
**OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL
FOR AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION**

**INSPECTION OF HABIB RAHMAN SECONDARY SCHOOL
CONSTRUCTION PROJECT IN KAPISA PROVINCE:
DESIGN AND SAFETY ISSUES REQUIRE ATTENTION**



October 26, 2009

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SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION
400 Army Navy Drive
Arlington, Virginia 22202

October 26, 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR: Commander, United States Forces-Afghanistan

Commander, Combined Joint Task Force-82

SUBJECT: SIGAR Inspection Report 10-3: Inspection of Habib Rahman Secondary School
Construction Project in Kapisa Province: Design and Safety Issues Require Attention

This report provides observations, findings, and recommendations of an inspection of a school construction project funded by the Commander's Emergency Response Program, and managed by the Kapisa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). This inspection focused on the management, design, and construction work for the Habib Rahman Secondary School located in the Nijrab District of Kapisa Province. This construction project cost the U.S. government \$312,000 dollars. It is one of 12 school projects initiated by the Kapisa PRT during the past 18 months.

The Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) conducted the inspection between June and August 2009. A summary of our report is on page ii. When preparing the final report, we considered written comments submitted by United States Forces-Afghanistan and incorporated information provided from these comments, as appropriate, into the report. These comments are reprinted in Appendix C of this report.

The inspection was conducted under the authority of Public Law 110-181 and the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended; and performed in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspections issued by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency.

Very respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Guy Sands-Pingot", is located below the "Very respectfully," text.

Guy Sands-Pingot
Assistant Inspector General for Inspections
Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction



SIGAR

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction

Summary of Report: SIGAR Inspection 10-3

October 26, 2009

Inspection of Habib Rahman Secondary School Construction Project in Kapisa Province: Design and Safety Issues Require Attention

Why SIGAR Did This Inspection –

SIGAR conducts inspections of Afghanistan infrastructure reconstruction projects to determine whether U.S. funds are used appropriately, contract terms are met, adequate oversight is provided, and the project can be maintained upon turnover to Afghan authorities.

What SIGAR Inspected –

In June and August 2009, SIGAR inspected the Habib Rahman Secondary School construction project being built in a remote part of Nijrab District, Kapisa Province, Afghanistan. The design plan called for a two story, 24 classroom school building capable of serving up to 2,000 students to be built at a cost of \$312,000 funded with money from the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP). This education infrastructure project was proposed by the Kapisa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) and initially approved for implementation in August 2008.

What SIGAR Found –

Project Management and Quality Assurance: SIGAR found that the PRT's management and quality assurance program for this project was inadequate during the early phases of its implementation as evidenced by a number of contracting missteps, a lack of project documentation, and insufficient quality control measures. However, as a result of improved project oversight procedures on the part of the PRT, SIGAR's onsite visits in June and August found construction to be largely on time, within budget, and generally meeting the contract's quality requirements.

Design Flaws Which Impact Safety: SIGAR found two areas of concern that require attention.

- Unfinished work left over from earlier construction at the site continues to cause major design and safety issues. The contract does not require the removal of this unfinished structure and currently there are no plans to have it demolished. SIGAR believes this abandoned construction site occupies valuable space which could be used for a number of other purposes. Additionally, it presents an unsafe environment for school children.
- The lack of a reinforced retaining wall and the associated earth removal work needed in the rear of the school which is adjacent to the base of a hill could pose a hazard to building occupants from potential rock and mud slides. This problem resulted from the decision to build the new school behind the unfinished work site which required the contractor to excavate a portion of the hill to make room for the new construction. The existing masonry security perimeter wall is insufficient to protect the school from debris falling from the hillside.

What SIGAR Recommends –

That the Commander, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan and Commander, Kapisa PRT initiate a follow-on CERP project to correct the design and safety deficiencies noted in this report.

For more information, contact SIGAR Public affairs at (703) 602-8742 or PublicAffairs@sigar.mil



View of new school construction obscured by the unfinished and unusable structure of a previous construction project. (Photo provided by SIGAR)



View of the limited offset distance from the base of a hill which could be subject to rock and mud slides. (Photo provided by SIGAR)

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Inspection Objectives

SIGAR conducts inspections of Afghanistan infrastructure reconstruction projects to determine whether U.S. funds are used appropriately, contract terms are met, adequate oversight is provided, and the project can be maintained upon turnover to Afghan authorities.

SIGAR inspected the Habib Rahman Secondary School construction project managed by the Kapisa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), which is a component of United States Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A), between June and August 2009 and conducted onsite visits of the school construction work on June 21 and August 12, 2009.

Details on our inspection scope and methodology are provided in Appendix A.

Project Background

In support of Afghanistan's educational goals, the United States has sponsored the construction of hundreds of schools and educational facilities throughout Afghanistan since 2002. As part of this effort, the Habib Rahman Secondary School construction project was proposed by the Kapisa PRT in summer 2008 and approved for implementation in August 2008. Located in the remote and mountainous Nijrab District of Kapisa Province (see Figure 1), the intent of the project was to build a school compound that would serve an isolated community that has a growing population of children for whom no adequate school structure previously existed. (See Site Photo 1)

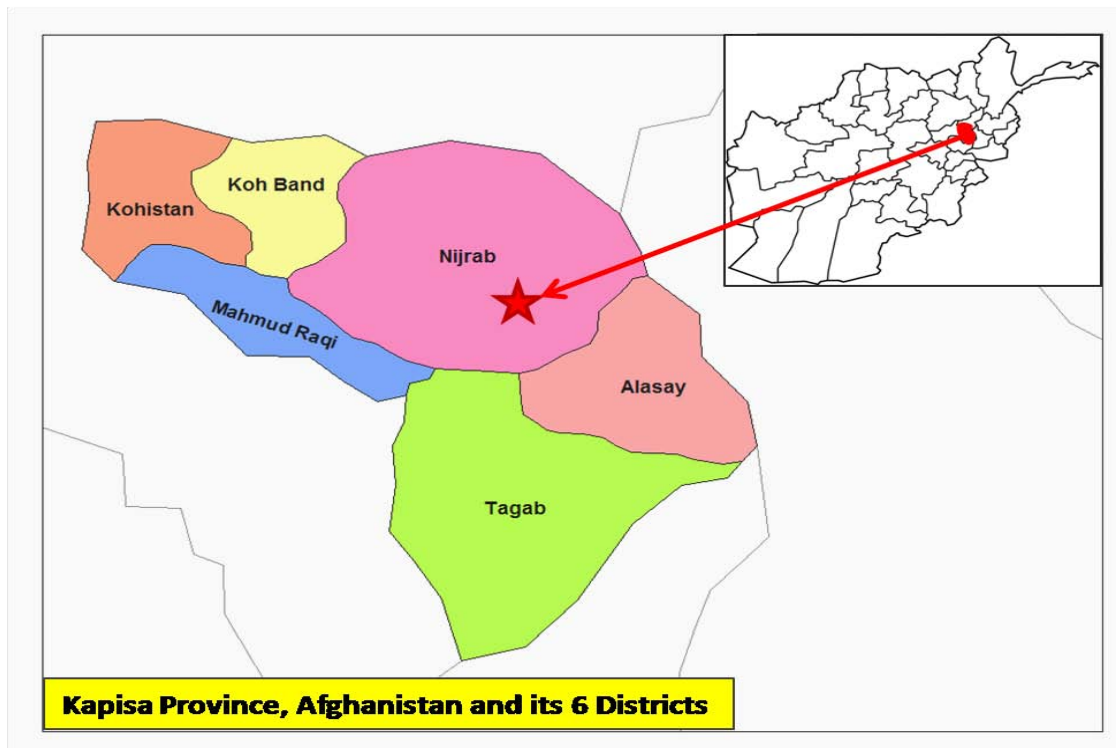


Figure 1: The Habib Rahman Secondary School is located in the mountainous Nijrab District of Kapisa Province shown by the red star. (Map provided by the Afghanistan Information Management System)

The project is part of a larger school construction initiative approved for implementation in August 2008 with funding provided by the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP).¹ As part of this initiative, 12 school construction projects have been initiated over the past 18 months in Kapisa Province.



Site Photo 1: View of partially completed school building. Portions of the previously constructed and abandoned structure can be seen to the right of the photograph. (Photo provided by SIGAR)

Contract Costs and Timing

After a series of earlier contract award problems, the current firm fixed price contract was awarded on December 22, 2008, at a total cost of \$312,000, with a performance period of 270 days.²

Contract Requirements and Standards

The contract calls for the construction of a two-story, 24 classroom school building capable of serving up to 2,000 students. Associated structures include a power generation house that requires the installation of a 10 kilowatt diesel fuel generator, a latrine, a hand operated water pump well and reservoir, and concrete walkways in addition to site preparation and the removal of rubble and refuse. Additionally, the contractor is responsible for fabricating and installing enough student bench desks for the students who would attend the school.

At the time of SIGAR's inspection in August, it was estimated that the project was almost 50 percent complete (see Site Photo 1) with significant progress made on the main school building and perimeter wall.

¹ This initiative was directed by Regional Command East, the higher headquarters of the Kapisa PRT and one of five regional commands that comprise the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force within Afghanistan. Regional Command East also serves as the headquarters for the Combined Joint Task Force located at Bagram Air Field which reports to USFOR-A.

² The project experienced a series of false starts beginning in August 2008 with a contract award to the Provincial Director of Education to serve as the prime contractor. This award to line ministries was later was determined to be prohibited for CERP-funded projects as result of new guidelines. As a result the original contract was terminated and the PRT re-awarded the contract to a local construction firm in December 2008.

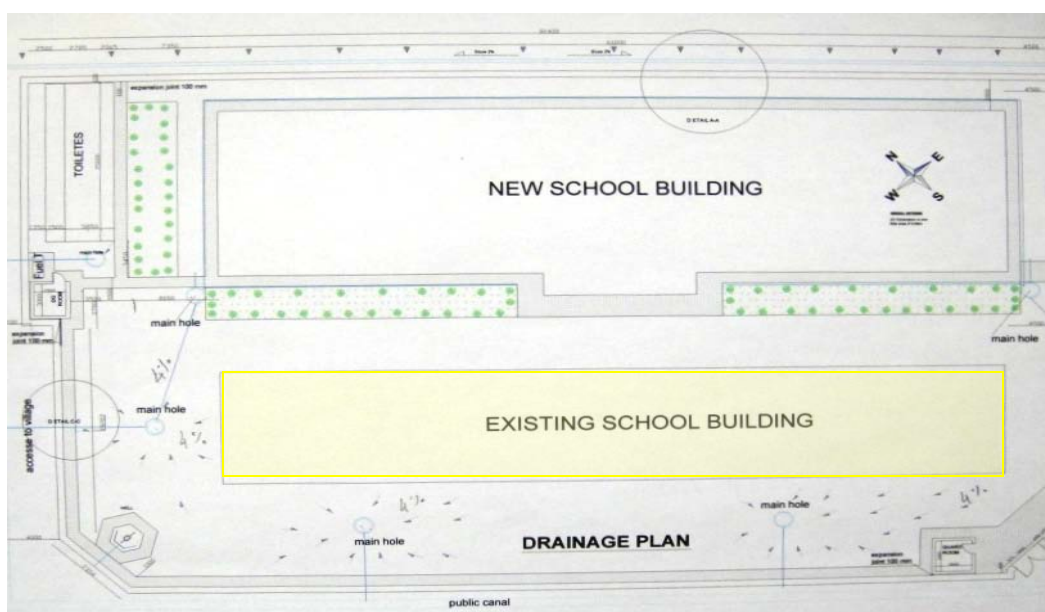


Figure 2: Design Plan for the Habib Rahman Secondary School which builds around a previously built, unfinished structure (shaded in yellow) rather than demolishing it. (Illustration provided by Kapisa PRT)

SIGAR Inspection Findings

SIGAR found that after a number of contracting missteps made during the initial phases of the project, construction efforts appear to be largely on schedule, within budget, and in general compliance with the quality standards called for in the new school construction contract. However, the project suffers from two major design flaws that create unsafe conditions.

Abandoned Construction Site Is Unsafe and Could be Used for Other Purposes

The first design flaw in the project noted by SIGAR focuses on the existence of a previously constructed but unfinished and unsafe structure (see Site Photo 2 and Figure 2) which occupies valuable land that could be used for a number of other purposes.³ When the Kapisa PRT became involved in the school project in the summer of 2008 following discussions with the Provincial Director of Education, it was decided that the existing structure should not be used because of concerns regarding its structural soundness. The current contract did not require the removal of this prior construction and PRT officials noted that they do not have plans to remedy this problem. SIGAR could not determine why this unfinished and unsafe structure was not demolished as part of the initial project proposal except for statements from the current PRT staff which indicated that local authorities believed they could make use of the unfinished structure. Despite attempts to

³ Several years ago, prior to the initiation of this CERP project, an international non-governmental organization started construction of a school building on the same site. The partially built structure was never completed due to a number of contractual and structural problems encountered during construction.

locate documents that would provide definitive details on the construction of this partially built structure, SIGAR could find no records or individuals who could offer further information on this decision.



Site Photo 2: View of earlier school construction that was left unfinished and abandoned for several years. This abandoned structure stands directly next to the main road leaving no clearance room for further construction in front. (Photo provided by Kapisa PRT)

Lack of Retaining Wall Poses Risk to School Occupants

In order to make room for the present construction site, which had to be built around the abandoned construction site, the contractor was required to excavate an extensive area 50 meters into the adjacent hillside. For this reason, the new school building was constructed adjacent to an embankment at the base of a steep hillside (see Site Photo 3) near a flood plain that was graded in order to accommodate the new school compound.

SIGAR found that the rear of the school building abuts the base of the embankment slope of the hill leaving a space of less than 2 meters between the perimeter wall and the rear wall of the school. Proper construction of a retaining wall requires masonry reinforcement of the wall as well as a footing constructed to the correct dimensions. Such a retaining wall is needed to hold back potential rock and mudslides. SIGAR considers the absence of a retaining wall to be a significant deficiency because the embankment slope may be subject to rock and mud slides that could pose an imminent hazard to building occupants.

SIGAR believes that the Kapisa PRT Quality Assurance Representative responsible for the planning of this project should have insisted on the construction of an appropriately designed retaining wall, as well as additional site grading to ensure an adequate offset between the school and the embankment was included in the original statement of work. These steps would have produced an adequate and safe school structure that would protect its occupants from landslides and other site hazards.



Site Photo 3: View of the embankment at the rear of the school building. Although a perimeter wall was subsequently built, it does not afford the structural protection against mud and rockslides that a properly designed and constructed retaining wall would provide. (Photo provided by Kapisa PRT)

Quality Control and Assurance Have Improved

At the time of SIGAR’s June site visit, key project management documents such as a proper Quality Control Plan, work schedules, and routine progress reports from the contractor, were largely missing from the project file. SIGAR believes the Kapisa PRT’s management of the project, as well as the conduct of its Quality Assurance Program, were inadequate during the initial stages of this project as evidenced by the numerous contracting missteps discussed earlier. However, SIGAR found that both the contractor’s and the PRT’s quality review systems improved significantly between our June and August site visits as a result of increased interest in the project on the part of the PRT. Improvements implemented during this time period included regularly scheduled visits by the PRT’s Quality Assurance Representative (see Site Photos 4 and 5 below), the filing of daily progress reports by the contractor, and development of a “coaching” program to teach proper construction techniques to work crews by the PRT. These improvements have largely corrected the earlier performance problems observed by SIGAR for the new school construction.



Site Photos 4 and 5: View of Kapisa PRT’s Quality Assurance Representative inspecting construction progress. (Photo provided by SIGAR)

Conclusions

While contract cost, schedule, and quality requirements have largely been met, SIGAR found that this project suffers from two major design flaws which have safety implications that should be resolved.

Recommendations

SIGAR recommends that the Commander, USFOR-A and the Commander, Kapisa PRT initiate a follow-on CERP project to correct the design and safety deficiencies noted in this report.

Agency Comments and Response

USFOR-A and the Kapisa PRT provided written responses to a draft of this report which are included in Appendix C.

In its response, USFOR-A indicated that it concurred with the information contained in the SIGAR report but stated that its representatives had not visited the project site. USFOR-A also stated that the demolition of old buildings is an approved CERP project category and that the recommended project could be implemented if it met one of the Commander's objectives. The response further added that the demolition "... seems like a job the community might be able to accomplish themselves." USFOR-A advised SIGAR that it had no basis from which to provide a concurrence or non-concurrence on the need for a retaining wall.

In its response, the Kapisa PRT agreed with the recommendation for a follow-on project to address deficiencies, particularly the need for a rear retaining wall. The PRT indicated that the partially completed structure had not been removed "at the request of Nijrab government officials and local *shura*⁴ leaders." The PRT further stated that local engineers were attempting to acquire funding to "build a small community center and/or library on the site that may use some of the existing structure." SIGAR believes this previously built construction work to be structurally inadequate for reuse and requires immediate attention. An examination of sections of the partially constructed structure found poor construction methods and inferior materials used that call its structural soundness into question. For this reason SIGAR continues to believe the existing structure should be demolished with the caveat that the PRT advise Nijrab government officials and local leaders of the reasons for the removal and seek their concurrence for the need of a separate location for a proposed community center and/or library.

(This report was conducted under the SIGAR Inspection Project Code SIGAR-002d-I)

⁴ A *shura* is a term used throughout Afghanistan to describe a consultative body. At the local and tribal levels, leaders meet in a shura to deliberate key decisions affecting their communities.

Appendix A- Scope and Methodology

SIGAR performed this project inspection from June to August 2009 in accordance with Quality Standards for Inspections issued by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. The inspection team included the Assistant Inspector General for Inspections and an engineer inspector.

In performing this project inspection, SIGAR:

- Reviewed contract documentation to include the following:
 - Contract Kapisa-Nijrab-8033-22107 issued by the Kapisa-Parwan PRT on December 21, 2008; relevant purchase orders, invoices, and vouchers dealing with the project; the Statement of Work with all required specifications and accompanying documentation.
 - All documentation prepared and presented by the contractor dealing with the construction of the school project.
 - The project Survey and Assessment Plan including design drawings and specifications, PRT quality assurance reports and records, construction progress photographs and other documentation brought to the inspection team's attention.
- Interviewed the previous and current PRT Commanders and other knowledgeable members of the PRT staff; the contractor and work foreman who were present during the on-site visits to the school construction sites made in both June and August 2009; and the Kapisa Provincial Director of Education.
- Conducted onsite inspections of the school project during visits on June 20 and August 12, 2009. Personnel from the Kapisa PRT (that included the previous and current PRT Engineer and members of their staff) accompanied SIGAR inspectors during these inspection visits.

Appendix B – Abbreviations

CERP	Commander's Emergency Response Program
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
SIGAR	Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
USFOR-A	United States Forces-Afghanistan

Appendix C – Agency Comments



HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES FORCES-AFGHANISTAN
KABUL, AFGHANISTAN
APO AE 09356

USFOR-A DCDR-S

23 September 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 400 Army Navy Drive, Arlington, VA 22202

SUBJECT: USFOR-A Response to Draft Report: Inspection of Habib Rahman Secondary School Construction Project, Kapisa Province: Project Design Issues Require Attention (SIGAR Inspection 09-05)

1. Reference Final – Draft Report SIGAR Inspection-09-05, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, subject same as above.
2. This memorandum formally responds to recommendations within the draft report.
3. Point of contact for this action is USFOR-A IG, Col Lawrence Brundidge, DSN: 318-237-1678.

Encl
USFOR-A Response to Draft Report 09-05

John A. MacDonald
JOHN A. MACDONALD *B6, USA*
Major General, USA
Deputy Commander, Support
United States Forces- Afghanistan

[Note: When the draft of this report was sent for agency comment, it was tentatively designated as SIGAR Inspection 09-05. Since receiving agency comments, this report has been re-designated SIGAR Inspection 10-3 as it is being issued in FY 2010.]

SIGAR DRAFT – 09-05

**“Inspection of Habib Rahman Secondary School Construction Project, Kapisa Province:
Project Design Issues Require Attention”****USFOR-A COMMENTS
TO THE DRAFT REPORT**

RECOMMENDATION 1: SIGAR recommends that the Commander, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan and Commander, Kapisa PRT initiate a follow-on CERP project to correct the design deficiencies noted in this report to include demolishing the previously built but unusable structure on the school compound, and constructing a protective retaining wall at the rear of the new school in place of the perimeter wall. (page 6 of SIGAR report)

USFOR-A RESPONSE: USFOR-A concurs with information provided in this SIGAR Report. USFOR-A has not visited this project site and does not have access to the project file.

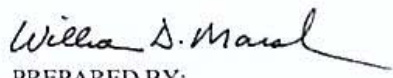
Demolition of old buildings is an approved project category. If the cleanup meets one of the Commander's objectives then this could be a legitimate CERP project, although this seems like a job the community might be able to accomplish themselves.

USFOR-A has no basis to concur or not with the need for a new retaining wall.

KP PRT RESPONSE: Kapisa PRT partially concurs with information provided in this SIGAR Report. A follow-on project should be implemented for correcting the rear security wall and potentially adding a retaining wall and proper drainage. The reinforced concrete frame of the previously built school was left on site at the request of Nijrab government officials and local shura leaders. The engineers of the area are working to get funding to build a small community center and/or library on the site that may use some of the existing structure.



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- Improve management and accountability over funds administered by U.S. and Afghan agencies and their contractors;
- Improve contracting and contract management processes;
- Prevent fraud, waste, and abuse; and
- Advance U.S. interests in reconstructing Afghanistan.

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