
IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

We cannot win a fight for hearts and minds when we outsource critical missions to unaccountable contractors.

– Then-Senator Barack Obama²⁶²

As Afghanistan enters its fourth decade of war, amid rampant corruption, the country presents unprecedented challenges to the conduct of ordinary business, much less business involving dangerous military logistics operations. Throughout this investigation, the evidence shows that Department of Defense officials received a drumbeat of complaints about the HNT contract's role in corruption, warlordism, and even aid to the enemy. Unfortunately, as demonstrated in dozens of documents and interviews, a dismissive attitude about these grave allegations was prevalent throughout components of the Department of Defense responsible for the HNT contract.

There are numerous constructive changes that could be made to the U.S. military trucking effort in Afghanistan that would improve contracting integrity while mitigating corrupting influences. As the Department of Defense absorbs the findings in this report and considers its course of action, the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs Majority staff makes the following recommendations:

Assume Direct Contractual Responsibility for Supply Chain Security Providers. If the United States is going to use small armies of private security contractors to defend its massive supply chain in a war zone, the Department of Defense must take direct responsibility for those contractors to ensure robust oversight. Trucking companies are wholly incapable of overseeing this scale of security operations. The U.S. government needs to have a direct line of authority and accountability over the private security companies that guard the supply chain.

Consider the Role of Afghan National Security Forces in Highway Security. To be sure, the ANP and ANA will ultimately have a role in ensuring safe passage on Afghanistan's roads. However, that would likely require a medium-term, if not long-term, transition. Numerous witnesses in this investigation have expressed extreme skepticism at any plan to rapidly transfer convoy security to the Afghan security forces due to concerns about capacity, competence, and corruption. Proposals to reform the convoy security scheme ought to take into account the Ministry of Interior's vision of a future role of Afghan security forces in highway security. If there is to be no immediate role for the ANA in convoy security, a plan must be developed to reach that goal with credible security alternatives that address immediate U.S. military logistics needs.

Inventory Actual Trucking Capacity Available to the Department of Defense. The Department should conduct a survey of the available trucking capacity in Afghanistan under the HNT contract to ensure that its needs will be met with the additional forces under orders to deploy to Afghanistan. Where there is information to suggest that there is a finite pool of trucks – some owner-operated, some as tribal assets, some owned by second- or third-tier subcontractors – adding prime contractors does not necessarily add to the pool of available trucks.

Draft Contracts to Ensure Transparency of Subcontractors. Contracts between the Department of Defense and its trucking and/or security prime contractors need to include provisions that ensure a line of sight, and accountability, between the Department of Defense and the relevant subcontractors. Such provisions should make clear the subcontractors' obligations, including full Department of Defense inspection and audit rights. Such provisions should also mandate the Department of Defense's obligation to have visibility into subcontractors critical to its wartime supply chain. There should also be robust and verifiable incident reporting requirements. Where Department of Defense regulations already require such provisions, the Department needs to enforce them.

Oversee Contracts to Ensure Contract Transparency and Performance. Similarly, the Department of Defense needs to provide the personnel and resources required to manage and oversee its trucking and security contracts in Afghanistan. These are not contracts that can be managed responsibly from a desk in Bagram or Kandahar alone. Contracts of this magnitude and of this consequence require travel 'outside the wire.' For convoys, that means having the force protection resources necessary for mobility of Department of Defense personnel to conduct periodic unannounced inspections and ride-alongs.

Analyze Effect of Coalition Contracting on Afghan Corruption. The national security components of the U.S. government, including the Department of Defense, the Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Department of Justice, and the Intelligence Community, need to begin to systematically track and analyze the effects of U.S., NATO, and other international donor funds on corruption in Afghanistan. Corruption is smothering the nascent efforts at Afghan governance that are fundamental to our strategy in Afghanistan. The effects of billions of dollars in development projects and security aid for Afghanistan, combined with billions of dollars spent in support of the U.S. and NATO military footprint in Afghanistan, need to be at the center of any analysis of metrics of our performance in the Afghan effort. Public reports in early June 2010 suggest that U.S. intelligence assets have been assigned to analyze Afghan corruption and governance.²⁶³ The U.S. government needs to devote sufficient assets to the endeavor, and the mandate should include an analysis of the effects of coalition contracts.