



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on May 1, 2019

Pentagon Stops Issuing Key Data on Afghanistan Mission

In a move hardly reflective of success in America's longest war, the U.S. military has quit releasing information about how much of Afghanistan is controlled by the Afghan government versus how much is controlled by the Taliban.

A [report](#) issued Tuesday by Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) John Sopko says that the Pentagon is no longer providing "district-level stability assessments." According to the aptly-named [Long War Journal](#), "These analyses counted the number of Afghan districts under government or insurgent 'control' and 'influence,' while also factoring in the 'total estimated population of the district[s]' and the 'total estimated area of the districts.'"



The [Associated Press](#) reported:

The last time the command released this information, in January, it showed that Afghan government control was stagnant or slipping. It said the share of the population under Afghan government control or influence — a figure that was largely unchanged from May 2017 to July 2018 at about 65 percent — had dropped in October 2018 to 63.5 percent. The government's control or influence of districts fell nearly 2 percentage points, to 53.8 percent.

In late 2017, General John Nicholson, then the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, [told](#) reporters, "The metric that's most telling in a counterinsurgency ... is population control." Nicholson said the goal was to get "80 percent" of the population under Kabul's control, at which point the government would be able to "drive the enemy to irrelevance."

With the numbers headed in the wrong direction, the military informed SIGAR that it would no longer issue its stability assessments "because the command no longer believes the data has decision-making value," according to Sopko's report.

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"We are focused on setting the conditions for a political settlement to safeguard our national interests," a spokesman for Nicholson's successor, General Scott Miller, told the AP. "The district stability assessment that was previously provided by DOD was redundant and did little to serve our mission of protecting our citizens and allies."

The suppression of population-control data is just the latest in a long line of such measures during the unconstitutional 18-year war. Just last week, Sopko [told](#) reporters, "What we are finding is now almost every metric for success or failure is now classified or non-existent." His opinion is that "the classification ... in some areas is needless."



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“People should know how their money’s being spent, and if everything is classified the people don’t know how the money’s being spent, they can’t ask important questions like are we doing a good job or not? Should we be there or not?” Sopko said.

Addressing the withholding of the stability assessments, he opined, “I don’t think it makes sense. The Afghan people know which districts are controlled by the Taliban. The Taliban obviously know which districts they control. Our military knows it. Everybody in Afghanistan knows it. The only people who don’t know what’s going on are the people who are paying for all of this, and that’s the American taxpayer.”

Taxpayers have officially been taken for \$737 billion on the war thus far, including \$132 billion in “reconstruction” assistance, much of which has been [squandered](#) (or [worse](#)), as SIGAR has detailed in [earlier reports](#). Over 2,400 servicemen have lost their lives in the undeclared conflict.

The Afghan government bears some of the responsibility for the withholding of critical information. “The government, for instance, requests that the number of Afghan security forces killed in action be kept classified, as well as performance evaluations for the U.S.-backed Afghan security forces, the Afghan Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior,” reported [The Hill](#).

President Donald Trump has also expressed a desire to withhold information about the Afghanistan effort, viewing the release of data as aiding the enemy. However, the AP noted that “there is no evidence that this had any influence on the latest decision,” and Sopko said there had been “no pushback” from the administration with regard to his reports.

Still, the fact that the Pentagon increasingly seeks to suppress information from Afghanistan suggests that the situation there is not improving and may, in fact, be worsening. How many more dollars and lives must be wasted on this illegal and futile attempt to pacify the “Graveyard of Empires”?

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