and well-being. There are approximately 1.7 million undocumented Afghan migrants in Pakistan, according to media reporting.¹³⁴ Pakistan’s first round of deportations, which started in November 2023, compelled almost 500,000 Afghans to depart Pakistan, State said.¹³⁵

The deportation of Afghans living in Pakistan who are not in U.S. resettlement or immigration pathways has declined since January 2024 but continued at lower levels. From January 1 to September 21, 238,372 Afghans—the vast majority of whom are undocumented individuals—returned to Afghanistan from Pakistan, State reported.¹³⁶ In late September, Pakistan’s Minister for States and Frontier Regions visited an Afghan refugee camp where he said that Pakistan would provide assistance to returning Afghan refugees.¹³⁷

Since 2021, the U.S. Government has brought home 50 Americans unjustly detained around the world, according to State.



Panelists discuss the inclusion of women in the future of Afghanistan at the UN headquarters on September 23, 2024. (UN Photo)

UN Secretary-General Spotlights Plight of Afghan Women and Girls During 79th General Assembly

During the 79th Session of the UN General Assembly in New York, UN Secretary-General António Guterres called on Afghanistan to focus on human rights abuses and underscored the Taliban’s treatment of women, including the recent Taliban morality decree.¹³⁸ (See pages 23-24.) The morality decree, which focuses on imposing restrictions in areas such as dress codes, behavior, and public morality, disproportionately affects women, State said.¹³⁹ The UN Secretary-General said that “what is happening in Afghanistan can be compared with some of the most egregious systems of oppression in recent history.”¹⁴⁰

The Taliban complained about being excluded from the UN General Assembly for a 3rd consecutive year. The leader of the Taliban office in Qatar, Suhail Shaheen, said that barring the Taliban from UN representation “exacerbates” divisions instead of resolving issues, media reported.¹⁴¹

During the General Assembly session, Australia, Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands announced their intention to initiate legal proceedings against the Taliban for violating the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, to which Afghanistan is a party. More than 20 countries expressed support for legal action, noting Afghanistan’s failure to fulfill its human rights treaty obligations as a key obstacle to normalization of relations. Taliban leadership responded that it was “absurd” to accuse them of gender discrimination, according to media reporting.¹⁴²

During the quarter, the Taliban barred the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights, Richard Bennett, from entering Afghanistan, media reported.¹⁴³ In a joint statement, the United States joined 11 UN Security Council members calling the Taliban ban on the Special Rapporteur “disturbing” and stating that Bennett had their “full support” to carry out his mandate. Russia and the PRC did not support the joint statement.¹⁴⁴

Enduring Welcome

Enduring Welcome (EW) is a whole-of-government effort to relocate and resettle eligible Afghan allies and their families from Afghanistan. The previous interagency effort to relocate Afghan allies, Operation Allies Welcome, formally ended on September 30, 2022, and was replaced with EW.¹⁴⁵

Congress established the EW administrative expenses account at State to increase oversight and accountability of funds appropriated or otherwise made available to State for EW program expenses. It provides for relocation and related support of at-risk individuals as a result of the situation in Afghanistan, including travel and other related expenditures.¹⁴⁶ State reported that it obligated \$800 million for EW expenses during the quarter, reducing available funds to \$1.4 billion as of September 30.¹⁴⁷

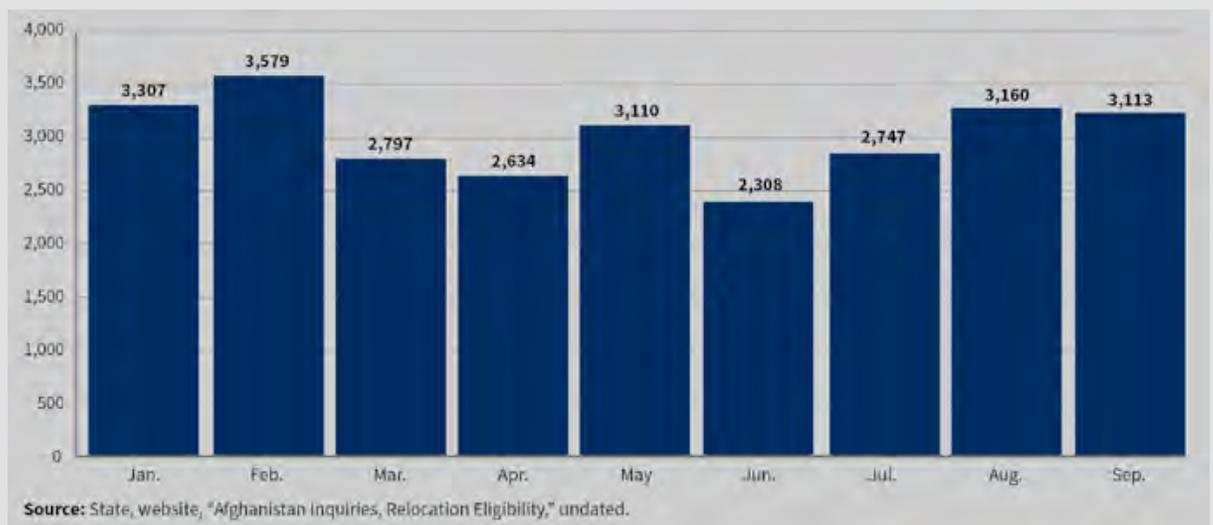
SPECIAL IMMIGRANT VISAS

State issued more than 33,000 SIVs in FY 2024, including more than 9,000 during the quarter.¹⁴⁸ (See Figure 2.) State reported that it was able to increase Chief of Mission processing—the first step in the Afghan SIV process—during the quarter in part due to increased coordination with U.S. Government partners to verify applicants' required letters of employment and recommendations. This collaboration led to streamlined processing in approximately 2,000 cases. State said the Afghan SIV unit routinely met its weekly benchmark of 800 Chief of Mission case completions.¹⁴⁹

During the quarter, to improve SIV application review, State stood up a dedicated team to review Chief of Mission cases that lack a letter of employment and/or recommendation. Although in the initial stages, State said that the team, which requires significant time and resources, will help to more efficiently process several thousand pending cases. State also reported that it signed an information-sharing agreement with the DoD to automate case information sharing between the two agencies.¹⁵⁰ State reported that by the end of FY 2024, the number of Chief of Mission decisions had increased by more than 50 percent compared to the previous year.¹⁵¹

Figure 2.

Special Immigrant Visa Issuances, January–September 2024



State also said that its Afghan SIV Unit fully automated the transfer of decisions between case processing systems.¹⁵² This shift toward automation eliminated the previous labor-intensive manual case management system. State also incorporated several additional steps to ensure accuracy.¹⁵³

During the quarter, State OIG completed an evaluation of State’s accounting, screening, and vetting of Afghan evacuees.¹⁵⁴ (See page 52.)

PROCESSING CENTERS

State’s Office of the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts (CARE) handles the planning and logistics of relocating eligible Afghans—including those who qualify for Special Immigrant Visas as well as Immigrant Visas and approved U.S. Refugee Assistance Program cases—on flights or by ground transportation to processing sites.¹⁵⁵

State told Congress that in FY 2025 it plans to continue to process and support the United States’ Afghan allies at several overseas locations: Doha, Qatar; Tirana, Albania; and Pakistan. According to State the CARE Doha processing site (previously called Camp as-Sayliyah) in Qatar continues to serve as the primary overseas platform for processing applications for individuals relocated from Afghanistan.¹⁵⁶

During the quarter, State announced that the United States and the Philippines reached an agreement to allow a limited number of Afghan nationals to transit to the Philippines to complete their SIV processing and resettlement to the United States. State said that the U.S. Government will support necessary services including food, housing, security, medical, and transportation for those Afghans temporarily in the Philippines to complete visa processing.¹⁵⁷

REFUGEES

The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) stated that it continued to expand Afghan refugee processing of all priority categories in countries worldwide.¹⁵⁸ As of August 27, USCIS had initially interviewed approximately 24,980 Afghan refugee applicants in 47 countries in FY 2024.¹⁵⁹ During the same period, 12,231 Afghan refugees arrived in the United States.¹⁶⁰

USCIS stated that it continues to prioritize OAW-related asylum applications while handling surges of credible fear referrals at the Southwest border.¹⁶¹ From July 1 to August 27, USCIS received 154 applications for asylum from Afghan nationals and completed 268 OAW asylum cases.¹⁶²

The DHS Office of Biometric Identity Management did not biometrically match to any of the Afghan Automated Biometrics Information System latent fingerprints (fingerprints not associated with a known identity) this quarter.¹⁶³ DHS and DoD automated biometric identification systems share allowable information with each other related to DHS and DoD enrollments.¹⁶⁴

The DHS stated that it was not aware of any violent extremist organization (VEO) intent or efforts to affect or infiltrate ongoing U.S. and coalition efforts to relocate American, Afghan, or other friendly personnel from Afghanistan during the quarter.¹⁶⁵

Table 2.

Chief of Mission Decisions by Fiscal Year

FY 2021	9,578
FY 2022	21,486
FY 2023	26,121
FY 2024	40,366

Source: State NEA-SCA/EX, response to State OIG request for information, 10/15/2024; State NEA/SCA-ASIV vetting comment, 11/5/2024.

TALIBAN ACTIVITY

Taliban Bans Religious Debates, Forbids “Non-Islamic” Ceremonies

State said that Emir Haibatullah Akhundzada continued to dominate Taliban decision-making. Akhundzada became the supreme leader of the Taliban in May 2016 and has authority over political, military, and religious affairs. The Taliban has now centralized governance, with decisions often made directly by Akhundzada, who resides in Kandahar.¹⁶⁶

State also reported that Taliban Prime Minister Akhund, Deputy Prime Minister Baradar, Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani, and Chief Justice Abdul Hakim Haqqani appeared to influence decision making by Akhundzada. Ulema, or religious councils, and local governments also play a role shaping the Taliban policies. Akhundzada periodically summons Taliban ministers to Kandahar for meetings.¹⁶⁷ During the quarter, Akhundzada traveled outside of Kandahar to northern Afghanistan where he called on local officials to enforce the new morality edict imposing severe restrictions on women and men, according to a media report.¹⁶⁸

In late September, the Taliban announced a ban on religious debates aimed at scholars critical of Taliban policies and warned that religious scholars should not raise religious issues in public forums, especially the media. The ban followed increasing tensions between the Taliban and scholars over the recent morality edict, which included declaring female voices “Awrah” (forbidden in public).¹⁶⁹

Minorities have never enjoyed full protection of their human rights by the Taliban—in particular, religious minorities. The new morality edict further restricts the rights of religious minorities, including by forbidding “non-Islamic” ceremonies, State said.¹⁷⁰

Taliban Announces Further Media Restrictions

State reported that Afghanistan under the Taliban has regressed into one of the world’s most restrictive environments for journalists and members of the media. The Taliban has shut down dozens of media outlets and routinely subjects reporters and media workers to intimidation and imprisonment. As a result, hundreds of journalists have fled the country. The few media outlets still in operation face severe restrictions, particularly regarding coverage of issues that may reflect unfavorably on the Taliban, such as human rights and corruption, State said.¹⁷¹

At the end of the quarter, the Taliban further restricted media freedoms, severely limiting acceptable topics and people who may be interviewed. The announcement contrasted sharply with earlier assurances the Taliban gave that media would be exempt from the morality law, media reported.¹⁷²

On September 21, the Taliban Ministry of Information and Culture introduced an eight-point set of restrictions on media in Afghanistan during a meeting with managers of several media outlets in Kabul. (See Table 3.) The Ministry also provided a list of 68 pre-approved individuals (including two women) with whom media organizations may conduct interviews. If a news program requires a guest outside this list, it must first submit the person’s name and details for approval.¹⁷³

Table 3.

The “Eight-point” Guidelines Regulating the Afghan Media

1. Political programs featuring discussions or debates should be pre-recorded, not broadcast live.
2. Experts and panelists must be invited according to the prescribed list; inviting anyone whose name is not included on the list is forbidden.
3. Media organizations must seek Ministry approval to invite someone whose name is not on the list.
4. Every morning, media organizations must submit a list of programs and notional guests for political debates to the Ministry’s Directorate of Media Supervision; organizations can only record and air a program after receiving approval.
5. It is prohibited to challenge Taliban officials or challenge the Taliban’s regulations, policies, and decisions.
6. The media manager, media outlet, program host, and editor of pre-recorded programs are required to remove weak points, sensitive topics, and criticisms of the “Islamic Emirate” (Taliban) and its officials.
7. In cases of violations of the above points, the media head, publication manager, program host, editor, and political expert (guest of the program) will be considered violators and will face consequences.
8. Media violations will be compensated in media form.

Source: Afghanistan Journalists Center, press release, “Taliban Imposes Stricter Regulations on Afghan Media, Raising Concerns Over Press Freedom,” 9/23/2024.

Taliban Seeks Greater Diplomatic Reach

While no country has formally announced that it recognizes the Taliban as Afghanistan’s government, several countries have accepted Taliban-appointed ambassadors or diplomatic representatives.¹⁷⁴ The Taliban reportedly claimed diplomatic representation in more than 36 cities in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.¹⁷⁵ The Taliban continued to expand diplomatic reach to take control of more of Afghanistan’s embassies and consulates overseas, announcing in September that it reopened an embassy in Muscat, Oman.¹⁷⁶ Also during the quarter, the United Arab Emirates accepted a Taliban-appointed ambassador but has not formally recognized the Taliban, State said.¹⁷⁷ In August, UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan visited Afghan Prime Minister Akhund in an Abu Dhabi hospital where he was receiving treatment, media reported.¹⁷⁸

In July, host governments closed several Afghanistan missions in Europe, Australia, and Canada, withdrawing recognition from missions established by previous governments.¹⁷⁹ Media reported that the British foreign office summoned Afghanistan’s former ambassador to the United Kingdom and asked him to close the Afghan embassy within 20 days. The former ambassador announced that the embassy would close and cease operations on September 27. Embassy personnel had 90 days to decide whether to leave the United Kingdom or stay and claim asylum, according to a news report.¹⁸⁰

During the quarter, Central Asian countries took steps to broaden relations with the Taliban, despite their increasingly restrictive policies. Kyrgyzstan removed the Taliban from its list of terrorist organizations earlier this month, Turkmenistan resumed work with Afghanistan on a major gas-pipeline project, and Uzbekistan signed \$2.5 billion worth of cooperation

agreements with Kabul during the Uzbek prime minister’s high-profile visit to Afghanistan in August, media reported.¹⁸¹ Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan all accepted Taliban-appointed diplomatic representatives in 2024, but without granting formal recognition. Other Central Asian countries continue to host officials appointed by the Ashraf Ghani administration.¹⁸²

Some UN Security Council Members Encourage Easing of Restrictions, Sanctions on Taliban

At the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan’s (UNAMA) quarterly briefing to the UN Security Council on September 18, eight countries encouraged easing restrictions on the Taliban. India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, the PRC, Russia, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan each encouraged increasing trade, lifting sanctions, and unfreezing assets for the Taliban, highlighting joint infrastructure projects on energy, rail, and communications. Most still raised human rights concerns but claimed development and normalization of relations would lead to progress on human rights. The PRC specifically called for changes to the 1988 sanctions regime.¹⁸³

State reported that the travel ban measure of the 1988 sanctions regime requires member states hosting sanctioned individuals to request an exemption request to the 1988 Sanctions Committee. This requirement may dissuade some member states from hosting sanctioned individuals and thus limit the travel of sanctioned Taliban leaders. Exemption requests are confidential to the 1988 Sanctions Committee; however, approved exemptions in effect are posted on the UN website.¹⁸⁴ (See Table 4.)

Table 4.

UN Security Council Committee Travel Ban Exemptions for September 2024

September 27	Approved a travel ban exemption and a related assets freeze exemption for Hamidullah Akhund Sher Mohammad (Taliban civil aviation and transport minister) to travel to Türkiye to participate in a meeting hosted by the Turkish Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure from October 1-5, 2024.
September 25	Approved a travel ban exemption for Gul Agha Ishakzai (Taliban finance minister) to travel to Moscow in September 2024 to attend the International Forum “Russian Energy Week.”
September 23	Approved a travel ban exemption for Abdul Latif Mansur (Taliban water and power minister) to travel to Moscow in September 2024 to attend the International Forum “Russian Energy Week.”
September 13	Approved a travel ban exemption and a related assets freeze exemption for Mohammad Essa Akhund (Taliban minerals and petroleum minister) to travel to Istanbul, Türkiye, from September 15 to 30, 2024, for medical treatment.

Source: UN Security Council, “Travel Exemptions in Effect,” website, undated; Counter Extremism Project, website, undated.

At the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan’s quarterly briefing to the UN Security Council on September 18, eight countries encouraged easing restrictions on the Taliban.

New Morality Edict Could Affect Humanitarian Assistance

On August 21, the Taliban issued a new morality edict to govern personal conduct. The edict includes a requirement that women wear clothing that covers their entire body, bans their voices being heard in public, and further restricts their movement without a male relative. The edict also requires men to grow beards, bans drivers from playing music, and restricts the media from publishing images of people. The Taliban Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice enforces this edict through verbal warnings, confiscation of property, and confinement.¹⁸⁵

The severe restrictions on girls' and women's rights to education, work, and earned income further exacerbated poverty and inequality among Afghan women, preventing the progress and development of the entire country, the UN reported.¹⁸⁶ In a July 2024 report, UNAMA described how the Taliban Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice was already responsible for several human rights violations in relation to women's rights.¹⁸⁷ In a September report, UNAMA noted that the Taliban is party to international human rights instruments and is therefore legally obliged to protect and promote the human rights of women, men, girls, and boys living in the country and to rescind restrictions that impede the enjoyment of human rights.¹⁸⁸

Nearly every speaker at UNAMA's quarterly briefing to the UN Security Council condemned the Taliban "vice and virtue" edict, including those from the PRC and Iran, State reported. Speakers, including UN-Women Executive Director Sima Sami Bahous, almost universally spoke against the edict, which further restricts women's participation in public life. Pakistan condemned it as a "warped interpretation of Islam" and blamed the Taliban for "doubling down" on misogyny.¹⁸⁹ The U.S. representative to the UN said that the rapidly deteriorating human rights situation in Afghanistan "increasingly raised questions on the merits of engaging the Taliban."¹⁹⁰

While enforcement of the new morality edict is not yet widespread, civil society and human rights activists say the new edict has increased fear and uncertainty among Afghans throughout the country. Humanitarian partners fear the edict could further limit women's access to assistance, further hinder aid agencies' ability to deliver principled assistance, worsen the country's mental health crisis, and lead to additional emigration.¹⁹¹

State said that the impact of the Taliban edict on women and girls remains high and is a significant concern and focus of State oversight efforts. Some female humanitarian staff continue to work from home, via telephone, or in other home-work situations, limiting their face-to-face interactions with program participants. Moreover, community engagement, protection activities, and related services for women and girls, including survivors of gender-based violence, remain severely affected by the ban. State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (State PRM) partners continue to negotiate with Taliban contacts and to modify project activities and challenge the edict to ensure the most vulnerable Afghans continue to receive the life-saving humanitarian assistance they need.¹⁹²

As of September 13, USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) partners had not reported any direct impacts on their staff or activities, likely due to the 40-day adjustment period provided.¹⁹³ However, they reported that the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice had made more visits to inspect office locations and activities.¹⁹⁴ USAID further noted that

(continued on next page)

New Morality Edict Could Affect Humanitarian Assistance

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the edict threatens to silence female voices and restrict independent media, impacting USAID programs such as the Afghanistan Support Program and Information, Dialogue, and Rights in Afghanistan.¹⁹⁵

In the health sector, the new edict has been enforced selectively, according to USAID.¹⁹⁶ For example, one of USAID’s health implementers conducted a rapid analysis to assess the impact of the newly enacted Taliban laws on health programs.¹⁹⁷ In general, provincial cities face no major social restrictions, with most enforcement directed at the district level.¹⁹⁸ In provincial cities, women without a “mahram” (male escort) are permitted to visit clinics and shops, and use local transport within city limits.¹⁹⁹

For health programs at the district level, health clinics maintain separate waiting areas for men and women, typically divided by a curtain or wall, and women must be accompanied by a mahram up to the clinic’s entrance.²⁰⁰ Once inside, no restrictions prevent women from being examined by male doctors or health workers, though gynecological issues are handled by female health care providers, in line with longstanding cultural norms in Afghanistan.²⁰¹

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

The U.S. Government’s humanitarian objectives in Afghanistan are to promote a principled humanitarian response that advocates for the independence of humanitarian partners in facilitating aid; to support and provide protection assistance to vulnerable Afghans, including women and girls; and to improve available protection and health assistance to support the living conditions of Afghan internally displaced persons (IDP), refugees, returnees, and new Afghan arrivals in neighboring countries, particularly women and girls, according to State.²⁰²

State said that humanitarian needs in Afghanistan have risen significantly since the Taliban took over on August 15, 2021. The key drivers of needs include climate stress and natural disasters, economic deterioration, and worsening protection issues amid increasing Taliban restrictions on women and girls, compounded by Taliban attempts to interfere in the delivery of aid.²⁰³

The U.S. Government remains the largest humanitarian donor to the Afghanistan Response, providing more than \$697 million in humanitarian assistance in FY 2024, including nearly \$535 million in USAID BHA assistance and more than \$162 million in State PRM support.²⁰⁴ U.S. Government humanitarian funding for the Afghanistan response is depicted in Table 5.

Donor funding does not meet humanitarian need. The United Nations reported that as of August 30, the Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan for 2024 had received \$762.4 million, or 24.9 percent, of the required \$3.06 billion in funding.²⁰⁵ This was an improvement over the previous quarter, when the 2024 plan received only 16.2 percent of the required funding but was still a significant shortfall.²⁰⁶ USAID humanitarian assistance funding by sector is depicted in Figure 3.

Table 5.

U.S. Government Humanitarian Funding for the Afghanistan Response in FY 2024

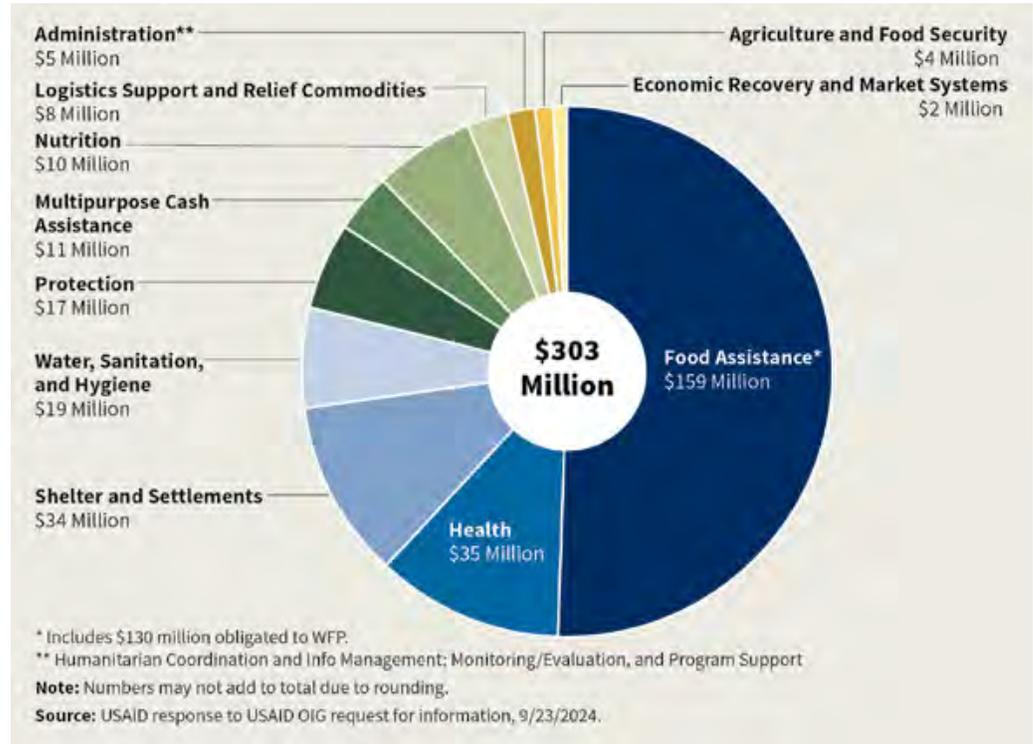
USAID BHA	\$534,719,064
State PRM	\$162,299,944
TOTAL	\$697,019,008

Note: Funds committed or obligated in FY 2024.

Source: USAID, “Afghanistan–Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #4,” 9/30/2024.

Figure 3.

USAID Humanitarian Assistance Funding by Sector, FY 2024



Humanitarian actors continued to face challenges in providing assistance, with Taliban interference being the primary obstacle, according to OCHA’s July access report.²⁰⁷ Incidents such as attempts to influence beneficiary selection, procurement, and recruitment, delays in signing Memorandums of Understanding, and pressure to share sensitive beneficiary and staff data accounted for 77 of the 106 reported access incidents during the month.²⁰⁸

Food Security Needs Remain High in Afghanistan

Approximately 12.4 million people are acutely food insecure in Afghanistan, according to the UN World Food Programme (WFP). This represents a decline from the same period in 2023, when 15.3 million people were acutely food insecure.²⁰⁹ Overall improvements were driven by the scale of humanitarian food and emergency agricultural assistance and the improved harvest in 2023. However, Afghanistan still faces high levels of food insecurity. In 2024, approximately 4 million malnourished children and pregnant and breastfeeding women require services for acute malnutrition, while almost 3 million children and 1 million pregnant and breastfeeding women require targeted supplementary feeding to prevent acute malnutrition.²¹⁰

The U.S. Government provides essential emergency food assistance in Afghanistan through cash transfers, food vouchers, and in-kind aid to vulnerable populations.²¹¹ In April, USAID BHA helped the WFP reach 2.5 million people with food support.²¹² Additionally, USAID

Farmer Field Schools support the implementation of good agricultural practices, including line sowing techniques for wheat seed distribution. (USAID photo)



BHA-funded international NGOs distribute seeds and livestock feed in food-insecure areas to strengthen household resilience alongside food and other aid. Additionally, USAID BHA-backed international NGOs distribute seeds and livestock feed in food-insecure areas to strengthen household resilience alongside food and other aid. The WFP received \$130 million from USAID BHA during the quarter and \$280 million during FY 2024.²¹³ In April, USAID BHA helped the WFP reach 2.5 million people with food support.²¹⁴ Additionally, USAID BHA-backed international NGOs distribute seeds and livestock feed in food-insecure areas to strengthen household resilience alongside food and other aid.²¹⁵

Natural Disasters Continue to Cause Challenges and Displacements

Heavy rainfall from July 15 to 16, along with flash flooding, and windstorms, impacted approximately 4,300 people and caused at least 129 deaths across 20 districts in Badakhshan, Baghlan, Ghazni, Kabul, Kunar, Kapisa, Laghman, and Nangarhar provinces, according to an assessment from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), as of July 22.²¹⁶ The floods damaged or destroyed agricultural land, infrastructure, and private property, including at least 800 houses and food supplies for more than 600 households.²¹⁷ Additionally, approximately 550 tents and water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities in Nangarhar's Omari camp, where Afghan returnees from Pakistan are sheltering, were damaged.²¹⁸ A USAID BHA partner reported that a returnee reception center at Torkham was also affected. However, IOM's assistance for returnees continued uninterrupted.²¹⁹ Those living in the open or in temporary shelters face heightened health and protection risks.²²⁰

In response to the floods, a USAID BHA funded NGO co-led the emergency health response delivering supplies to static health facilities and providing health and nutrition services through mobile teams.²²¹ With support from USAID BHA and other donors, IOM disinfected 10 water sources in Kunar and 8 in Laghman, provided primary health care to approximately 350 people, and offered mental health and psychosocial support to nearly 130 individuals in Nangarhar's Surkh Rod district.²²² IOM also transported 400 emergency shelter kits and tents to affected areas.²²³ Additionally, the WFP distributed food assistance to flood-affected households in Badakhshan, Baghlan, and Nangarhar, while United Nations Children's Fund delivered chlorine, hygiene kits, water purification tablets, and water testing kits to other organizations.²²⁴

The UN Continues Cash Transfers for Humanitarian Aid

The August 2024 World Bank Afghanistan Economic Monitor stated that despite a widening trade deficit the afghani, the official currency of Afghanistan, remained stable against the U.S. dollar. The stability of the exchange rate suggested a balanced foreign exchange market, likely supported by increased remittances and cash shipments, which helped mitigate the pressure from the growing trade deficit. Additionally, regular foreign exchange auctions conducted by the Central Bank of Afghanistan have played a significant role in maintaining exchange rate stability.²²⁵

According to a June 2024 think tank report the United Nations has transported several billion U.S. dollars in cash into Afghanistan to fund humanitarian aid. As of 2024, UN cash shipments remained a critical lifeline for an estimated 23.7 million people at risk in a nation of 41 million. The country's modest degree of economic stabilization since 2021 is due in large part to the inflow of these funds, which total more than \$2.9 billion since the Taliban takeover. UNAMA coordinates physical shipments of cash to be delivered to various UN agencies and UN-partnered international NGOs operating in Afghanistan. The funds are used to pay staff salaries and procure food and supplies, including covering the costs of imports.²²⁶

Mental and Health Services Receive Continued Humanitarian Assistance Support

In late July, the Kandahar Provincial Public Health Department temporarily suspended mental health and psychosocial support services at all provincial health facilities, due to confusion between these activities and efforts focused on gender-based violence.²²⁷ By September 2, the Taliban extended the suspension to health facilities in Helmand province, according to a USAID BHA NGO partner.²²⁸ While some humanitarian actors continue to provide mental health and psychosocial support services in both provinces, prolonged suspensions could significantly limit the ability to address specialized mental health and psychosocial needs.²²⁹

The U.S. Government financially supports UN and international NGO partners in delivering critical health services across Afghanistan, enhancing access to care for displaced individuals, host communities, and populations affected by conflict and other crises.²³⁰ U.S. assistance funds clinics and mobile health teams for emergency and primary care, local volunteer training, essential medicine provision, and vaccination campaigns.²³¹ Additionally, U.S. funding aids the World Health Organization in coordinating emergency health responses, sustaining essential health services, and ensuring the supply of vital health commodities in Afghanistan.²³²

Violence Causes Road Closures and Affects Humanitarian Assistance Staff

Armed clashes between Afghan security forces and Pakistan border forces occurred at the Torkham border crossing in Nangarhar Province on August 12, leading to a 3-day closure.²³³ This temporarily delayed the transport of humanitarian food supplies into Afghanistan and halted relief services for returnees.²³⁴ However, USAID BHA partners have not reported any significant disruptions to operations since the reopening of the border.²³⁵

In July, at least six incidents of violence against humanitarian personnel, assets, and facilities were reported, including both physical violence and threats, according to the latest humanitarian access data from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).²³⁶ In total, OCHA documented 14 incidents of violence against humanitarian actors during the previous quarter, averaging approximately five incidents per month.²³⁷ Several USAID BHA-funded implementer staff have been detained for periods of time ranging from hours to days.²³⁸

The U.S. Government provides protection support for IDPs, refugees, returnees, and other vulnerable groups in Afghanistan.²³⁹ Services include mental health and psychosocial support, individual counseling, skills-building activities, and safe spaces for children, along with child protection, family services, and legal assistance for returning refugees.²⁴⁰ With USAID BHA support, the UN Population Fund and its NGO sub-awardees reached nearly 114,200 individuals with critical assistance—including essential health services, psychosocial support, and vocational training—through 23 maternal and child health centers across 15 provinces between July 1 and September 30.²⁴¹

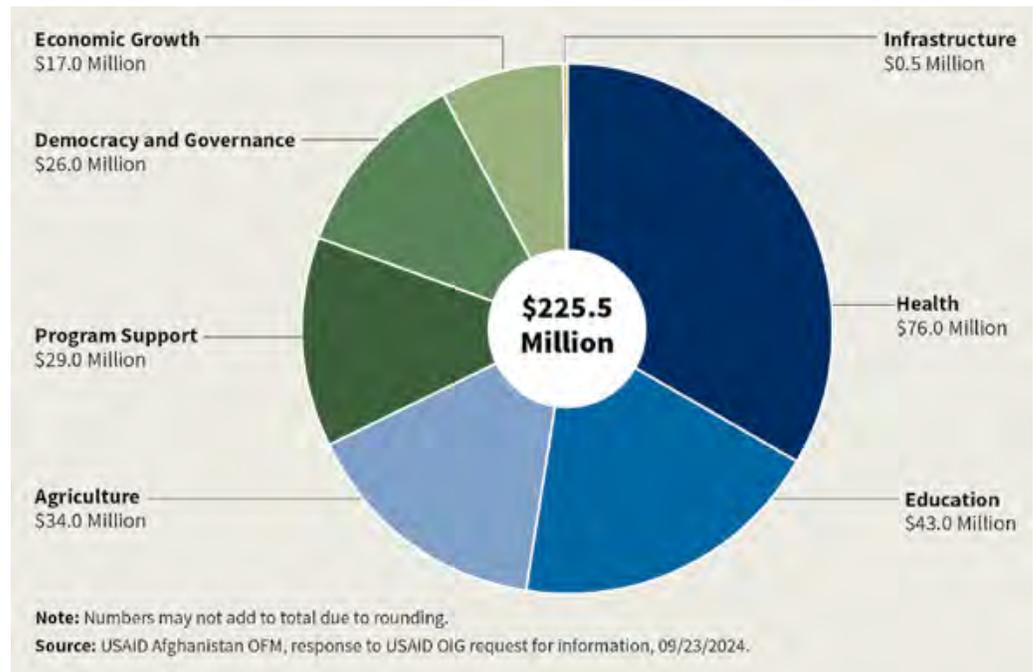
Monitoring and Oversight of Department of State-funded Humanitarian Programs

State PRM continued to focus on balancing its monitoring and information requirement needs against the risks of pressuring partners to adopt high-risk practices to meet program objectives. State PRM leveraged desk monitoring and site visit feedback by State PRM's third-party monitor to track program progress and compare performance over time. State PRM also monitored partners' compliance with minimum standard criteria and enhanced monitoring mechanisms the UN Humanitarian Country Team developed following missions to Afghanistan by UN leadership in early 2023. State PRM continued to advise partners to avoid practices that normalize lower-quality working conditions and assistance, such as replacing female staff with male staff to continue activities that only men can benefit from; using male staff or relying only on remote methods to target and monitor female beneficiaries; or pressuring partners to implement programs where activities do not fall within their humanitarian principle and policies.²⁴²

Since December 2015, State PRM has maintained a third-party monitoring contract to conduct on-site monitoring to supplement increased desk reviews and regular phone consultations with program partners. The third-party monitors oversee State PRM programs, and the site visit reports provide valuable information through onsite verification and monitoring of activities. From July 2023 to July 2024, the third-party monitor conducted 30 site visits to State PRM-funded projects, which represents a 50 percent increase in site visits compared to from July 2022 to July 2023. State PRM worked diligently with the third-party monitor to plan site visits regionally, which allowed for additional site visits to State PRM-funded activities.²⁴³

In July, at least six incidents of violence against humanitarian personnel, assets, and facilities were reported, including both physical violence and threats, according to the latest humanitarian access data from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Figure 4.

USAID Development Funding by Sector, FY 2024

DEVELOPMENT

USAID funded 23 active awards during the quarter totaling \$1.2 billion.²⁴⁴ Total funds obligated in FY 2024 for development were \$225 million, with \$165 million in total funds disbursed.²⁴⁵ Of the obligated amount, \$91 million were funds appropriated from FY 2012 to FY 2016.²⁴⁶ The total of unobligated (pipeline) funding remaining at the end of the quarter was \$76 million.²⁴⁷ USAID development funding by sector is depicted in Figure 4.

USAID Unable to Conduct Traditional Oversight Site Visits

USAID staff were not able to conduct site visits in Afghanistan during the quarter.²⁴⁸ To provide oversight of its programs, USAID Afghanistan continued to use third-party monitoring for onsite review.²⁴⁹ USAID conducted two virtual site visits during the quarter, meeting with farmers in Bagram district, Parwan province for its Strengthening Rural Livelihoods and Food Security program and viewing a training session and meeting with entrepreneurs for its Afghanistan Value Chains Program Entrepreneurship and Business Incubation Camp.²⁵⁰ USAID Afghanistan's third party monitor temporarily suspended field monitoring from June 7 to July 7 due to safety concerns after subcontractor staff were detained.²⁵¹ The third party monitor expanded its use of subcontractors in order to ensure continuation of monitoring services.²⁵²

Table 6.

USAID Afghanistan Awards Eligible for Third-Party Monitoring

Award	Total Award Amount
Not Covered by Third-Party Monitoring	
Accessible and Quality Basic Education	\$79,249,987
Rural WASH	35,841,332
Support for Essential Services for Afghan Women and Girls	30,000,000
WHO Polio and Immunization Grant II: Polio Eradication Surveillance and Response (Field Support)	21,500,000
Information, Dialogue and Rights in Afghanistan (IDR)	14,079,528
Local Health System Sustainability (LHSS)	8,000,000
Young Women Lead	4,935,797
TOTAL NOT COVERED BY THIRD-PARTY MONITORING	\$193,606,644
Covered by Third-Party Monitoring	
Afghanistan Competitiveness of Export-Oriented Businesses Activity (ACEBA)	\$105,722,822
Assistance for Families and Indigent Afghans to Thrive (AFIAT)	117,000,000
Urban Health Initiative (UHI)	104,000,000
Afghan Value Chain-Program (AVC-P)	75,672,170
Women's Scholarship Endowment (WSE)	60,000,000
Supporting Transformation for Afghanistan's Recovery (STAR)	28,338,901
Supporting Student Success in Afghanistan (SSSA)	27,284,620
Afghanistan Support Project (ASP)	25,884,633
Exports, Jobs, and Market Linkages in the Carpet and Jewelry Value Chains	14,935,752
TOTAL COVERED BY THIRD-PARTY MONITORING	\$543,903,146

Source: USAID Afghanistan OFM, response to USAID OIG request for information, 9/23/2024.

Afghanistan's Economy Lacks Drivers for Sustained Growth

The lack of credit and capital, limited technical knowledge, climate change impacts, and limitations on the full and open participation of women in Afghanistan's political, social, and economic life are critical issues in the agriculture and service sectors, according to USAID.²⁵³ The lack of credit and capital is a key barrier to firm-level growth and expansion.²⁵⁴ Formal financial institutions struggle to remain operational and credit flows to the agricultural sector and small and medium enterprises have nearly dried up.²⁵⁵

According to the World Bank's August 2024 Afghanistan Economic Monitor, the Afghan economy remained stable yet significantly contracted since 2021. The World Bank said that

According to the World Bank, from January to July 2024, Afghanistan's total exports fell to \$805 million, an 11 percent decline compared to the same period in 2023.

since August 2021, Afghanistan's economy lost a quarter of its value. The economy stands at approximately \$15 billion, down from \$20 billion before the takeover. This downturn has impacted economic activities linked to military spending and the aid-driven service sector, thereby exacerbating the country's structural constraints linked to poor physical infrastructure, human capital, and vulnerability to shocks.²⁵⁶

Of note was the country's growing trade deficit. According to the World Bank, from January to July 2024, Afghanistan's total exports fell to \$805 million, an 11 percent decline compared to the same period in 2023. This decline was driven largely by reductions in Pakistani imports of Afghan goods, including coal and dry fruits. The afghani remained stable, largely due to remittances and cash shipments, though this will continue to make Afghan exports less appealing due to costs, State said.²⁵⁷

The World Bank also reported that in July 2024 Afghanistan continued to face deflation as prices declined 6.6 percent compared to July 2023. This decrease was primarily caused by a significant drop in food prices. From January to July 2024, Afghanistan's total exports fell, largely due to shifting trade relations with Pakistan. Despite the decline in exports, Pakistan remained Afghanistan's largest export market, accounting for 47 percent of total exports, followed by India at 27 percent. Iran has also emerged as a significant new market. At the same time, imports surged from January to July 2024 compared to the same period in 2023. Iran emerged as the largest source of imports, accounting for 30 percent of total imports, which the World Bank attributed to Afghanistan's shift in transit trade routes to Iran following Pakistan's border restrictions.²⁵⁸ According to UNAMA, on June 10 the Taliban reported the existence of trade relations with 80 countries.²⁵⁹ While the Taliban took steps to strengthen the banking sector, regulate money markets, and develop microfinance regulations and Islamic financing instruments, the banking sector remained severely constrained.²⁶⁰

USAID Programs Seek to Promote Economic Growth

Agriculture: USAID worked with firms to set up or expand farmer credit schemes to promote positive relationships between firms and farmers while pushing out credit to the most vulnerable Afghans.²⁶¹ USAID reported that its activities in the agriculture sector promoted the use of modern technologies.²⁶² USAID reported that its activities also supported building a network of Afghan women in agriculture.²⁶³ Household income from agriculture in target areas also increased by 19 percent over 5 years, although the implementer noted that it was difficult to state how durable this was.²⁶⁴ Positive results were also indicated by increased production in agriculture for key products, increased value in annual sales of farms and firms receiving U.S. Government assistance, an increased number of full-time equivalent jobs created with U.S. Government assistance, and an increased value of new U.S. Government commitments and private sector investment leveraged by the U.S. Government to support food security and nutrition.²⁶⁵

Business growth: USAID programs provided nearly \$4 million in interest-free returnable working capital advances to assist 58 companies (22 women-owned) in purchasing raw materials, paying salaries, and sustaining other operational costs.²⁶⁶ Another USAID activity implemented an apprenticeship program to provide individuals with marketable skills to earn a livelihood, provide skilled labor for businesses, and address challenges with labor costs.²⁶⁷

Carpet value chain: USAID provided grants to establish or expand carpet production facilities to allow companies to increase the availability of inputs, reduce costs, boost carpet production, and finish the carpets inside Afghanistan while creating livelihood opportunities.²⁶⁸ USAID reported its activities supported women weavers in the carpet sector.²⁶⁹ Surveys conducted by a USAID implementer revealed notable positive impacts. Host companies were employing apprentices upon completion of their training, allowing them to continue working in their respective roles. Trained carpet weavers experienced an increase in orders for home-based weaving, while wool spinners reported higher demand for their services and opportunities for employment in spinning centers. Additionally, herders reported improved herd health, increased survival rates among their animals, and higher income generated from the production of cashmere.²⁷⁰

Climate change: Afghanistan is the sixth most vulnerable country in the world to the effects of climate change, according to USAID, with impacts on the agricultural sector ranging from water scarcity to rangelands, to shifting snow melt patterns which feed irrigation systems.²⁷¹ USAID reported promoting the expansion of solar power systems to replace off-grid fuel powered generators, improving irrigation canals and soil health, implementing smart agricultural practices, and the development of vermiculture and other composting methods.²⁷²

USAID reported on several challenges to implementing these programs.²⁷³ Restrictions on the open and full participation of women in daily economic, social, and political life of Afghanistan persisted and, in some cases, women employees continued to work from home and were still awaiting permission to return to USAID implementer project offices. High-quality agricultural goods and commodities are also difficult to procure.²⁷⁴ Imports are extremely expensive and domestic products do not yet meet the quality standards for USAID projects.²⁷⁵

To address the limitations on women's full and open participation in different aspects of life in Afghanistan, USAID identified several methodologies to continue and increase its engagement with women in targeted sectors.²⁷⁶ Its activities focused on placing women in apprenticeships within willing private sector firms to learn new skills, supporting women at home through kitchen gardens, and designing activities and support mechanisms for women-run firms.²⁷⁷

USAID Implementer Staff Face Taliban Harassment

Although USAID did not see a notable change in violence against aid workers compared to last quarter. However, USAID reported that its program implementers had been detained and harassed by the Taliban during the quarter, including for reasons of employment of women. USAID also observed detentions of implementer staff operating without memorandums of understanding. Harassment and detentions of individuals working in sectors such as rights, media, and psychosocial particularly increased. In one case, employees of a USAID-funded subcontractor were sentenced to prison terms.

Afghan Fund Update

Assets in the Fund for the Afghan People (Afghan Fund) reached \$3.84 billion at the end of June 2024 due to investment gains.²⁷⁸

In a statement following the Afghan Fund’s June 28 Board meeting, the Board of Trustees announced that it remained “open to disburse funds for arrears clearance to the Asian Development Bank” intended to address Afghanistan’s outstanding arrears. However, as of September 30, State said that it was not aware of any disbursement of funds.²⁷⁹

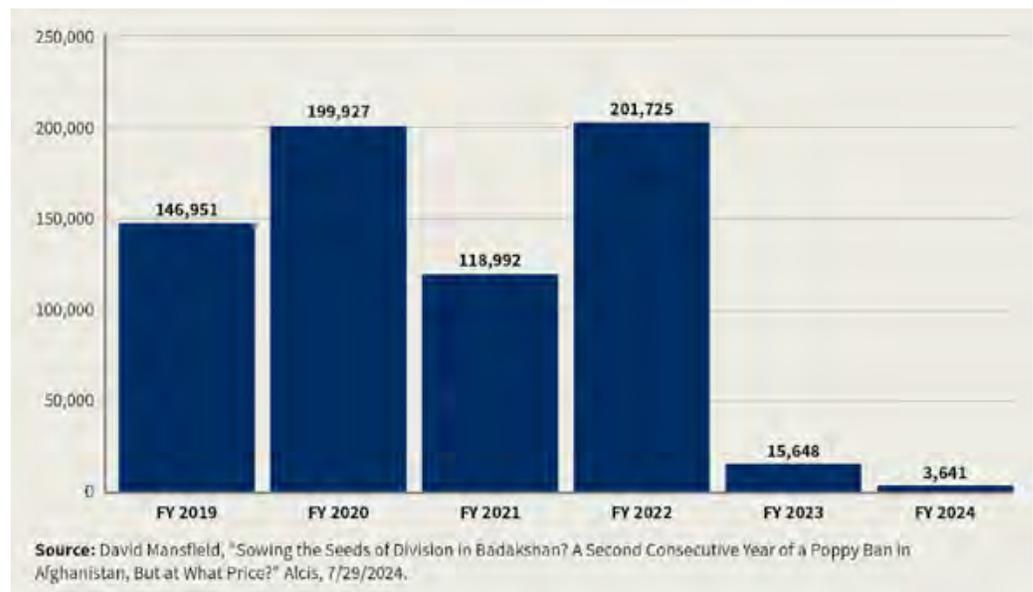
On September 6, the Afghan Fund’s Board of Trustees announced the renewal of the Afghan Fund’s entire four-person Board membership for an additional 2 years.²⁸⁰

State Commits New Funding to Strengthen Rural, Licit Economies in Afghanistan

Now in the second year of its poppy ban, Afghanistan continued to encounter challenges implementing and maintaining the ban. According to agricultural experts, long-term success depends on overcoming resistance from local communities and ensuring that alternative livelihoods are provided to farmers.²⁸¹ As of July 22, agricultural mapping of 14 out of 34 provinces—where 92 percent of Afghanistan’s poppy was cultivated in 2022—showed that the area being used for poppy cultivation had decreased to less than 4,000 hectares from approximately 16,000 hectares in 2023.²⁸² (See Figure 5.)

Figure 5.

Estimates of Land Dedicated to Poppy in 14 Major Producer Provinces, 2019-2024, in Hectares



During the quarter, State’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (State INL) continued to fund counternarcotics projects in Afghanistan. State INL announced \$3 million in new funding to support the UN Development Program’s work in six provinces to enhance production of high-value crops, increase quality of post-harvest handling and processing of agricultural food products, and provide sustainable market access for smallholder farmers and agribusinesses to strengthen rural, licit economies.²⁸³ In September, State INL met with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC) Afghanistan Opium Survey team to discuss progress for this year’s opium cultivation survey, which is funded by State INL. UNODC completed satellite imagery analysis this quarter and is preparing to release the survey next quarter.²⁸⁴

State INL continued to monitor its counternarcotics programs through regular check-ins with implementers, quarterly reports, and third-party monitoring and impact assessment of select projects. One implementing partner reported that two partner NGO organizations (one of which is funded by State INL) were told by the Taliban Ministry of Economy to remove “women” from their organizations’ names. The implementing partner met with the NGOs to discuss a response. So far, the request has not impacted the NGOs’ ability to continue project activities.²⁸⁵

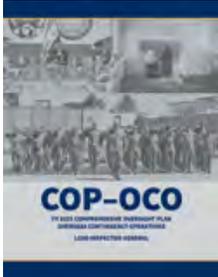
Taliban Did Not Interfere in Efforts to Clear Landmines and Other Explosive Remnants of War

In August, a landmine explosion in eastern Afghanistan killed four children and two teachers, media reported.²⁸⁶ Landmines and explosive remnants of war killed 292 Afghans—88 percent of them children—in the first half of 2024, OCHA reported. Afghanistan remains one of the most landmine-contaminated countries in the world, with an estimated 1.2 million square meters of land contaminated by mines, IEDs, and explosive remnants of war.²⁸⁷

During the quarter, State’s Conventional Weapons Destruction program for Afghanistan continued 11 humanitarian mine action projects valued at \$35.28 million. (See Table 8.) From 1997 until October 11, 2024, State-funded implementing partners cleared nearly 400 million square meters of land and removed or destroyed approximately 8.5 million landmines and other explosive remnants of war such as unexploded ordnance, abandoned ordnance, stockpiled or cached munitions, and homemade explosives.²⁸⁸

State’s Bureau of Political-Military Affairs’ Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (PM/WRA) said it continued to employ a third-party monitoring entity that provided weekly and monthly situation reports documenting monitoring and evaluation site visits of all U.S.-funded projects covering humanitarian demining, technical survey, information management of the Mine Action database, and victim assistance. State said weekly site visits identify operational non-conformities and ensure partner compliance with mine action standards. The Taliban did not interfere with State-funded programming in Afghanistan during the quarter, State PM/WRA said.²⁸⁹

Landmines and explosive remnants of war killed 292 Afghans—88 percent of them children—in the first half of 2024, OCHA reported.



**FY 2025
Comprehensive
Oversight Plan
for Overseas
Contingency
Operations.**

OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

Under the Lead Inspector General (IG) framework, the DoD OIG, State OIG, USAID OIG, and partner agencies conduct audits, inspections, evaluations, and investigations related to Operation Enduring Sentinel (OES).

STRATEGIC PLANNING

The Overseas Contingency Operations Joint Planning Group serves as the primary venue to coordinate audits, inspections, and evaluations of U.S. Government-funded activities supporting overseas contingency operations, including those relating to Afghanistan and the Middle East. The Joint Planning Group meets quarterly to provide a forum for coordination of the broader Federal oversight community, including the Military Service IGs and audit agencies, the Government Accountability Office, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), and the OIGs of the Departments of Justice, the Treasury, Energy, and Homeland Security (DHS), the Social Security Administration, and the Intelligence Community. Additionally, the DHS OIG hosted the Afghanistan Project Coordination Group as a forum for IG community representatives to coordinate ongoing and planned oversight work stemming from the August 2021 U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. The group held its last meeting on March 5, though participants have continued to coordinate oversight work through the overseas contingency operation Joint Planning Group

Pursuant to the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, the Lead IG develops and implements a joint strategic plan to guide comprehensive oversight of programs and operations for each overseas contingency operation. The Lead IG agencies update the oversight plan annually.

The *FY 2025 Joint Strategic Oversight Plan for Operation Enduring Sentinel*, issued on September 30, 2024, as part of the *FY 2025 Comprehensive Oversight Plan for Overseas Contingency Operations*, is organized by three strategic oversight areas: Military Operations; Diplomacy, Development Assistance, and Humanitarian Assistance; and Support to Mission.

AUDITS, INSPECTIONS, AND EVALUATIONS

The Lead IG agencies use dedicated, rotational, and temporary employees, as well as contractors, to conduct oversight projects, investigate fraud and corruption, and provide consolidated planning and reporting on the status of overseas contingency operations.

DoD OIG oversight and investigative personnel continued to work on OES-related projects and cases from the United States, Bahrain, Germany, Kuwait, and Qatar. State OIG personnel performed their oversight duties from Washington, D.C., and Frankfurt, Germany. USAID OIG personnel continued oversight work from the USAID Asia Regional Office in Bangkok, Thailand, and from Washington, D.C.

COMPLETED PROJECTS

From July 1 through September 30, 2024, the Lead IG and partner agencies issued five oversight reports related to OES, as detailed below. Completed reports by the Lead IG and partner agencies are available on their respective web pages.

FINAL REPORTS BY LEAD IG AGENCIES

DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Management Assistance Report: The Department Would Benefit from a Formal, Systematic Methodology to Capture and Utilize Lessons Learned Following Post Evacuations

AUD-GEER-24-32, September 30, 2024

State OIG issued this management advisory as part of an ongoing audit to determine the extent to which State has incorporated lessons learned from past evacuations in formal guidance and instructions to aid in safeguarding, managing, or disposing of defensive equipment and armored vehicles at overseas posts.

To ensure the safety of mission personnel during political instability or other security threats, State may evacuate personnel and suspend operations at an embassy or consulate. Since 2014, State has evacuated and suspended operations at seven overseas posts because of deteriorating security environments in the host countries, including Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan, in August 2021 and Embassy Kyiv, Ukraine, in February 2022. During an audit of the disposition of sensitive security assets in the lead-up to the evacuations of Embassy Kabul and Embassy Kyiv, State OIG identified challenges related to State's approach to documenting and applying lessons learned from previous post evacuations. This report addresses those challenges.

State OIG found that State had not established a consistent, comprehensive method to capture lessons learned following post drawdowns, evacuations, and suspensions of operations. State OIG identified two types of reports intended to document lessons learned. Both types of reports are intended to document significant lessons learned following post evacuations and may include recommendations to aid other posts facing emergency evacuation scenarios. However, State OIG found that State had not established clear requirements as to when these reports must be produced. State OIG also found that, even when lessons learned reports were produced following a post's evacuation, State had not established a process to systematically review documented lessons learned or determine when lessons learned should necessitate changes to State policies, procedures, or guidance. As a result, State OIG found that many of the same difficulties experienced by posts that underwent evacuations prior to 2021 were repeated during the evacuation of Embassy Kabul.

State OIG made three recommendations to address the deficiencies identified in this report. The relevant State entities concurred with two recommendations and neither agreed nor disagreed with one recommendation. At the time the report was issued, State OIG considered all three recommendations resolved, pending further action. The recommendations will remain open until State OIG receives documentation that all agreed upon actions have been completed.

Supplemental Classified Report on the Audit of the Disposition of Sensitive Security Assets at U.S. Embassies Kabul, Afghanistan and Kyiv, Ukraine

AUD-GEER-24-31; September 19, 2024

State OIG conducted this audit to determine whether U.S. Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan, and U.S. Embassy Kyiv managed, safeguarded, and disposed of sensitive security assets in advance of the evacuation of each post in accordance with State guidance. This report is classified. Details can be found in this quarterly report's classified appendix. State OIG issued a related unclassified report in October.

FY 2023 NDAA Section 5275 Mandated Review of the Department of State Efforts to Support and Process Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Applications and Other Afghan Evacuees

AUD-GEER-24-28; September 9, 2024

Section 5275 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, Public Law 117-263, directed the OIGs of the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State to conduct a joint review of efforts to support and process evacuees from Afghanistan and the Afghanistan special immigrant visa program (SIV) in coordination with the DoD OIG and other appropriate Inspectors General. Among other things, section 5275 directed these OIGs to provide information regarding the vetting, processing, and resettlement of evacuees, and required that the review include an assessment of the systems, staffing, policies, and programs used to: 1) screen and vet evacuees; 2) admit and process the evacuees at U.S. ports of entry; 3) temporarily house the evacuees prior to resettlement; and 4) account for the total number of individuals evacuated from Afghanistan in 2021 with the support of the U.S. Government, including the number of individuals who were holders of Afghan special immigrant visas.

Following an interim joint report published by the OIGs in June 2023, this report summarizes all of State OIG's work related to the Afghan SIV program since 2020. From June 2020 through July 2024, State OIG issued seven reports, five of which included recommendations intended to improve the Afghan SIV program. In those reports, State OIG issued 21 recommendations, 14 of which were closed and 7 of which recommendations were resolved pending further action, as of August 1, 2024. This report contained no new recommendations.

Evaluation of Department of State Accounting, Screening, and Vetting of Afghan Evacuees

AUD-GEER-24-21; July 22, 2024

State OIG conducted a review to assess State's 1) systems, staffing, policies, and programs used to vet Afghan evacuees and Afghan SIV holders; and 2) systems, policies, and programs used to determine the number of individuals evacuated from Afghanistan.

Following State's evacuation and suspension of operations at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan, in August 2021, multiple Congressional committees requested that State OIG review the processing of Afghan special immigrant visas. State OIG is issuing a series of reports in response to the requests. In addition, Section 5275 of the FY 2023 National Defense Authorization Act directed State OIG to assess State's efforts to support and process evacuees from Afghanistan and the Afghanistan SIV program. State OIG incorporated the Section 5275 requirements into its ongoing work related to Afghan SIVs. State OIG conducted this evaluation to 1) determine the extent to which State accounted for the total number of individuals evacuated from Afghanistan in 2021 with U.S. Government support; and 2) assess the systems, staffing, policies, and programs used to screen and vet SIV applicants.

State OIG could not confirm the number of individuals evacuated from Afghanistan, regardless of destination, with U.S. Government support in 2021. State OIG determined that State relied entirely on the DoD to track evacuation statistics because the military commander was responsible for conducting the noncombatant evacuation operation. Following the noncombatant evacuation operation, State continued relocating Afghan SIV applicants, U.S. citizens, and other eligible Afghans from Afghanistan. State OIG found that State maintained records of individuals relocated since the noncombatant evacuation operation ended. According to State's records, from September 2021 through December 2023, State relocated 35,171 individuals, including 1,971 U.S. citizens and 21,925 Afghan SIV holders and applicants from Afghanistan.

State also reviewed a statistical sample of Afghan SIVs issued in 2021 and found that State followed its established policies, process, and procedures to screen and vet the Afghan SIV applicants with respect to confirming the applicants' identity and spouses who were minors. In addition, State did not find any instances of human trafficking or domestic abuse concerns in the Afghan SIV files reviewed.

State OIG made two recommendations to improve data sharing between State and the DoD during military assisted evacuations, including noncombatant evacuations. State concurred with both recommendations. At the time the report was issued, State OIG considered one recommendation resolved and one recommendation closed. The open recommendation will remain open until State OIG receives documentation that all agreed upon actions have been completed.

FINAL REPORTS BY PARTNER IG AGENCIES

SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION

Counterterrorism Vetting in Afghanistan: Two of Five State Bureaus Could Not Demonstrate Compliance with State Partner Vetting Requirements

SIGAR-24-31-AR; July 16, 2024

SIGAR conducted this audit to determine the extent to which State adhered to applicable policies and procedures for vetting implementing partners conducting activities in Afghanistan.

Since 2001, State has used grants, contracts, and other funding vehicles to implement development and humanitarian projects to help achieve U.S. foreign policy and national security goals in Afghanistan. Under federal laws and regulations, U.S. agencies, including State, are prohibited from engaging in transactions with certain sanctioned individuals, entities, and jurisdictions, including those listed by the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control.

SIGAR found that three out of five State bureaus that had active awards in Afghanistan from March 1, 2022, through November 30, 2022, had sufficient documentation to demonstrate they complied with State's Foreign Affairs Manual and other State implementing partner counterterrorism vetting requirements. Specifically, the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement; the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration; and the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, Office of Press and Public Diplomacy provided SIGAR with documentation showing they complied with State's vetting policies.

SIGAR found two bureaus, the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), provided some documentation but not enough to determine whether all their Afghanistan programs complied with State's vetting guidance.

DRL and INL could not demonstrate that they complied with State's partner vetting requirements for many of their programs in Afghanistan. Specifically, DRL could only provide supporting vetting documentation for four of its seven awards, while partner vetting documentation for four of its awards were missing from its contracting files.

As a result, SIGAR could not determine whether DRL complied with State's partner vetting requirements for four of its awards. INL could only provide SIGAR with supporting vetting documentation for 3 of its 22 awards because supporting documentation for 19 of its awards was missing from its contracting files. Based on the response, SIGAR determined that INL did not comply with federal document retention requirements.

SIGAR made one recommendation to help improve State's compliance with Federal and State partner vetting requirements. In comments to SIGAR, State acknowledged gaps in compliance with federal and internal document retention requirements and committed to ensuring all program offices comply with applicable federal and partner vetting requirements. State agreed with SIGAR's report conclusion and recommendation. The recommendation will remain open until SIGAR receives documentation that all agreed upon actions have been completed.

ONGOING AND PLANNED OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

As of September 30, 2024, the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies had 19 ongoing and 7 planned projects related to OES, including the examples highlighted below. Tables 9, 10, and 11, contained in Appendixes E and F, list the titles and objectives for all ongoing and planned projects.

Military Operations

- **SIGAR** is conducting an evaluation of U.S. counternarcotics efforts in Afghanistan since 2021 to assess the extent to which the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs: 1) planned and implemented U.S.-funded counternarcotics programs in accordance with U.S. and State strategies and goals; 2) U.S.-funded counternarcotics programs achieved intended outcomes; and 3) how Taliban governance has affected program implementation.

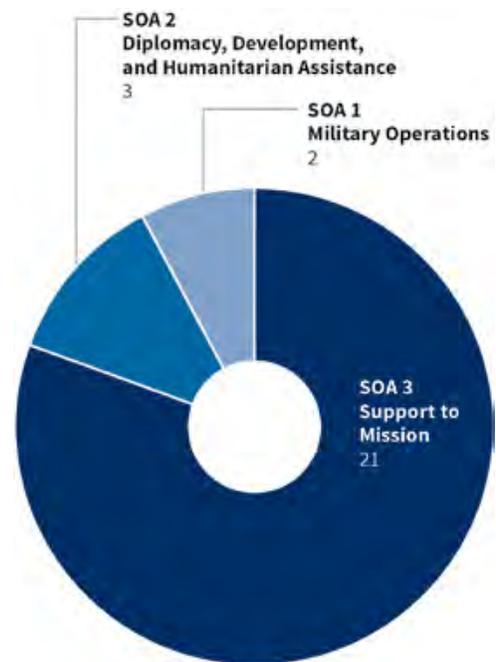
Diplomacy, Development Assistance, and Humanitarian Assistance

- **State OIG** is conducting a multipart review of the SIV program, covering SIV application processing times, adjustments to the SIV application process, the status of previous recommendations, the status of SIV recipients, and the status of SIV and refugee screening and vetting since August 2021. A final report will cover all of State OIG’s reporting on the SIV program. Four of the reports have been issued.
- **USAID OIG** is conducting an audit to assess USAID oversight of implementer efforts to manage security and safety risks and mitigate Taliban interference with assistance in Afghanistan.

Support to Mission

- **State OIG** is conducting an audit to determine whether the U.S. embassies in Kabul, Afghanistan, and Kyiv, Ukraine managed, safeguarded, and disposed of sensitive security assets in advance of the evacuation and suspension of operations at each post in accordance with State guidance.
- **SIGAR** is conducting an audit of State and USAID efforts to reduce gender-based violence in Afghanistan to determine the extent to which State, USAID, and international partners have coordinated their efforts to address gender-based violence to prevent duplication of efforts, and whether State and USAID have processes in place to ensure that they are meeting gender-based violence related goals and objectives.

Figure 6.
Ongoing and Planned Projects by Strategic Oversight Area



HOTLINE AND INVESTIGATIONS

INVESTIGATIONS

The DoD OIG's criminal investigative component, the Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS), maintained investigative personnel in Bahrain and Kuwait, where they worked on cases related to OES and Operation Freedom Sentinel (OFS). DCIS agents also worked on OES/OFS-related cases from offices in the United States. State OIG and USAID OIG investigators worked on cases related to OES/OFS from Washington, D.C., El Salvador, Germany, Israel, South Africa, and Thailand.

During the quarter, investigative branches of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies had 37 open investigations, while 7 investigations were closed. Three referrals were made to the Department of Justice during the quarter.

The Lead IG agencies and their partners continue to use the Fraud and Corruption Investigative Working Group (FCIWG) framework to coordinate investigative activities, deconflict potential or common targets, and interact for logistical and legal support. The FCIWG framework consists of representatives from DCIS, State OIG, USAID OIG, the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, the Air Force Office of Special Investigations and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Figure 7 displays the data on investigations related to OES/OFS.

Figure 7.

OES-related Investigation Activities, July 1–September 30, 2024

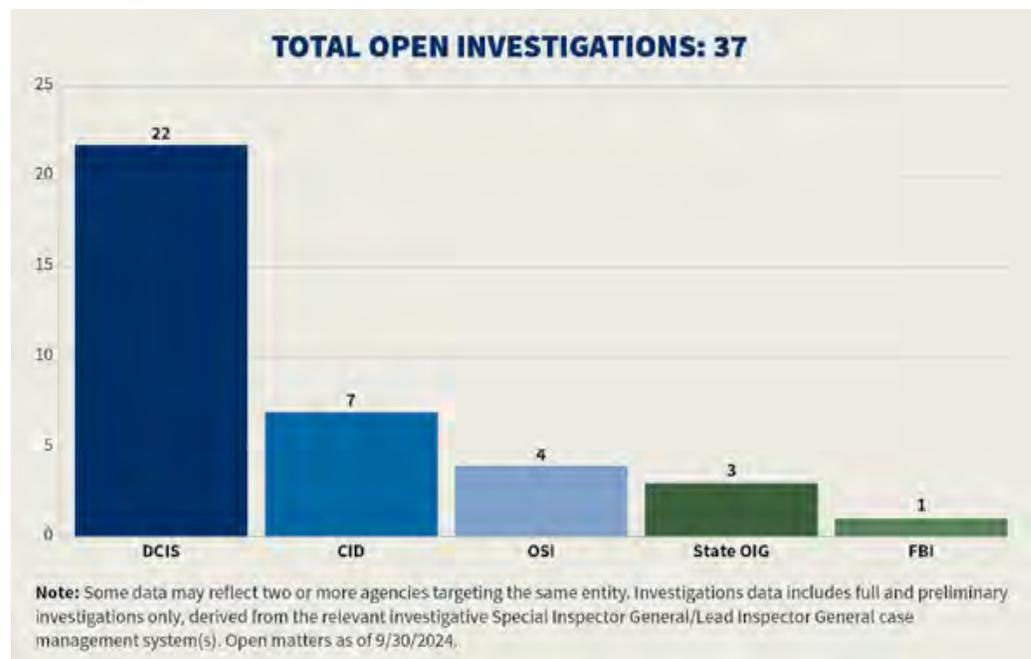
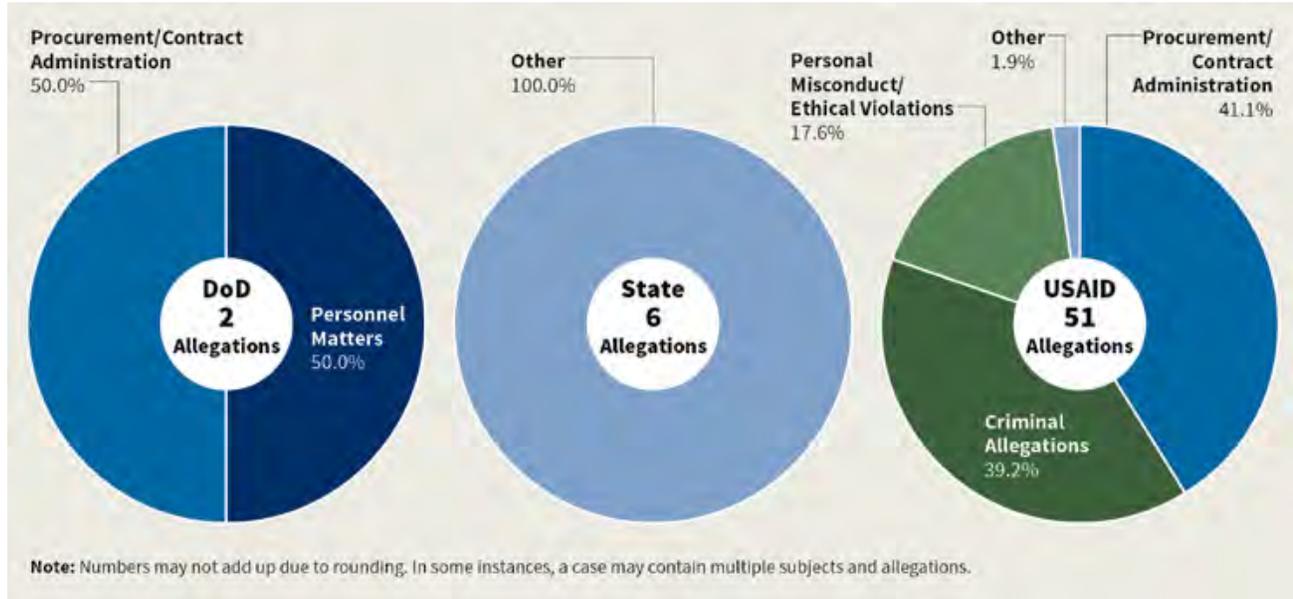


Figure 8.

DoD, State, and USAID OES-related Hotline Activities, July 1–September 30, 2024



HOTLINE ACTIVITY

Each Lead IG agency maintains its own hotline to receive complaints specific to its agency. The hotlines provide a confidential, reliable means for individuals to report violations of law, rule, or regulation; mismanagement; gross waste of funds; or abuse of authority.

During the quarter, the DoD OIG hotline investigator received 2 allegations and referred 5 cases to Lead IG agencies and other investigative organizations. State OIG received 6 allegations and referred 4 cases. USAID OIG received 51 allegations. In some instances, a case may contain multiple allegations. (See Figure 8.)



APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Classified Appendix to this Report

A classified appendix to this report provides additional information on Operation Enduring Sentinel, as noted in several sections of this report. The appendix will be delivered to relevant agencies and congressional committees.

APPENDIX B

About the Lead Inspector General

The Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended (5 U.S.C. Section 419, previously found at 5 U.S.C. App, Section 8L) established the Lead Inspector General (Lead IG) framework for oversight of overseas contingency operations. The Lead IG agencies are the Offices of Inspector General (OIG) of the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of State (State), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Section 419 requires the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to appoint a Lead IG from among the Inspectors General of the Lead IG agencies upon the commencement or designation of a military operation that exceeds 60 days as an overseas contingency operation or receipt of notification thereof.

Lead IG oversight of the operation “sunset” at the end of the first fiscal year after commencement or designation in which the total amount appropriated for the operation is less than \$100,000,000.

The Lead IG agencies collectively carry out the Lead IG statutory responsibilities to:

- Submit to Congress on a quarterly basis a report on the contingency operation and to make that report available to the public.
- Develop a joint strategic plan to conduct comprehensive oversight of the operation.
- Ensure independent and effective oversight of programs and operations of the U.S. Government in support of the operation through either joint or individual audits, inspections, investigations, and evaluations.

APPENDIX C

Methodology for Preparing this Lead IG Report

This report complies with section the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended (5 U.S.C. Section 419), which requires that the designated Lead IG provide a quarterly report, available to the public, on each overseas contingency operation, and is consistent with the requirement that a biannual report be published by the Lead IG on the activities of the Inspectors General with respect to that overseas contingency operation. The Chair of the Council of the Inspectors General for Integrity and Efficiency designated the DoD IG as the Lead IG for Operation Enduring Sentinel (OES). The Lead IG appointed the State IG to be the Associate IG for OES.

This report covers the period from July 1 through September 30, 2024. The three Lead IG agencies—DoD OIG, State OIG, and USAID OIG—and partner oversight agencies contributed the content of this report.

To fulfill the congressional mandate to report on OES, the Lead IG agencies gather data and information from Federal agencies and open sources. The sources of information contained in this report are listed in endnotes or notes to tables and figures. Except in the case of audits, inspections, investigations, and evaluations referenced in this report, the Lead IG agencies have not verified or audited the information collected through open-source research or from Federal agencies, and the information provided represents the view of the source cited in each instance.

INFORMATION COLLECTION FROM AGENCIES AND OPEN SOURCES

Each quarter, the Lead IG agencies gather information from the DoD, State, USAID, and other Federal agencies about their programs and operations related to OES. The Lead IG agencies use the information provided by their respective agencies for quarterly reporting and oversight planning.

This report also draws on current, publicly available information from reputable sources. Sources used in this report may include the following:

- U.S. Government statements, press conferences, and reports
- Reports issued by international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and think tanks
- Media reports

The Lead IG agencies use open-source information to assess information obtained through their agency information collection process and provide additional detail about the operation.

REPORT PRODUCTION

The DoD IG, as the Lead IG for this operation, is responsible for assembling and producing this report. The DoD OIG, State OIG, and USAID OIG draft the sections of the report related to the activities of their agencies and then participate in editing the entire report. Once assembled, each OIG coordinates a two-phase review process of the report within its own agency. During the first review, the Lead IG agencies ask relevant offices within their agencies to comment, correct inaccuracies, and provide additional documentation. The Lead IG agencies incorporate agency comments, where appropriate, and send the report back to the agencies for a second review prior to publication. The final report reflects the editorial view of the DoD OIG, State OIG, and USAID OIG as independent oversight agencies.

APPENDIX D

State- and USAID-funded Activities During the Quarter

Table 7.

USAID Afghanistan Programs Supporting Afghan Women and Girls

Program	Program Description
Women's Scholarship Endowment (WSE) 9/27/2018–9/26/2028 \$60,000,000	USAID Afghanistan's WSE Activity aims to assist Afghan women in obtaining a university or graduate education either in-person or online in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) and other fields of study, better enabling them to overcome barriers to gaining employment, raise their incomes, and help them achieve leadership roles within their families and communities. The program also provides career development and leadership training to scholars to better prepare them to enter the workforce.
Young Women Lead (YWL) 9/2023–9/2025 \$4,935,797	Still in the start up phase, Young Women Lead (YWL) activity aims to expand post-secondary education opportunities and increase access in fields of study where females are allowed at the post-secondary education level such as allied health, education, agriculture, and information technology. Allied health fields include anesthesia, dental prosthesis, medical technology, midwifery, nursing, and pharmacy.
Supporting Student Success in Afghanistan 12/30/2022–12/31/2024 \$27,284,620	Supporting Student Success in Afghanistan (SSSA) aims to sustain access and improve retention in local, quality higher education opportunities for male and female students living in Afghanistan. SSSA meets the needs of young women living in all provinces of Afghanistan, delivering quality higher education and targeted academic programs, including college preparatory classes, wrap-around services, and extracurricular programs.
Accessible and Quality Basic Education (AQBE) 10/1/2023–9/30/2028 \$79,500,000	Still in the start up phase, the purpose of AQBE is to improve safe, equitable access to quality learning for primary school-aged girls and boys and secondary school-aged girls.
Rural Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (Ru-WASH) 6/24/2020–6/23/2025 \$35,841,332	The Ru-WASH activity addresses the following needs in Afghanistan: acute water and sanitation needs in underserved, rural and peri-urban areas of Afghanistan; unequal sanitation facilities for girls and boys in schools; lack of adequate WASH facilities in health care facilities; service delivery and operations support to sustain critical WASH structures, including community-level structures; and transmission of the COVID-19 virus in schools and their surrounding catchment communities in high-risk COVID-19 areas.
Urban Health Initiative (UHI) 10/14/2020–10/13/2025 \$104,000,000	The goal of UHI is to improve health outcomes for people living in urban areas, with a special focus on women, children and other vulnerable populations. In order to achieve this, UHI provides the following interventions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring, training, and supportive supervision to health care providers, in public and private facilities, to improve the quality of basic service delivery • Support to midwifery-led care networks to increase women's access to services • Strengthen COVID response and treatment • Promote virtual care through the establishment of mobile service delivery opportunities and a telementoring platform • Procure and supply essential medicines, equipment, and commodities for select health facilities

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Program	Program Description
<p>Assistance for Families and Indigent Afghans to Thrive (AFIAT)</p> <p>7/10/2020–7/9/2025</p> <p>\$117,000,000</p>	<p>The goal of AFIAT is to improve the health outcomes of the Afghan people, particularly women of childbearing age and preschool children, in rural and peri-urban parts of Afghanistan. In order to achieve this, AFIAT provides the following interventions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring, training, and supportive supervision to health care providers, in public facilities, to improve the quality of basic service delivery. • Build core competency of midwives to deliver maternal and child health services • Co-lead the NGO Pharmaceutical Supply Chain Management Group to help meet the needs of health facilities for essential medicines and supplies • Strengthen the national health management information system (HMIS) to ensure accurate tracking of health service update and outcomes • Strengthen COVID response and treatment • Provide oversight for the development and implementation of the 2023 Afghanistan National Health Survey, a household-level survey that looks at health outcomes—especially for women and children.
<p>Local Health System Sustainability (LHSS)</p> <p>8/1/2022–7/31/2024</p> <p>\$18,054</p>	<p>LHSS represents USAID’s highly successful, long-term engagement in health private sector social marketing (formerly SHOPS-Plus). The goal of LHSS is to increase the use of priority health services through strategic expansion of private sector approaches within the health system.</p> <p>Through a partnership with the Afghanistan Social Marketing Organization (ASMO), LHSS promotes affordable, socially marketed health products focused on women and children. Their current basket of products includes micronutrients, iron folate, postnatal care products, antidiarrheal treatment, water treatment, and family planning products.</p> <p>It is estimated that 22 percent of Afghan women who use modern contraceptives rely on LHSS-supported products. Additionally, LHSS contributes 16 percent of total household water treatment use, 11 percent of oral rehydration salts use, and 5 percent of micronutrient use nationally.</p>
<p>National Disease Surveillance Response (NDSR)</p> <p>2/2/2022–9/30/2031</p> <p>Annual buy-in (amount changes)</p> <p>\$50,000,000 in FY 2023</p>	<p>The NDSR is Afghanistan’s only comprehensive indicator and event-based surveillance system. It tracks and reports on 17 priority infectious diseases and pregnancy-related deaths from 613 sentinel sites. This real time data provides critical information on outbreaks (many of which disproportionately affect women and children), allowing for rapid and targeted response.</p>
<p>Global Health Supply Chain Management (GHSC-PSM)</p> <p>4/20/2015–11/28/2024</p> <p>\$25,000,000</p>	<p>GHSC-PSM serves as the central procurement mechanism for USAID Missions worldwide to purchase high quality contraceptives and other essential public health supplies. This mechanism is used by the Afghanistan Mission to procure contraceptive commodities for the USAID-supported social marketing program (LHSS).</p>
<p>Information, Dialogue, and Rights in Afghanistan (IDR)</p> <p>9/23/2022–6/30/2026</p> <p>\$14,079,528</p>	<p>This activity supports women’s empowerment through various interventions that protect access to independent sources of information, create platforms for rights-based discourse, and promote policy dialogue on the conditions for all Afghans to live in dignity and rights. Specifically, IDR activities support reporting on rights and governance issues of public interest; developing a strong cadre of female journalists and producers, helping journalists operate safely and effectively, enabling Afghan civic activists to advocate and facilitating dialogue on inclusive governance.</p>

Program	Program Description
<p>Enabling Essential Services for Afghan Women and Girls 5/30/2022–5/29/2025 \$30,000,000</p>	<p>This activity supports the re-establishment of comprehensive support services for women and girls and contributes to an enabling environment for women’s rights and women’s participation. The activity’s three broad objectives are to: 1) provide access to essential services that prevent and respond to violence against women and girls according to international norms and standards; 2) support the livelihoods of vulnerable women through training, entrepreneurship support, and job placements; and 3) support women-led civil society organizations and networks to advance women’s rights in Afghanistan.</p>
<p>Supporting Transformation for Afghanistan’s Recovery (STAR) 2/18/2021–12/31/2024 \$28,338,901</p>	<p>The Supporting Transformation for Afghanistan’s Recovery (STAR) program activities aim to build the resilience of Afghan communities in some of the country’s poorest and most conflict-affected districts. The program strengthens the food and livelihood security of families who have struggled throughout the country’s long war, providing cash assistance, resilience-focused agricultural and livestock support, and market skills and linkages. In addition, targeted communities will be supported to rehabilitate or construct critical WASH infrastructure for improved access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene. The program also mainstreams protection, focusing on women, girls, and other vulnerable groups.</p>
<p>Counter Trafficking in Persons (CTIP III) 10/2/2024 - 9/30/2027</p>	<p>Counter Trafficking in Persons (CTIP III) is still in the start phase. The program will focus on raising public awareness to identify and refer trafficking in persons (TIP) cases, strengthening protection and recovery services for victims, enhancing rehabilitation and reintegration support, and empowering local CSOs through capacity building and grants. It will use 50 percent of resources for local solutions to counter TIP and support survivors.</p>
<p>Afghanistan Competitiveness for Export-Oriented Businesses Activity (ACEBA) 1/28/2020–1/27/2025 \$105,722,822</p>	<p>Subsequent to the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, ACEBA resumed work with the private sector prioritizing livelihoods support. The activity retains its market focus and where possible maintains existing efforts in its key value chains of carpets, cashmere, and saffron, while also adding a new value chain for humanitarian goods and services. All value chains are recognized for their potential to deliver demonstrable results from downstream value-add, sales, exports, and job creation particularly in providing livelihood opportunities for women.</p>
<p>Exports, Jobs, and Market Linkages for Carpet and Jewelry Value Chains 1/31/2019–4/30/2025 \$14,941,606</p>	<p>The Exports, Jobs, and Market Linkages in the Carpet and Jewelry Value Chains activity supports the Afghan carpet and jewelry sectors as major drivers of broad-based economic growth and sustainable employment in Afghanistan, primarily for women.</p> <p>The goal of the program is to create jobs and exports within the carpet and jewelry sectors, driving \$20 million in direct-to-market sales of finished Afghan carpet and jewelry products (\$19 million in sales of carpets and \$1 million in sales of jewelry) thus supporting new jobs, particularly for women. The carpet and jewelry value chains were selected for their exceptional potential of creating jobs for women, unlike many other economic sectors.</p> <p>With a recent approved program extension (2 years 2023-2025), it is expected that 23,940 jobs will be added to the 19,000 jobs already achieved by the program, for women.</p>
<p>Strengthening Rural Livelihoods and Food Security Program (SRL-FS) 7/31/2022–7/31/2026 \$80,000,000</p>	<p>The purpose of the SRL-FS activity is to improve the food security of crisis and emergency level affected population groups in the eight most food insecure provinces rural areas of Afghanistan. The program helps minimize the impacts of economic disruption and instability, drought, and other recent shocks on vulnerable, and at-risk agriculture based communities and livelihoods; it also and helps to minimize negative effects on productive agricultural assets in targeted provinces and districts of Afghanistan, with a focus on women and vulnerable populations. This assistance also aims to enhance food security and improve nutrition and near-term resilience of vulnerable smallholder farmers and herders including landless and women-headed households. This activity emphasizes support to women alongside Afghan Value Chains–Program listed below.</p>

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Program	Program Description
Afghan Value Chains–Program (AVCP) 6/9/2018–6/8/2025 \$75,672,170	AVCP is a market-driven, private sector-focused program that aims to sustainably strengthen livestock and crops value chains, resulting in increased incomes, employment, commercial viability, resiliency, and productivity. AVCP is aiming to increase food security and supports women in agriculture, identifying channels for women to continue and increase participation in Afghanistan’s economy. The project facilitates the integration of women into livestock and crops value chains and seeks to upgrade the roles of women already participating in the agriculture sector.
Women and Man in Agriculture (WAMA) 10/1/2024–9/30/2029 \$59,910,649	The purpose of the WAMA activity is to improve food security for all Afghans and expand women’s empowerment and benefit by supporting sustainable agricultural livelihoods. WAMA will focus on private sector-led broad-based market systems development to reactivate the rural economy and preserve the gains of USAID’s investments in agriculture over the last two decades.
Afghanistan Integrated Youth Activity (AIYA) 10/1/2024–9/30/2029 \$62,000,000	The AIYA aims to empower Afghan youth, particularly girls and young women, by equipping them with market-relevant technical and soft skills. This initiative seeks to enhance income, food security, and economic resilience among participants. The overarching goal of AIYA is to improve learning outcomes and livelihood opportunities for young women and men. Expected outcomes include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved post-secondary technical and vocational education or learning opportunities for youth, with a focus on market-relevant, skills-based learning within the agricultural sector and its related value chains. 2. Youth, particularly girls and young women, acquire market-relevant skills to improve livelihood opportunities and engage in climate

Source: USAID Afghanistan, response to USAID OIG request for information, 9/30/2024.

Table 8.

State-funded Non-humanitarian Assistance Activities in Afghanistan During the Quarter

Women’s Economic Empowerment South and Central Asian Affairs/Security and Transnational Affairs (SCA/STA)	
Afghan Women Economic Empowerment Through Leveraging the Private Sector \$1,802,776	Advances the economic security and resilience of Afghan women in Afghanistan and in third countries. Supports the ability of the private sector, NGOs, and other civil society organizations to engage and provide assistance to Afghan women.
Demining Political-Military Affairs/Weapons Removal and Abatement (PM/WRA)	
Land Release and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) Clearance \$3,600,000	Reduces at-risk, illicitly proliferated, or indiscriminately used conventional weapons of war, increases civilian security, and promotes U.S. foreign policy interests in Badakhshan and Kunduz Provinces, Afghanistan.
Weapons and Ammunition Disposal Teams \$5,789,800	Conducts non-technical survey, excavation, disposal (mechanical), and mine risk education.

Employing Former Combatants as Deminers in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan \$4,750,000	Conducts Explosive Remnants of War clearance in Nangarhar province and economically reintegrates demobilized Afghan Local Police as deminers to reduce the risk of accidents and increase available land for productive use.
Third Party Monitoring and Oversight \$6,625,000	Monitors, mentors, and develops Conventional Weapons Destruction program in Afghanistan working closely with PM/WRA.
Conventional Weapons Destruction \$3,375,000	Improves security and stability for Afghan civilian population by removing and destroying ammunition, explosives, explosive source material, and weapons to restrict their flow to armed opposition groups and to prevent civilian accidents.
Demining, Risk Education, and Re-Integration Project in Maydan Wardak Province \$3,282,000	Removes landmines and Explosive Remnants of War, thereby reducing civilian casualties, ensuring a safe environment, and enabling productive land use for agriculture, grazing, habitation, and other economic development initiatives.
Support to UN-led Humanitarian Mine Action Coordination in Afghanistan \$2,680,975	United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) will ensure Afghan communities benefit from humanitarian mine action initiatives unimpeded by dangerous explosive ordnance.
Non-technical Survey and Land Release in 49 Contaminated Districts \$1,500,000	Collects up-to-date, reliable, and accurate data and information, to identify and confirm actual scope and social economic impact of mines/Explosive Remnants of War.
Survey and Clearance of Abandoned Improvised Munitions in Helmand \$4,858,569	Increases stability and improves human security through removal of abandoned improvised munitions and other Explosive Ordnance from impacted communities in Helmand province.
Demining and Victim Assistance Political-Military Affairs/Weapons Removal and Abatement (PM/WRA)	
Victim Assistance in Afghanistan—Emergency mobile physical rehabilitation, psychosocial support, and Explosive Ordnance Risk Education sessions across Kabul, Kandahar, and Nimroz provinces \$1,606,000	Provides emergency support to landmine survivors through physical rehabilitation, psychological support, and Explosive Ordnance Risk Education sessions, and enhance quality and availability of prosthetics and orthotics services.
Victims Assistance and Physical Rehabilitation Project in Paktika Province \$500,000	Builds local capacity and establish a mechanism for disability and rehabilitation services to prevent long-term disability; and facilitate physical rehabilitation for victims of war and manmade disasters in Patika province.

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Rule of Law International Narcotics Law Enforcement Affairs/Europe and Asia (INL/EA)	
Supporting Access to Justice through Non-State Actors \$11,077,716	Assists non-state justice actors in the protection of human rights of Afghans, especially women, girls, and ethnic minorities, by supporting civil society organizations and other non-state justice service providers to sustain and expand the rule of law in Afghanistan.
Counternarcotics International Narcotics Law Enforcement Affairs/Europe and Asia (INL/EA)	
Community-Based Agriculture and Rural Development–Access to Licit Livelihoods Funds Obligated: \$28,427,158	Supports male and female farmers in six provinces with history of high opium poppy cultivation to transition to licit crop production and connects them with agribusinesses and exporters to facilitate market linkages.
Afghan Opiate Trade Project \$3,272,548	Supports UN research and analysis initiatives to understand global trafficking trends of Afghan opiates.
Afghanistan Opium Survey \$7,310,465	Supports the UN Office on Drugs and Crime’s annual Afghanistan opium cultivation survey to inform international community of opium poppy cultivation and production trends.
Drugs Monitoring Platform \$4,097,041	Monitors trafficking and seizures of Afghan-origin drugs in near real-time.
Counternarcotics Public Information \$7,029,264	Supports Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty-affiliated public information outlets in Afghanistan to promote counternarcotics public awareness campaigns.
Assistance to Drug Treatment Centers \$11,174,568	Supports drug treatment centers in Afghanistan prioritizing treatment of women and children.
Monitoring and Evaluation and Impact Assessment of Community-Based Agriculture and Rural Development and UN Women Service Points \$4,837,516	Provides in-depth third-party monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessment services for the Community-Based Agriculture and Rural Development program and third-party monitoring for INL’s work with UN Women.
Drug Use Disorder Treatment and Care for Afghan People \$8,926,690	Supports service quality improvement of 24 drug use disorder treatment and care services to ensure people with drug use disorders, especially women, adolescents and children in Afghanistan have increased access to quality, evidence-based, humane drug use disorder treatment and recovery support in project provinces.

Source: State INL, response to State OIG request for information, 10/4/2024.

APPENDIX E

Ongoing Oversight Projects

Tables 9 and 10 list the titles and objectives for Lead IG and partner agencies' ongoing oversight projects related to OES.

Table 9.

Ongoing Oversight Projects Related to OES by Lead IG Agencies, as of September 30, 2024

DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Review of the Department of State Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Program

To assess the number of SIV applications received and processed and their processing times; the status and resolution of recommendations made by State OIG in its reports “Quarterly Reporting on Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Program Needs Improvement” (AUD-MERO-20-34, June 2020) and “Review of the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Program” (AUD-MERO-20-35, June 2020); the status of SIV recipients; adjustments made to processing SIV applications between 2018 and 2021; the status of SIV and refugee screening since August 2021; and the whole of State OIG reporting on the SIV Program in a capping report.

Audit of the Disposition of Defensive Equipment and Armored Vehicles in Advance of Evacuations of U.S. Embassies Kabul and Kyiv

To determine whether U.S. Embassies Kabul, Afghanistan, and Kyiv, Ukraine, managed, safeguarded, and disposed of sensitive security assets in advance of the evacuation and suspension of operations at each post in accordance with State guidance.

Inspection of Embassy Doha, Qatar

To evaluate the programs and operations of the U.S. Embassy in Doha, Qatar.

Classified Inspection of Embassy, Doha, Qatar

To evaluate the programs and operations of the U.S. Embassy in Doha, Qatar.

U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Audit of USAID's Efforts to Safeguard Implementers and Activities in Afghanistan

To determine USAID's oversight of implementer efforts in Afghanistan to mitigate 1) security and safety risks in activities and 2) Taliban interference in activities.

Table 10.

Ongoing Oversight Projects Related to OES by Lead IG Partner Agencies, as of September 30, 2024

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

National Snapshot of Recent Trends in the Refugee Resettlement Program

To 1) summarize nationwide data on the ORR Refugee Resettlement Program; 2) identify recent trends in participation and outcomes; and 3) identify any challenges encountered by states, replacement designees, and domestic resettlement agencies and other non-profit organizations in administering ORR-funded benefits and services.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Review of Asylum Application Adjudication Processing in Response to Ahmed vs. DHS

To determine whether missed aliases or incomplete resolution of potential matches to derogatory records have increased following the Ahmed vs. DHS settlement agreement.

Evaluation of DHS' Monitoring of the End of Immigration Parole

To assess whether DHS has processes, procedures, and resources to monitor the end of immigration parole to ensure parolees are lawfully present in the United States and determine what enforcement consequences exist for parolees who stay in the United States after parole expiration or revocation.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Federal Bureau of Investigation's Participation in Operation Allies Refuge and Operation Allies Welcome

To assess the effectiveness of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's coordination with its federal partners to support Operation Allies Refuge and Operation Allies Welcome.

SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION

U.S.-Funded Capital Assets in Afghanistan

To reevaluate and update SIGAR's prior capital assets report to determine the current status of these assets, including the extent to which the Taliban, or other actors in Afghanistan, have maintained and use these assets.

Audit of U.S. Agencies' Oversight of Funds Provided to Public International Organizations for Activities in Afghanistan

To assess the extent to which U.S. agencies and Public International Organizations conduct oversight of U.S. funds provided for assistance to Afghanistan.

State Implementing Partner Agreements with the Taliban

To determine the extent to which: 1) State's implementing partners have entered into agreements with the Taliban to facilitate program implementation; 2) those agreements were completed and reviewed in accordance with applicable requirements; and 3) agreements with the Taliban have affected program implementation.

Audit of USAID's Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene Projects

To determine the extent to which USAID has conducted oversight of Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene projects; whether these projects have met their goals and objectives; and identify the challenges faced by USAID and Afghanistan in sustaining the progress made by the Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene program going forward.

Follow on Performance Audit of State's Demining Activities in Afghanistan

To determine the extent to which State performed all required oversight activities including annual reviews of award risk assessment and monitoring plans, quarterly reviews of performance progress and financial reports, and final review memoranda; State developed measurable award agreement targets and objectives and connected them to higher level goals; funds provided to demining activities have directly benefited the Taliban regime or prohibited entities and individuals.

Personnel: U.S. Government Efforts to Deploy the Right People, in the Right Numbers, for the Right Amount of Time in Order to Accomplish Reconstruction Objectives in Afghanistan

To identify the challenges the U.S. Government faced in deploying the right people, in the right numbers, for the right amount of time in order to achieve reconstruction objectives in Afghanistan; identify the ways in which the U.S. Government attempted to overcome those challenges, and whether those measures were effective; and distill lessons learned from efforts to rectify personnel problems within the Afghanistan context.

Audit of State and USAID Efforts to Reduce Gender-Based Violence in Afghanistan

To determine the extent to which USAID, State, and international partners have coordinated their efforts to address gender-based violence in Afghanistan to prevent duplication of efforts, and whether USAID and State have processes in place to ensure that they are meeting gender-based violence related goals and objectives.

APPENDIX F

Planned Oversight Projects

Table 11 lists the titles and objectives for Lead IG and partner agencies' planned oversight projects related to OES.

Table 11.

Planned Oversight Projects Related to OES by Lead IG Partner Agencies, as of September 30, 2024

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Audit of the DoD's Management of the Logistics Civil Augmentation Program Contract for the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts Doha at Camp As Sayliyah

To assess the effectiveness of the DoD's management of the Logistics Civil Augmentation Program V (LOGCAP V) contract in support of the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts (CARE) Doha at Camp As Sayliyah (CAS).

DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Review of the Coordinator of Afghanistan Relocation Operations

To determine whether CARE-Doha is 1) operating in accordance with State contract oversight requirements; 2) operating in accordance with State security requirements; and 3) housing and processing Afghan guests in accordance with applicable standards.

SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION

U.S. Counternarcotics Efforts in Afghanistan Since 2021

To assess the extent to which INL: 1) planned and implemented U.S.-funded counternarcotics programs in accordance with U.S. and Department of State strategies and goals; 2) U.S.-funded counternarcotics programs achieved intended outcomes; and 3) Taliban governance has affected program implementation.

USAID's Livelihood Programming in Afghanistan

To determine the extent to which USAID's non-agriculture livelihood programs are 1) achieving intended outcomes; 2) USAID and its partners took steps to ensure that the program results are sustainable; 3) implementing and adjusting current programs based on the lessons from previous livelihood programs to improve the likelihood of success; and 4) the extent to which USAID has conducted required oversight.

Audit of State and USAID's Internally Displaced Persons Camps Within Afghanistan

To determine the extent to which State and USAID funded activities with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and United Nations International Organization for Migration for Internally Displaced Persons are meeting their intended goals and objectives; and State and USAID are performing oversight of their funding to these organizations.

Audit of USAID's Third-Party Monitoring and Evaluation Efforts

To determine the extent to which USAID measured Afghanistan Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Activity's (AMELA) progress in meeting its goal of providing meaningful external evaluations of project performance; measured third-party monitoring of development and humanitarian programming; reliable data collection and analysis, and aligning interventions with the mission's strategic goals; determined whether the program is meeting its performance targets outlined in the contract; and demonstrated the extent that AMELA is sustainable despite changing conditions in Afghanistan.

ACRONYMS

Acronym	
AAF	(Former) Afghan Air Force
AAU	Afghanistan Affairs Unit
ACEBA	Afghanistan Competitiveness of Export-Oriented Business Activity
AQIS	al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent
ASO	al-Siddiq office, a regional ISIS directorate covering Afghanistan
BHA	USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
CARE	State Office of the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts
C5+1	The U.S. Government's whole-of-government diplomatic approach to Central Asia
DCIS	Defense Criminal Investigative Service
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
DoD	Department of Defense
DoJ	Department of Justice
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FCIWG	Fraud and Corruption Investigative Working Group
FY	fiscal year
IDP	internally displaced persons
INL	State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISIS-K	ISIS-Khorasan
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
Lead IG	Lead Inspector General
Lead IG agencies	DoD, State, and USAID OIGs
LOGCAP	DoD Logistics Civil Augmentation Program
NGO	nongovernmental organization

Acronym	
OAW	Operation Allies Welcome
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OES	Operation Enduring Sentinel
OFS	Operation Freedom's Sentinel
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OUSD(C)	Office of the Undersecretary of Defense (Comptroller)
OUSD(P)	Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
PM	State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRM	State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SIGAR	Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
SIV	Special Immigrant Visa
State	Department of State
TJP	Tehrik-e Jihad Pakistan
Treasury	Department of the Treasury
TTP	Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
U.S.	United States
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USCENTCOM	U.S. Central Command
USCIS	U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
VEO	violent extremist organization
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	UN World Health Organization



ENDNOTES

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