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I am writing to alert you to problems with the design of the Weesh-Chaman (Weesh) border crossing point in Kandahar province, Afghanistan, which is currently under construction. A nation's ability to control its borders is central to its ability to control the flow of licit and illicit goods and assess appropriate tariffs and customs duties. Customs revenue is a major component of Afghanistan's national budget. For example, in the most recently completed Afghan fiscal year, customs revenues contributed approximately 44 percent of Afghanistan's annual national budget.

As part of an ongoing audit of U.S. Agency for International Development and Department of Homeland Security Customs and Border Protection efforts to develop and strengthen Afghanistan's capacity to assess and collect customs revenue, we identified two design concerns related to the construction of the Weesh border crossing point. First, the site has only one entry control point, even though current guidance from the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan/Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (NTM-A/CSTC-A) calls for two control points. Second, there are plans to install an inspection device at the site, which may block one traffic lane and that does not have sufficient clearance to allow for efficient inspection of many of the vehicles that travel through the border crossing. These design problems will likely increase congestion. Increased congestion directly affects inspection efficiency and security within the border crossing point. Immediate action is needed to address these issues. Resolving the issues highlighted in this letter may also help NTM-A/CSTC-A and USACE address any similar issues related to the design of six other ongoing border crossing point construction projects totaling approximately \$38.4 million.

On October 3, 2013, we sent an embargoed draft of this letter to USACE, NTM-A/CTSC-A, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), and the International Security Assistance Force, among others, informing them that it would be released the following week. According to USFOR-A, nothing in this letter or its more detailed enclosure is classified. However, at the request of senior USFOR-A and CENTCOM officials, we agreed to restrict the release of the enclosure because of security concerns.

On October 9, 2013, prior to publication of this product, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A) issued a press release calling into question the accuracy of our draft letter. We strongly disagree with the assertions included in this press release. For example, USFOR-A claims that the guidance requiring two entry control points does not apply to border control points, but only applies to facilities that provide long-term housing for personnel. However, the guidance in question was provided to SIGAR by CSTC-A/NTM-A officials in

response to our specific, written request for “guidance indicating the number of entry control points at NTM-A/CSTC-A constructed border control points.” Moreover, there is nothing in the guidance document itself to indicate that it applies solely to facilities that provide long-term housing for personnel.

USFOR-A’s press release also states that, in USFOR-A’s experience, the inspection device’s impact on traffic flow will be minimal. This view is not shared by officials from either the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers or NATO Regional Command-South, both of whom voiced serious concerns over installation of the device. In fact, Regional Command-South issued a formal letter of non-concurrence related to the device’s installation.

Finally, USFOR-A’s press release notes that there will be a large site nearby where all trucks from Pakistan will cross-load their cargo to Afghan vehicles in accordance with Afghan government requirements. USFOR-A does not explain why it believes mention of this site is relevant to the problems we identified. However, the press release appears to imply that this site will ease traffic congestion at the border control point. Such a conclusion would be erroneous, as all trucks must first go through the border control point before reaching the trans-loading yard.

Should you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Elizabeth Field, Assistant Inspector General for Audits & Inspections, at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED], or Michael Welsh, Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Audits & Inspections, Kabul, at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.



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for Afghanistan Reconstruction