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ASIAN AND PACIFIC
SECURITY AFFAIRS

FEB 12 2018

The Honorable Claire McCaskill
Ranking Member
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator McCaskill:

Thank you for your October 20, 2017, letter to Secretary Mattis concerning the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) report on Afghan National Defense and Security Forces personnel going absent without leave from U.S.-based training. I am responding on behalf of the Secretary.

The Department of Defense shares your concerns and those raised in SIGAR's report. The enclosure provides specific responses to the questions in your letter. It is our goal to ensure that all Afghan military students who attend U.S.-based training successfully complete their training and return to Afghanistan to defend their country.

Thank you for your steadfast support of our mission in Afghanistan and for our men and women in uniform.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randall G. Schriver".

Randall G. Schriver

Enclosure:
Response to October 20, 2017, Letter Specific Questions



**Department of Defense Responses to
Senator McCaskill's Questions on
Afghan Personnel Going AWOL from U.S.-Based Training**

Q1: The SIGAR report stated that as of March 7, 2017, 13 trainees from Afghanistan remain AWOL. At this time, have these individuals been located? If not, why? If so, what is their status?

DoD Response: According to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), as of February 2018, nine Afghan military personnel remain AWOL. Despite the best efforts of numerous agencies, these Afghans have not been located, and they remain in an AWOL status. The rest of the Afghan security forces members who went AWOL from the U.S.-based training have been deported, voluntarily left the United States, are in detention for processing or have applied for a legal immigration status with the Department of Homeland Security.

Q2: Of those trainees that went AWOL from Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, when did they go AWOL and what is their current status?

DoD Response: According to the Department of Homeland Security, eleven Afghans went AWOL from training at the U.S. Army Military Police School or the U.S. Army Engineer School, both located at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. The Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) has accounted for all eleven AWOL Afghans, including six in a legal status in the United States and five who departed the United States. Legal status is defined as a formal and recognized request for a change in status. Some of the Afghans have been granted permanent residence in the United States. The remainder are allowed to remain in the United States pending a final determination on their applications. When the Afghans applied for a change of status, they were required to provide the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service with their current addresses. If a change of status is denied, the individual will receive a notice from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service to appear before an Immigration Judge leading to removal proceedings.

Q3: What kind of notification does DoD provide to state and local law enforcement officials and to the public when trainees go AWOL?

DoD Response: DSCA's Security Assistance Management Manual provides specific guidance to the Services on actions to take if an Afghan or any International Military Student (IMS) goes AWOL. The military schools where Afghans and other IMSs train have an International Military Student Office (IMSO) to support the international students. The IMSO develops a local accountability process with the school and other supporting military organizations to ensure they can account for all IMSs. If the IMSO determines that an IMS has gone AWOL, DSCA requires the IMSO to notify immediately the Department of Homeland Security/Immigration and Customs Enforcement (both the local and national offices), the appropriate Military Department Training Manager and Country Program Manager, and the appropriate Combatant Command responsible for the country sending the student.

The normal notification process does not include the IMSO directly contacting local law enforcement organizations; instead, the Department of Homeland Security makes the

individual's AWOL status and identification information available to local law enforcement through the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Criminal Background Check System.

Q4: Please describe the oversight and supervision for trainees from Afghanistan. Does DoD have any plans to expand the Afghan Student Management Office to help supervise trainees while in the United States? Does DoD have any plans to expand or alter in any way its level or means of oversight and supervision of Afghan trainees?

DoD Response: The International Student Management Office (ISMO) supporting the school or installation where training is taking place is directly responsible for the oversight and supervision of IMSs, including Afghan students. ISMO support varies depending on the type of training and other factors based on the students attending the training.

The Afghanistan Student Management Office (ASMO) Team, funded by the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund, assists IMSOs by providing additional support and supervision for Afghan students attending training at Joint Base San Antonio—including English language instruction taught there at Defense Language Institute—and at Moody Air Force Base in Georgia.

The U.S. Air Force (USAF) plans to establish an ASMO office in Fort Worth, Texas, to manage the Afghan pilots and maintenance technicians attending the AC-208 training program when it begins in the fall of 2018. In addition, USAF has requested that the Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan fund Afghan officers to serve as Afghan Liaison Officers at each USAF location in the United States at which Afghans are trained.

The Department will continue to monitor the situation and evaluate whether Afghan efforts to vet students properly will address the problem. If necessary, the Department will consider reducing the number of U.S.-based training opportunities for Afghan personnel.

Q5: What is the average cost to train an ANDSF soldier in the United States?

DoD Response: The cost varies widely depending on the type of training. Training costs include: English language training, preparatory courses, tuition, travel, and living allowances. The following are examples of the costs for IMS attendance, whether they are from Afghanistan or other countries, at numerous U.S. military schools: U.S. Army Ranger School, \$51,000; Command and General Staff Course, \$137,000; U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, \$128,000; Engineer Basic Officer Leaders Course, \$64,000; National War College, \$215,000; Army Flight School, UH-60A Track, \$488,000; and U.S. Marine Corps Expeditionary Warfare Course, \$68,600.

Q6: SIGAR reported that one of the major reasons for Afghan trainees to go AWOL was because of perceived job insecurity when they return. Does DOD have any plan to ensure trainees have job security when they return to Afghanistan after completing their training in the United States? Does DOD have a plan to work with individuals in MOD and MOI to ensure Afghan trainees return to the billets that left or will have new ones reflecting their training when they return?

DoD Response: The Department agrees that all Afghans attending U.S.-based training should be placed in an appropriate assignment when they return to Afghanistan. The Department is working with the Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan (CSTC-A) and the Afghan Military Attaché at the Afghan Embassy in Washington, D.C., to address this issue. Generally, this problem is more likely to affect senior officers attending relatively long courses, such as a senior service war college, which in many cases includes preparatory English language training; such officers could be in the United States for more than a year. During the officer’s U.S.-based training, the Afghan Ministry of Defense (MoD) will place another officer in the billet that the student previously occupied, similar to how the U.S. military manages billets. We are working with MoD to strengthen its officer career management capacity and to ensure that the appropriate MoD organizations are aware far enough in advance that a particular officer is returning to facilitate placement in his or her prior assignment or reassignment to a new position.

Q7: SIGAR reported that another major reason for Afghan trainees to go AWOL was because they feared for their personal safety and that of their families when they returned to Afghanistan. What action is DoD taking to improve the physical security of Afghan trainees and their families in Afghanistan?

DoD Response: The Department will continue to work with CSTC-A and the Afghan MoD to address these concerns. Overall, the security of Afghan military personnel and their families is the responsibility of the Afghan MoD. DoD advisors are assisting the MoD by assessing the feasibility of a program to provide secure, on-base housing for those personnel who are most vulnerable to threats. Also, DoD has advised Afghan and Resolute Support officials to ensure that Afghan pilots do not have a media or social network presence that makes them identifiable to those who would do them, or their families, harm.

Q8: Is DOD taking any other actions to reduce the number of Afghan trainees going AWOL, find any that are currently AWOL, and improve the process to locate and apprehend ones when they go AWOL?

DoD Response: The Department will continue to monitor the situation and evaluate whether Afghan efforts to vet students properly will address the problem. If necessary, the Department will consider reducing the number of U.S.-based training opportunities for Afghan personnel.

The Department of Homeland Security is responsible for finding and apprehending AWOL foreign military students in the United States if they have not fled beyond U.S. borders. The Department of Defense will continue to cooperate with other U.S. government departments and agencies to address the Afghan AWOL situation, including prompt notification of appropriate authorities when a student goes AWOL and ensuring that biometric data from all Afghans attending U.S.-based training is made available to those agencies.