



**United States Department of State  
and the Broadcasting Board of Governors  
Office of Inspector General**

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## **Inspection of Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan**



*Architect's rendering of exterior of planned Embassy Kabul office building*

In what is nominally a post-conflict environment, Embassy Kabul has significant responsibility for nation building. The dedicated, all-volunteer staff exhibits high morale and energy in carrying out its duties. Essentially the entire American staff turns over each summer, and some officers are inexperienced in the jobs to which they are assigned. OIG endorses the embassy's imaginative proposal to ameliorate these problems. Almost all Afghan employees were hired after the embassy reopened in 2002. Overburdened Americans have little time to train, mentor, and evaluate the locally employed staff. Supervision will be even more problematic when some American officers move into the new chancery while their local employees work in temporary offices scattered across the compound.

Job performance is significantly impacted by very strict security requirements that constrain movements both in Kabul and throughout the country. Although security considerations are self-evident and paramount in the operating environment, the aggressive conduct and sometimes-unprofessional appearance of the embassy's contract protective detail need to be addressed.

The U.S. diplomatic presence in Afghanistan is large for an embassy in a poor and third world country of 29 million people, but perhaps too small for one charged with leading U.S. efforts to rebuild a shattered nation.

Afghanistan was the source of almost 90 percent of the global production of raw opium in 2004. Inevitably, counternarcotics issues will vie with counterterrorism and counterinsurgency on the U.S. government's policy agenda. Meshing these critical objectives is neither easy nor automatic. Embassy Kabul is taking commendable steps to wean the host government from over-dependence on the U.S. government for policy guidance and policy decisions.

The mission encompasses 23 provincial reconstruction teams (PRT) scattered around Afghanistan. These are embedded with U.S. and coalition military units that provide necessary security and life support for the civilian and military (civic action) personnel dedicated to furthering policy objectives. At present, the activities of each PRT reflect capabilities and perceptions of the members assigned and are designed to meet perceived local needs. There is a need for a more defined strategy, closer coordination and supervision, and evaluation of PRT work specifically to include assessment of the cost-benefit ratios of these operations.

## Background



Map of Afghanistan

From 1880 to 1973, Afghanistan was ruled by a kingly dynasty. Since the overthrow of the monarchy, Afghanistan has experienced almost continuous conflict. A short-lived republic under Sardar Mohammad Daoud gave way to Marxist rule in April 1978 and an Afghani tilt towards the Soviet Union. The comity between Kabul and Moscow soon soured, and on Christmas Eve, 1979, Soviet troops invaded, but they were unable to subdue the country. Abetted by the U.S. government and allies, Afghan freedom fighters (*mujahideen*) ultimately inflicted such heavy tolls that the Soviets were forced to withdraw.

Afterwards, the mujahideen fell on each other, and a bloody civil war ensued. When the zealous and puritanical Taliban movement gained strength in the mid-1990s, the war-weary population initially welcomed them. Only later did harsh imposition of retrogressive interpretations of Islam alienate significant numbers of the population. Based on perceived religious affinities, the Taliban government gave sanctuary to rabidly anti-Western terrorist elements, most notably the al-Qaida movement led by Osama bin Laden. After the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the Taliban refused to turn over al-Qaida leaders and, on October 7, 2001, the United States led a military action aimed at overthrowing the regime in Kabul. The capital fell on November 13, 2001, and the U.S. embassy reopened on December 17, 2001.

Now, it is the U.S. government's turn to help Afghans establish governance and rule of law in what many perceive to be a state barely able to function. For instance, the al-Qaida movement remains in the mountainous region on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, and remnants of the Taliban fuel a counterinsurgency movement requiring constant military action. To address these threats to internal stability and external projection, approximately 20,000 American military personnel, augmented by forces from coalition partners, are in country under the control of the Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan (CFC-A). Coordination between the embassy and CFC-A is close and productive.

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