

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 15, 2023

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State

Dear Secretary Blinken:

On March 1, 2023, the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) sent you a letter outlining 14 open recommendations which your department has failed to respond to for more than two years. These recommendations include \$40 million in questioned costs, 20 instances of noncompliance with laws or regulations, and 24 internal control deficiencies.¹ The list is extensive, embarrassing, and requires an immediate explanation. The Department of State's (DOS) failure to fully address these recommendations for more than two years shows contempt toward the taxpayers who funded your activity.

The law requires the Department of State to submit management decisions on all inspector general findings and recommendations within six months and to take final actions to implement recommendations within 12 months of an inspector general report. DOS, disappointingly, has not taken either of these steps for well over two years.²

DOS's Bureau of the Comptroller and Global Financial Services recently emailed SIGAR a response to their "repeated requests" for responses.³ According to SIGAR, DOS informed them that they will not provide a consolidated response to SIGAR's letter. Instead, DOS said the "responsible State bureaus would directly provide status updates for each recommendation."⁴

In an email to my staff, SIGAR apprised my office of the actions DOS has taken to remedy concerns since SIGAR sent the letter. Of the \$40 million in questioned costs, you have certified a little over \$19,000 as allowable. You have also entered negotiations with one auditee about recovering \$191,000 of the \$40 million; but this action is not yet complete. In two years, that's all you can show the taxpayer; this is unacceptable.

Compliance with rules, regulations, and laws—especially when dealing with taxpayer money—is a demand, not an option. In order for Congress to better understand what steps you

¹ Letter from John Sopko to Antony Blinken, *Outstanding Financial Audit Recommendations to State*, Page 1, (Mar. 1, 2023). [SIGAR Alert Letter 23-17 Outstanding Financial Audit Recommendations to State.pdf](#)

² As of March 1, 2022, "State has not complied with these requirements or its commitment to promptly resolve recommendations" from SIGAR's Oct. 2020 report. *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.* at 2.

have taken to be proper stewards of the taxpayers' money, please provide the following information by March 29, 2023:

1. Rolling updates on the progress of the "responsible State bureaus" for each recommendation made by SIGAR;
2. The reason(s) for the delay in response and action concerning SIGAR's inquiries and recommendations;
3. A copy of the responsible contracting officer's determination about the allowability of all questioned costs identified in SIGAR's recommendations;
4. All records illustrating DOS's efforts to collect any disallowed amounts or their reimbursement; and
5. All records of communication, such as memoranda, e-mail, and records of meetings, relating to DOS's efforts to address the issues identified in the recommendations.

For questions, please contact my Budget Committee staff at (202) 224-0642.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget