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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3303

December 18, 2017

The Honorable James N. Mattis
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Mattis:

I am writing to express my deep concern about the Defense Department's decision to classify data that for years it provided to the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), and to the public, in an unclassified form. According to the attached SIGAR memo, the data includes 33 important measures of Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) performance (i.e. end strength, force composition, attrition, casualties, etc.).

While I understand and share the department's desire not to publicize information that helps the enemy, American taxpayers also have a right to know how their money is being spent. America has already spent \$70 billion to prop up the Afghan defense and security forces. Billions more are dedicated to that effort every year. Without information on progress and performance, there is no way for taxpayers to judge what kind of return they're getting on their investment. That is unacceptable.

Furthermore, I understand that while DOD is now classifying these metrics for the ANDSF, it makes those metrics for our own military readily available to the public in unclassified form. That inconsistency does not appear to make sense. If releasing similar data for our own military has long been deemed acceptable, data for the Afghan military should be treated the same way. After all, American taxpayers are paying for both. Why not let them know the truth?

Most Americans know Afghanistan is the graveyard of empires. As my friend and yours, former Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, General Charles C. Krulak, recently reminded me: "NO ONE has ever conquered Afghanistan...and many have tried. We will join the list of Nations that have tried and failed." While we can hope for a different outcome, the American government needs to be open and honest with taxpayers. That is especially true after 16 years of engagement.

I respectfully urge you to promptly reconsider the department's treatment of this information. DOD should not expect taxpayers, or their representatives, to continue spending billions to stand up the Afghan military and police with no oversight or accountability in return.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,
 Merry C. Christman!
 Walter B. Jones

Walter B. Jones
Member of Congress