

U.S. State Department and Pentagon conceal data on Afghanistan defeat

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Washington, October 30 (RHC)-- A U.S. government watchdog has said that the U.S. State Department and Pentagon are suppressing information that Congress and the public need to understand about the U.S. military defeat in Afghanistan.

"The full picture of what happened in August -- and all the warning signs that could have predicted the outcome -- will only be revealed if the information that the departments of Defense and State have already restricted from public release is made available," John Sopko, the special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction (SIGAR), said in a statement issued in Washington, DC.

A State Department spokesperson admitted the department had requested "some reports be temporarily removed to redact identifying information from public records and protect the identities of Afghans and Afghan partner organizations" due to security concerns about the evacuation effort. "The identifying information are the only details intended to be shielded," the spokesperson said, adding that SIGAR has the authority to restore the reports.

The 20-year war in Afghanistan was "a failure from its very inception," American author and political analyst Daniel Kovalik has said. Sopko told reporters that after the Taliban captured Kabul, the State Department requested him to temporarily suspend online access to certain reports he issued to ensure the safety of Afghans who worked for the United States.

The department "was never able to describe any specific threats to individuals that were supposedly contained in our reports," said Sopko, who added he "reluctantly" barred access to the documents.

The U.S. invaded Afghanistan in October 2001 following the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States. American forces occupied the country for nearly 20 years on the pretext of fighting against the Taliban. But as the U.S. forces left Afghanistan, the Taliban stormed into Kabul, weakened by continued foreign occupation.

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