

the FARC and innocent civilians, categorizing both as actors in the conflict, when it has been civilians who have been the victims of the FARC's narco-terrorism and the FARC's brutality.

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As if that were not awful enough, Mr. Speaker, to equate innocent victims with the FARC in the courts of law, the draft agreement goes even further by allowing those very same violent drug dealers and insurgent leaders to not only stand for election to public office, but also to use the proceeds of the drug trade, the kidnappings, and all of the other illicit sources to fund their campaigns. This is incredible.

But the flaws in this deal don't end there, Mr. Speaker. This agreement will prevent the United States from extraditing any FARC members who have been accused of crimes against American citizens. This is especially troubling when we consider that many of the FARC members may receive immunity.

It would not surprise me if the Obama administration uses this deal as an excuse to drop the FARC from our list that designates the FARC as a foreign terrorist organization.

The Obama administration has never met a bad deal that it did not want to say yes to, especially if the deal empowers tyrants or acquiesces to terrorist demands. This puts our credibility and our national security at risk.

But what is really driving these requests is the Obama administration's continued quest to appease the Castro regime. This is the same Castro regime whose weapons systems from China to Cuba was intercepted by the Colombian Government just last March and which were suspected of being intended for the FARC.

While negotiations were taking place, they were doing this illicit arms shipment. Incredible. It is the same Castro regime that, for decades, has supported the FARC and trained many of its leaders in the terror camps.

Mr. Speaker, Cuba has no interest in a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Colombia. The Castro regime is only interested in leveraging a strengthened and legitimized FARC as a dominant player in Colombia.

The proposed deal as well as those requests by Colombia of the U.S. Government are not only dangerous to our Colombian partners, but they are also dangerous to our national security and our interests in the region.

I urge my fellow Members of Congress to speak out against this terrorist group, the FARC, as well as to block any attempts by our administration to go soft in these negotiations because this weak position could threaten our safety and block American citizens from receiving their rightful justice.

I urge my colleagues to block attempts by the Obama administration to use U.S. taxpayer dollars for this

agreement between the Colombian Government and the FARC.

A reinforced FARC with established political legitimacy sets a dangerous precedent for other organizations with similar dangerous aspirations and anti-American objectives in the region.

Let's not force our constituents to pay for this flawed and dangerous deal with terrorist groups.

GUN CONTROL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SPEIER) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, on February 25, in Hesston, Kansas, a disgruntled coworker killed Renee Benjamin, 30; Josh Higbee, 31; and Brian Sadowsky, 44, with an imported Serbian AK-47-type assault weapon.

ATF has the power to ban these weapons. President George H.W. Bush demanded a ban in 1989. Ironically, his son, President George W. Bush, was pressured by the NRA when he took office to repeal the importation of the assault weapon ban.

Today I am introducing the Imported Assault Weapons Ban, a bill that would ban the importation of these assault weapons once and for all. This continued bloodshed must stop. But, somehow, my colleagues continue to accept outrageous violence as part of everyday life.

In February 2016—just last month—there were 35 mass shootings, which is to say 35 acts of violence where four or more people were wounded or killed. That is more than one per day.

Here are the real people who died because of gun violence in February. Sadly, I don't have time on the floor today to name those who were injured, but those who died include the following:

Marvin Douglass Lancaster, III, age 21, was killed while in an adult club on February 6 in Tampa, Florida. Christopher Houston, 20, was also shot there and died later.

Carlos Doroteo, 49, was killed while walking in his neighborhood on February 6 in Los Angeles, California.

Jennifer Jacques, 42; Arthur Norton, 58; and Phinny Norton, 60, were killed by Jennifer's 19-year-old son Dylan in their home on February 6 in Uvalde, Texas.

Ernesto Ayber, 29, was killed on February 7 in Rochester, New York.

Joseph Villalobos, 22, and Jonathan Avila Rojas, 33, were killed inside a nightclub on February 7 in Orlando, Florida.

Carlos Bates, 29, and Isaiah Major, III, 43, were killed at a Mardi Gras parade on February 7 in Pass Christian, Mississippi.

Dwight Hughes, Jr., 21, was killed on February 7 in Chicago, Illinois.

Trisha Nelson, 28, was killed by her fiancé, who was angry about parking, as she fled their car on February 12 in Plymouth, Minnesota. Her fiancé was later killed in a shootout with police.

Armando Curiel, 17; Raul Lopez, 19; and his brother Angel Lopez, 20, were killed in an SUV on February 18 in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Michael Broadnax, 41, was killed in a driveway on February 19 in Vallejo, California. His son, Bomani Broadnax, 22, died later of his injuries.

Officer James Lee Tartt, 44, was killed in a shootout on February 20 in Iuka, Mississippi. His family had just moved into their new home just a month earlier.

Manual Ortiz, 28, was killed at a bar on February 20 in Tampa, Florida. He had a month-old son.

Mary Lou Nye, 62; Mary Jo Nye, 60; Dorothy Brown, 74; and Barbara Hawthorne, 68, were killed in a parking lot on February 21 in Kalamazoo, Michigan. The gunman then killed Rich Smith, 53, and son Tyler Smith, 17.

Emma Wallace, 37, was killed in a car on February 21 in Hazelwood, Missouri.

The Buckner family, including mother Kimberly, father Vic, 18-year-old daughter Kaitlin, and 6-year-old daughter Emma, were killed at their family home on February 23 in Phoenix, Arizona. Their son, the shooter, was killed by police.

A deputy sheriff, Corporal Nate Carrigan, 35, was killed while serving an eviction notice on February 24 in Bailey, Colorado.

Lana Carlson, 49, and her sons Quinn, 16, and Tory, 18, as well as their neighbor, Donna Reed, 68, were killed at their home by Lana's husband on February 25 in Belfair, Washington.

Crystal Hamilton, 29, was killed by her husband on February 27 in Woodbridge, Virginia. Officer Ashley Guindon, also 29, was killed while responding to the scene. It was her first shift as a police officer.

An unidentified man was killed in a parking lot on February 28 in Riverside, California.

May the dead rest in peace, the wounded recover quickly and completely, and the bereaved receive comfort. These are the faces of Americans gunned down because we lack the guts to do anything about gun violence.

WASTE, FRAUD, AND ABUSE IN AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I came back to Washington, as my colleagues did, and I saw the headlines in Politico that said: Hill GOP on the Hot Seat Ahead of Recess. It was a piece about the leadership's effort to pass a \$1.7 trillion budget.

Mr. Speaker, we are headed off a fiscal cliff, with over \$19 trillion in debt. Yet, Congress keeps driving toward that cliff.

Like most Members of Congress, I go home every weekend. I live in eastern North Carolina. I am very active in my district. I talk to many people, from

the grocery store to church. Many times the conversation is: Why can't you in Congress wake up before it is too late?

We just heard Congressman BROOKS from Alabama talk about Venezuela. We are headed right there just as quick as we can.

The waste, fraud, and abuse in Afghanistan is a prime example of Congress not doing its job. When I tell people back home that it was reported recently by John Sopko, Inspector General of Afghanistan Reconstruction, that the Pentagon spent \$6 million to buy nine goats from Italy, some laugh and some are just disgusted.

How in the world could we keep funding the Pentagon when they waste money buying goats for \$6 million? The waste of American taxpayer dollars in Afghanistan never ends.

The Wall Street Journal recently ran a story titled: "Afghan Police Force Struggling to Maintain Membership," by Jessica Donati, in which she reports that more than 36,000 Afghanistan policemen left the force last year because of Taliban attacks and poor leadership.

We have spent \$18 billion on training the Afghan police force and, here again, we lost 36,000. The poor taxpayer. We keep funding this waste in Afghanistan like we have got plenty of money. What we are doing in the Congress is absolute madness.

Mr. Speaker, I will include in the RECORD a NBC News report titled: "12 Ways Your Tax Dollars Were Squandered in Afghanistan."

[From www.nbcnews.com, March 5, 2016]

12 WAYS YOUR TAX DOLLARS WERE SQUANDERED IN AFGHANISTAN

(By Alexander Smith)

The United States has now spent more money reconstructing Afghanistan than it did rebuilding Europe at the end of World War II, according to a government watchdog.

The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) said in a statement to Congress last week that when adjusted for inflation the \$113.1 billion plowed into the chaos-riven country outstripped the post-WWII spend by at least \$10 billion.

Billions have been squandered on projects that were either useless or sub-standard, or lost to waste, corruption, and systemic abuse, according to SIGAR's reports.

NBC News spoke to SIGAR's Special Inspector General John F. Sopko about 12 of the most bizarre and baffling cases highlighted by his team's investigations.

Paraphrasing Albert Einstein, Sopko said the U.S.'s profligate spending in Afghanistan is "the definition of insanity—doing the same things over and over again, expecting a different result."

1. \$486 MILLION FOR 'DEATHTRAP' AIRCRAFT THAT WERE LATER SOLD FOR \$32,000

Two of the G222 aircraft in a corner of Kabul International Airport in November 2013. SIGAR

The Pentagon spent close to half a billion dollars on 20 Italian-made cargo planes that it eventually scrapped and sold for just \$32,000, according to SIGAR.

"These planes were the wrong planes for Afghanistan," Sopko told NBC News. "The U.S. had difficulty getting the Afghans to fly them, and our pilots called them deathtraps. One pilot said parts started falling off while he was coming into land."

After being taken out of use in March 2013, the G222 aircraft, which are also referred to as the C-27A Spartan, were towed to a corner of Kabul International Airport where they were visible from the civilian terminal. They had "trees and bushes growing around them," the inspector general said.

Sixteen of the planes were scrapped and sold to a local construction company for 6 cents a pound, SIGAR said. The other four remained unused at a U.S. base in Germany.

Sopko called the planes "one of the biggest single programs in Afghanistan that was a total failure."

2. \$335 MILLION ON A POWER PLANT THAT USED JUST 1 PERCENT OF ITS CAPACITY

Tarakhil Power Plant pictured in October 2009. SIGAR

The Tarakhil Power Plant was fired up in 2009 to "provide more reliable power" to blackout-plagued Kabul, according to the United States Agency for International Development, which built the facility.

However, the "modern" diesel plant exported just 8,846 megawatt hours of power between February 2014 and April 2015, SIGAR said in a letter to USAID last August. This output was less than 1 percent of the plant's capacity and provided just 0.35 percent of power to Kabul, a city of 4.6 million people.

Furthermore, the plants "frequent starts and stops . . . place greater wear and tear on the engines and electrical components," which could result in its "catastrophic failure," the watchdog said.

USAID responded to SIGAR's report in June 2015, saying: "We have no indication that [Afghan state-run utility company] Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS), failed to operate Tarakhil as was alleged in your letter."

3. ALMOST \$500,000 ON BUILDINGS THAT 'MELTED' IN THE RAIN

The dry-fire range in Wardak is pictured in February 2013. SIGAR

U.S. officials directed and oversaw the construction of an Afghan police training facility in 2012 that was so poorly built that its walls actually fell apart in the rain. The \$456,669 dry-fire range in Wardak province was "not only an embarrassment, but, more significantly, a waste of U.S. taxpayers' money," SIGAR's report said in January 2015.

It was overseen by the U.S. Central Command's Joint Theater Support Contracting Command and contracted out to an Afghan firm, the Qesmatullah Nasrat Construction Company.

SIGAR said this "melting" started just four months after the building was finished in October 2012. It blamed U.S. officials' bad planning and failure to hold to account the Afghan construction firm, which used poor-quality materials. The U.S. subsequently contracted another firm to rebuild the facility.

Sopko called the incident "baffling."

4. \$34.4 MILLION ON A SOYBEAN PROGRAM FOR A COUNTRY THAT DOESN'T EAT SOYBEANS

Some of the remaining soybean inventory in March 2014 after it was imported from the U.S. to Afghanistan. SIGAR

"Afghans apparently have never grown or eaten soybeans before," SIGAR said in its June 2014 report. This did not stop the U.S. Department of Agriculture funding a \$34.4 million program by the American Soybean Association to try to introduce the foodstuff into the country in 2010.

The project "did not meet expectations," the USDA confirmed to SIGAR, largely owing to inappropriate farming conditions in Afghanistan and the fact no one wanted to buy a product they had never eaten.

"They didn't grow them, they didn't eat them, there was no market for them, and yet

we thought it was a good idea," Sopko told NBC News.

"What is troubling about this particular project is that it appears that many of these problems could reasonably have been foreseen and, therefore, possibly avoided," the inspector general wrote in a letter to Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack in June 2014.

5. ONE GENERAL'S EXPLANATION WHY 1,600 FIRE-PRONE BUILDINGS WEREN'T A PROBLEM

Fire breaks out at an arch-span building at the Afghan National Army's Camp Sayer in October 2012. SIGAR

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers built some 2,000 buildings to be used as barracks, medical clinics and fire stations by the Afghan National Army as part of a \$1.57-billion program. When two fires in October and December 2012 revealed that around 80 percent of these structures did not meet international building regulations for fire safety, Sopko said he was "troubled" by the "arrogant" response from a senior USACE chief.

Major General Michael R. Eyre, commanding general of USACE's Transatlantic Division, said the risk of fire was acceptable because "the typical occupant populations for these facilities are young, fit Afghan soldiers." Writing in a January 2014 memo published by SIGAR, Eyre said these recruits "have the physical ability to make a hasty retreat during a developing situation."

Sopko told NBC News that Eyre's comments "showed a really poor attitude toward our allies." He added: "It was an unbelievable arrogance, and I'm sorry to say that about a senior officer."

6. A \$600,000 HOSPITAL WHERE INFANTS WERE WASHED IN DIRTY RIVER WATER

A room in Salang hospital in January 2004. SIGAR

Despite the Department of Defense spending \$597,929 on Salang Hospital in Afghanistan's Parwan province, the 20-bed facility has been forced to resort to startling medical practices.

"Because there was no clean water, staff at the hospital were washing newborns with untreated river water," SIGAR's report said in January 2014. It added that the "poorly constructed" building was also at increased "risk of structural collapse during an earthquake."

NBC News visited the hospital in January 2014 and witnessed some disturbing practices: a doctor poking around a dental patient's mouth with a pair of unsterilized scissors before yanking out another's tooth with a pair of pliers.

The United States Forces-Afghanistan responded to SIGAR's report in January 2014 saying it would investigate why the building was not constructed to standard.

In a separate report, SIGAR said that USAID reimbursed the International Organization for Migration for spiraling costs while building Gardez Hospital, in Paktia province.

The IOM's "weak internal controls" meant it paid \$300,000 for just 600 gallons of diesel fuel—a price of \$500 per gallon when market prices should not have exceeded \$5, SIGAR said.

7. \$36 MILLION ON A MILITARY FACILITY THAT SEVERAL GENERALS DIDN'T WANT

An unused room at the so-called "64K" facility. SIGAR

The so-called "64K" command-and-control facility at Afghanistan's Camp Leatherneck cost \$36 million and was "a total waste of U.S. taxpayer funds," SIGAR's report said in May 2015.

The facility in Helmand province—named because it measured 64,000 square feet—was intended to support the U.S. troop surge of 2010.

However, a year before its construction, the very general in charge of the surge asked

that it not be built because the existing facilities were “more than sufficient,” the watchdog said. But another general denied this cancellation request, according to SIGAR, because he said it would not be “prudent” to quit a project for which funds had already been appropriated by Congress.

Ultimately, construction did not begin until May 2011, two months before the draw-down of the troops involved in surge. Sopko found the “well-built and newly furnished” building totally untouched in June 2013, with plastic sheets still covering the furniture.

“Again, nobody was held to account,” Sopko told NBC News, adding it was a “gross . . . really wasteful, extremely wasteful amount of money.”

He added: “We have thrown too much money at the country. We pour in money not really thinking about it.”

8. \$39.6 MILLION THAT CREATED AN AWKWARD CONVERSATION FOR THE U.S. AMBASSADOR

A now-defunct Pentagon task force spent almost \$40 million on Afghanistan’s oil, mining and gas industry—but no one remembered to tell America’s diplomats in Kabul, according to SIGAR, citing a senior official at the U.S. embassy in the city.

In fact, the first the U.S. ambassador knew about the multi-billion-dollar spend was when Afghan government officials thanked him for his country’s support, SIGAR said.

The project, administered by the Task Force for Business and Stability Operations (TFBSO), was part of a wider \$488 million investment that also included the State Department and USAID. These organizations “failed to coordinate and prioritize” their work, which created “poor working relationships, and . . . potential sustainability problems,” according to SIGAR.

It was, according to Sopko, “a real disaster.”

One USAID official told the watchdog it would take the U.S. “100 years” to complete the necessary infrastructure and training Afghanistan needs to completely develop these industries.

9. \$3 MILLION FOR THE PURCHASE—AND THEN MYSTERY CANCELLATION—OF EIGHT BOATS

One of the eight boats sitting in a Virginia warehouse in June 2014. SIGAR

SIGAR said the U.S. military has been unable to provide records answering “the most basic questions” surrounding the mystery purchase and cancellation of eight patrol boats for landlocked Afghanistan.

The scant facts SIGAR were able to find indicated the boats were bought in 2010 to be used by the Afghan National Police, and that they were intended to be deployed along the country’s northern river border with Uzbekistan.

“The order was cancelled—without explanation—nine months later,” SIGAR said. The boats were still sitting unused at a Navy warehouse in Yorktown, Virginia, as of 2014.

“We bought in a navy for a landlocked country,” Sopko said.

10. \$7.8 BILLION FIGHTING DRUGS—WHILE AFGHANS GROW MORE OPIUM THAN EVER

Afghan farmers harvest opium sap from a poppy field in Nangarhar province in May 2015. NOORULLAH SHIRZADA/AFP—Getty Images, file

Despite the U.S. plowing some \$7.8 billion into stopping Afghanistan’s drug trade, “Afghan farmers are growing more opium than ever before,” SIGAR reported in December 2014.

“Poppy-growing provinces that were once declared ‘poppy free’ have seen a resurgence in cultivation,” it said, noting that internationally funded irrigation projects may have actually increased poppy growth in recent years.

The “fragile gains” the U.S. has made on Afghan health, education and rule of law were being put in “jeopardy or wiped out by the narcotics trade, which not only supports the insurgency, but also feeds organized crime and corruption,” Sopko told U.S. lawmakers in January 2014.

Afghanistan is the world’s leader in the production of opium. In 2013, the value of Afghan opium was \$3 billion—equivalent to 15 percent of the country’s GDP—according to the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime.

Sopko told NBC News the picture is no more optimistic today. “No matter which metric you use, this effort has been a real failure,” he said.

11. \$7.8 MILLION ON A NEARLY-EMPTY BUSINESS PARK

The entrance to Shorandam Industrial Park in June 2014. SIGAR

The USAID-funded Shorandam industrial Park in Kandahar province was transferred to the Afghan government in September 2010 with the intention of accommodating 48 business and hundreds of local employees. Four years later, SIGAR inspectors found just one active company operating there.

This was due to the U.S. military building a power plant on one-third of the industrial park to provide electricity to nearby Kandahar City, causing “entrepreneurs to shy away from setting up businesses” at the site, SIGAR said in its report of April 2015.

After the military withdrew in mid-2014, the investigators were told that at least four Afghan businesses had moved into the industrial park. However, SIGAR said that it could not complete a thorough inspection because USAID’s contract files were “missing important documentation.”

12. \$81.9 MILLION ON INCINERATORS THAT EITHER WEREN’T USED OR HARMED TROOPS

The DOD spent nearly \$82 million on nine incineration facilities in Afghanistan—yet four of them never fired their furnaces, SIGAR said in February 2015. These four dormant facilities had eight incinerators between them and the wastage cost \$20.1 million.

In addition, SIGAR inspectors said it was “disturbing” that “prohibited items,” such as tires and batteries, continued to be burned in Afghanistan’s 251 burn pits. U.S. military personnel were also exposed to emissions from these pits “that could have lasting negative health consequences,” the watchdog said.

The Department of Defense said it was “vital” interested in exploring all possible ways to save taxpayer dollars and ensure we are good stewards of government resources.”

A spokesman added: “We’ll continue to work with SIGAR, and other agencies, to help get to the bottom of any reported issues or concerns.”

A spokesman for Afghanistan’s President Ashraf Ghani declined to comment on this story.

Mr. JONES. Some of the most egregious examples of waste in this list are the \$486 million the Pentagon paid for deathtrap aircraft that were scrapped and sold for \$32,000. You spend \$486 million and what you get back is scrap. It costs \$32,000. Also, \$500,000 on training facilities for Afghan police that melted in the rain. The poor American taxpayer.

John Sopko, the Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, has told Congress on many occasions to look at the waste, fraud, and abuse in Afghanistan. Yet, every year we will pass appropriations bills on the floor of

the House to continue to spend billions of dollars in Afghanistan. I do not understand it.

It is time for America to wake up. It is time for the Congress to wake up and bring our troops home from Afghanistan. It is time to say to Afghanistan: Fight it out, if you want to. It is your country.

Afghanistan is the graveyard of empires. There is a headstone in that graveyard that says: America, I am waiting for you. You are headed for this graveyard.

ZIKA VIRUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. RUIZ) for 5 minutes.

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise to address a serious public health issue facing our country.

As a physician, I am very concerned over the recent spread of the Zika virus in the Americas, particularly given the potential long-term effects that are now being linked to the virus.

Zika was first discovered in 1948 in Uganda. Until recently, little research or attention was paid to the virus. It was not thought to have any lasting effects until recently. Because of this, there is no vaccine, no drug treatment, and testing is not readily available.

It is important to note that four out of five individuals who contract Zika are unaware that they have it because they do not ever show any symptoms. For those that do, symptoms are generally mild.

However, as the virus continues to spread, researchers are identifying a link between Zika and infants being born with congenital microcephaly as well as a link between Zika and Guillain-Barre syndrome.

There are still many questions, and scientists are searching for answers. For example, can Zika be transmitted sexually? If so, for how long is it transmittable? What are the long-term health and economic effects of this infection?

While at this time there have been no reported cases of mosquito transmission within the U.S., there have been over 150 travel-related cases reported. Most recently a Zika case was found in Orange County, not too far from my district.

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The CDC is currently advising pregnant women to postpone travel to Zika-affected areas, and if they must travel, to first consult with their physician and take all necessary precautions to avoid mosquitos.

Last month, the administration submitted a supplemental appropriations request for emergency funding to help fight the Zika virus. And my physician-scientist colleagues at the CDC and NIH have echoed the need for funding.

As we enter mosquito season and families start to travel for summer vacation, it is important that we do not