

US WASTING MONEY ON AFGHANISTAN INFRASTRUCTURE WHILE US INFRASTRUCTURE CONTINUES DECLINE

Joshua Foust tweeted a link to a story in today's Washington Post about the most recent report from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. Foust's tweet succinctly summed up the situation: "#SIGAR body slams the war in Afghanistan... again, and no one will probably ever care." He followed that up with more: "This will destroy you if you dwell on it too much, but the blithe way DC encourages zero memory and zero accountability really is awful."

Coming on the heels of the exposure of General William Caldwell's disgusting 2010 coverup of hellish conditions at Afghanistan's Dawood National Military Hospital in Kabul, it's hard to see how Foust can be wrong in his pessimism. Where was the outrage over such horrid conditions? Why is Caldwell still in the military?

The SIGAR report eviscerates the US counterinsurgency strategy that is based on the assumption that building a Western type of "infrastructure" will produce an Afghan populace that develops such adulation for the purveyors of such cultural "improvement" that they will immediately in fall in line with all other desires of the West.

The Post story opens:

A U.S. initiative to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on construction projects in Afghanistan, originally pitched as a vital tool in the military campaign against the Taliban, is running so far behind schedule that it will not

yield benefits until most U.S. combat forces have departed the country, according to a government inspection report to be released Monday.

A few paragraphs later, we get more of the explanation of how the strategy was supposed to work:

Many U.S. military commanders, diplomats and reconstruction experts have long believed that large infrastructure projects were essential to fixing Iraq and Afghanistan.

The next sentence, however, suggests that David Petraeus saw through this strategy and understood what really mattered in the “battle for hearts and minds”:

Now-retired Gen. David H. Petraeus, the former top commander in both wars who is now director of the CIA, used to say that cash was one of his most important weapons.

For Petraeus, at least, the “reconstruction” effort really consisted of finding the right people to pay off so that they would at least briefly lay down their arms. The recent spate of violence in Iraq shows how permanent Petraeus’ strategy was there, but he will never be called to account for this massive failure.

Reading through the rest of the Post’s story reveals more folly behind the fateful power generating station for Kandahar. I had previously been aware that the idiotic decision had been made to power this station with diesel generators. But the failure to plan rears its ugly head again when we learn about the hydropower project that is slated to replace the diesel generators:

The installation of the turbine at the dam, which will not occur for at least

two more years, will produce significantly less power than the city receives from the generators. Since the Afghan government will not have the financial ability to buy diesel for the generators, that means the city's power supply will inevitably ebb once the turbine is operational and U.S. funding for diesel ends.

That looks more like a plan to fail than a failure of planning.

The article points out that since Congressional authorization of the Afghan Infrastructure Fund in 2010, the US has poured about \$1.8 billion into the projects it funds and yet SIGAR appears unable to point to any successes in infrastructure development.

Meanwhile, as the American Society for Civil Engineers has reported, the US infrastructure is a complete shambles, despite the fact that the population in the US is entirely dependent on a Western style of infrastructure. The 2009 report card shows a D+ for energy and a D- for roads, among other failures. They calculated a total cost of \$2.2 trillion to bring our infrastructure up to where it needs to be over a five year period. Where could we find such money? The wars, of course. A year ago, it was estimated that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have cost us at least \$3.7 trillion in the ten years they had been underway to that point.

Isn't that an interesting coincidence? Over the last ten years, the spending for our two misguided wars has been at 84% of the rate needed over only five years to fix our infrastructure. These wars have served only to sully the reputation of the United States in the eyes of the rest of the world. To those who would claim that military spending keeps our economy afloat, restoring US infrastructure is the only rejoinder we need to offer, and it comes without the baggage of creating a new generation of people who "hate us for our

freedoms”.