



## **U.S. mission takes the gas in Afghanistan**

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As the Obama administration moves special-ops forces into Syria, incidents of waste, fraud and abuse are dogging the U.S. mission in Afghanistan.

A \$43 million gas station tops the latest list of boondoggles exposed by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction.

**STEPPING IN IT:** Afghan soldiers march at a graduation ceremony at the Kabul Military Training Center.

“This is shocking in multiple ways,” Sen. Charles Grassley said in a statement Monday.

“The cost of an unnecessary gas station in Afghanistan skyrocketed to a ridiculous height. Now, the Department of Defense is blocking access to documents and personnel that would shed light on how the money was spent,” the Iowa Republican said.

SIGAR said the compressed natural gas station — similar to one built in Pakistan for \$500,000 — could not be defended by the Pentagon. Auditors found no audit trail to show how the original estimated cost escalated to \$43 million.

A lone natural gas pipeline serving the Afghan city of Mazar-e-Sharif is only safe to operate at minimal pressure.

“That this station cost 86 times more than a comparable facility in Pakistan raises serious questions,” Christopher Preble, vice president for defense and foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute, told Watchdog.org

Preble said the alleged lack of transparency “seems ... like a cover-up, based on the information presented to date.”

“The burden of proof should be on DoD to explain this apparent waste, if not outright fraud,” he concluded.

SIGAR audits have identified more than \$280.4 million in questioned costs related to the U.S. mission in Afghanistan.

Among the examples of waste is a command and control center that remains incomplete, three years after a \$2.2 million construction contract was awarded.

The Defense Department is not saying whether it plans to finish or demolish the building at Camp Brown in Kandahar.