

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.

□ 1030

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

delay this funding and work to ensure that we contain the damage the virus could cause if left unchecked. Timing is of the essence and emergency funding needs to be appropriated immediately to mitigate any potentially destructive effects.

This is why I sent a bipartisan letter, along with 61 of my colleagues, urging Speaker RYAN to bring to the floor legislation that would appropriate emergency funding to help fight the Zika virus.

This is not a Democratic issue. This is not a Republican issue. It is a public health and health security issue. The cost of not acting is just too high.

SHENANDOAH AREA COUNCIL BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA'S 2016 DISTINGUISHED CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOONEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of an outstanding member of my community in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia's Second Congressional District, Ed Wilson.

This afternoon in Martinsburg, Ed Wilson is being named the Shenandoah Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America's 2016 Distinguished Citizen of the Year. This award is given to exceptional members of the community who have "noteworthy and extraordinary leadership."

Past honorees include Senators Robert Byrd, Jay Rockefeller, SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO, and JOE MANCHIN, as well as Brigadier General V. Wayne Lloyd, the former head of the 167th Airlift Wing in Martinsburg.

My friend, Ed Wilson, also truly personifies all that this award embodies. Born in Woodbridge, New Jersey, Ed's journey of faith and service included a very early milestone.

At the age of 10, he joined the St. Vincent de Paul Society. This Catholic charitable organization, whose local chapter was founded by his wife, Midge, offers not a handout, but a hand up. This same ethic lies behind the mission of the Boy Scouts, who Ed has worked with for so many years.

Ed served in the Navy for 3 years before earning a position with the intelligence community as a linguist and analyst. Ed worked for the CIA for 31 years, 24 of which were overseas. He was stationed around the globe, in Europe, the Middle East, Central America, and Asia.

Finally, in 1977, Ed and his wife, Midge, moved to Falling Waters, in Berkeley County, West Virginia, where they have been committed to serving our community and its needs ever since.

Ed's work for our community has been called legendary by some, and I couldn't agree more. He has served with 16 agencies, charitable organiza-

tions, and community projects, including Big Brothers and Big Sisters of the Eastern Panhandle, Catholic Charities, March of Dimes, Martinsburg-Berkeley County Chamber of Commerce, Mountain State Apple Harvest Festival, and the United Way of the Eastern Panhandle.

Ed likes to say that life is too important to be taken seriously. I do agree, but I must add this. One of the serious reasons why the Boy Scouts honors Ed is the importance of his lifetime of service.

Ed provides an important role model for young men about the importance of commitment, virtue, culture, and just basic decency. With that in mind, I not only congratulate, but also thank my friend, Ed Wilson, for all he has done for our country and community.

WE NEED AN ALL-OF-THE-ABOVE ENERGY POLICY.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to comment on a recent statement made by the leading Democrat candidate for President and former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, who just on Sunday night on CNN was asked about her policies.

She said, "I am the only candidate which has a policy about bringing economic opportunity, using clean, renewable energy as the key into coal country because we are going to put a lot of coal miners and coal companies out of business."

Mr. Speaker, we need a President who has an all-of-the-above energy policy, not one who so blatantly discriminates against coal. This attack and war on coal that Hillary Clinton plans to continue, just like our current President, has devastated our State. We are in a recession in West Virginia. We need a President who will fight for our coal miners, promote the all-of-the-above energy policy, and utilize our country's natural resources, including coal.

This is important to West Virginia and everyone in the country, so I call upon all of us to look at the importance of this upcoming discussion on this issue.

PENN STATE STUDENTS COMMITTED TO ADDRESSING THE NATIONAL DEBT

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to laud the efforts of a student organization at Penn State University, located in the Pennsylvania Fifth Congressional District.

These students are participating, Mr. Speaker, in a nationwide competition called Up to Us. The goal is raising awareness of the national debt and the impact it will have on the leaders of tomorrow and generations to come, especially in terms of their future economic opportunities. The winning team

will be recognized later this year and will receive \$10,000.

The national debt isn't something you often hear much about from men and women in their late teens and early twenties, which is why I was so impressed by this.

These are signatures of more than 1,500 students seeking to raise awareness among the men and women who represent them in such places as the United States House of Representatives and the Senate.

I was happy to share some of the work we have done over the past few years in lowering the debt and pledge to continue that effort.

Spending has been reduced to historic levels under the Republican-led Congress. These fiscally responsible reductions are greater than those achieved under President Reagan and greater than those under former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich.

This has been a challenge, given that before Republicans took charge of the House, total spending to gross domestic production had skyrocketed from 21 to 24 percent. Discretionary spending alone went from 7 percent to 10 percent. We were drowning in debt.

One of the first measures in restoring financial common sense advanced by Republicans was the Budget Control Act that decreased government spending by more than \$2 trillion over 10 years. By flexing the power of the purse, the Republican-led House reduced spending from 9.1 to 6.5 percent of gross domestic product.

The second significant and successful debt reduction measure came in the form of the Ryan-Murray deal. This extended the Budget Control Act savings an additional 2 years.

Newly hired Federal employees are now required to contribute more to pension plans, and taxpayers contribute less. The spending reductions that were impacting mandatory spending for the first time resulted in faster and greater debt reduction.

The very first meaningful entitlement reform that provided even greater debt reduction came from the Republican-led Medicare reform legislation that has been enacted, known as the doc fix.

Now, while this legislation provided a permanent patch of the Medicare outpatient payment system, securing access to care, health care for America's older adults, the reforms are estimated to save \$2.9 trillion over 10 years in Medicare's unfunded liabilities. This leadership reduced the debt and supported the Medicare program's sustainability.

While the Republican-led Congress has taken action on debt reduction, much work remains. Raising awareness of the threats that debt creates for fiscal health, individual opportunity, upward mobility, and national security is a critical step.

I want to say thank you to the students at Penn State University who are involved in leading the Up to Us