

## United States Senate

SENATE CAUCUS ON  
INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL  
HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 818-C  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 17, 2018

John F. Sopko  
Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction  
2530 Crystal Drive  
Arlington, VA 22202-3940

Dear Mr. Sopko:

Since 2001, the United States has allocated well over \$8 billion to fighting opium production and trafficking in Afghanistan. However, despite this enormous investment, reports indicate that counternarcotics efforts in Afghanistan have been ineffective. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime found that opium production reached a record high level in 2017, and a report issued by your office in June, *Counternarcotics: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan*, found that Afghanistan remains the world's largest producer of opium, and the source of over 90 percent of the world's heroin.

We were especially concerned by SIGAR's finding that counternarcotics efforts were not consistently prioritized by senior leaders of either the U.S. or Afghan government, and that from 2002 to 2017, "no counterdrug program undertaken by the United States, its coalition partners, or the Afghan government has resulted in lasting reductions in poppy cultivation or opium production."

This is significant because, as you know, the Taliban controls the drug trade in Afghanistan and uses the proceeds to finance its war against the Afghan government, the U.S., and our partner nations. Moreover, the illicit drug industry in Afghanistan helps fuel widespread corruption throughout the country, which severely undermines all aspects of reconstruction.

Since SIGAR conducted the field work for its *Counternarcotics* report, the United States has renewed its counternarcotics activity in-country with military action. Specifically, in November 2017, U.S. and Afghan forces began a concentrated effort to target the finances of the Taliban. This included targeted air



strikes against drug labs, primarily in Helmand Province. These strikes expanded to additional provinces in April 2018. While it appears that many of the targeted drug labs were destroyed, the effect this has had on the overall illicit drug trade remains unclear.

As you may know, the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control's 2014 report entitled the *Future of U.S. Counternarcotics Control in Afghanistan*, stated that "absent a comprehensive, coordinated counternarcotics strategy that is coupled with unprecedented levels of international cooperation, Afghanistan could well become a narco-state, whose drug trade will continue threatening those inside and outside of its borders." We continue to believe that a stable and peaceful Afghanistan requires a dedicated and effective counternarcotics strategy that includes military, law enforcement, and civilian agency efforts, and has the support of the Afghan government's leadership.

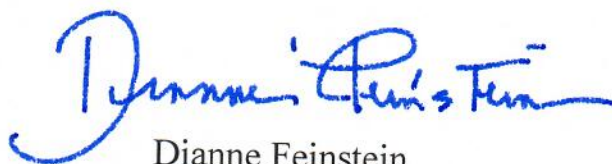
Therefore, we request that you conduct a thorough review of the U.S. government's current counternarcotics efforts in Afghanistan. Your inquiry should include, the following: (1) a review of the U.S. counternarcotics strategy for Afghanistan and the extent to which a whole-of-government approach to addressing this problem exists; (2) a review of the role and effectiveness of U.S. and Afghan law enforcement agencies in the counternarcotics effort; (3) an assessment of the impact of U.S. and Afghan efforts to target and disrupt the finances of the Taliban, including, but not limited to, the effectiveness of air strikes on Taliban drug labs, and overall poppy cultivation and heroin production; and (4) the extent to which money laundering and corruption undermine U.S. efforts to address the growing drug trade in Afghanistan.

We thank you in advance for your attention to this important matter. Should you have any questions about this request, please contact Kelly Lieupo in Senator Feinstein's office ([kelly\\_lieupo@feinstein.senate.gov](mailto:kelly_lieupo@feinstein.senate.gov)) or Aakash Singh in Senator Grassley's office ([aakash\\_singh@grassley.senate.gov](mailto:aakash_singh@grassley.senate.gov)). We look forward to your report.

Sincerely,



Charles Grassley  
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator