

Staggering Costs - U.S. Military Equipment Left Behind In Afghanistan

Table 1: Quantities of Key U.S.-Funded Equipment for the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, by Type and Fiscal Year, 2003–2016

Fiscal year	Communications equipment	Vehicles	Weapons	Explosive ordnance disposal equipment	Intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance equipment	Aircraft	Total
2003	497	510	0	0	0	0	1,007
2004	1,528	11	10,700	0	0	0	12,239
2005	9,340	2,503	28,913	0	0	0	40,756
2006	21,563	9,251	133,964	57	0	0	164,835
2007	3,743	2,292	126,878	81	1,205	1	134,200
2008	14,720	15,619	46,431	0	0	31	76,801
2009	21,704	7,521	59,976	468	792	7	90,468
2010	22,525	8,902	20,276	195	5,072	2	56,972
2011	47,928	21,841	27,207	2,582	3,643	59	103,260
2012	1,825	0	20	1,399	0	50	3,294
2013	6,578	139	21,114	22,383	4,992	32	55,238
2014	1,361	0	143	365	254	13	2,136
2015	4,237	5,512	43,994	1,640	233	10	55,626
2016	5,094	1,797	80,074	511	0	3	87,479
Total	162,643	75,898	599,690	29,681	16,191	208	884,311

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) data. | GAO-17-667R

U.S.-Funded Military Gear Into Afghanistan 2003-2016. Source: GAO
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The U.S. provided an estimated \$83 billion worth of training and equipment to Afghan security forces since 2001. This year, alone, the U.S. military aid to Afghan forces was \$3 billion.

Putting price tags on American military equipment still in Afghanistan isn't an easy task. In the fog of war - or withdrawal - Afghanistan has always been a black box with little sunshine.

Not helping transparency, the Biden Administration is now hiding key audits on Afghan military equipment. *This week, our auditors at OpenTheBooks.com reposted two key reports on the U.S. war chest of military gear in Afghanistan that had disappeared from federal websites.*

#1. Government Accountability Office (GAO) audit of U.S. provided military gear in Afghanistan (August 2017): reposted report (dead link: report).

#2. Special Inspector General For Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) audit of \$174 million in lost ScanEagle drones (July 2020): reposted report (dead link: report).

U.S. taxpayers paid for these audits and the U.S.-provided equipment and should be able to follow the money.







After publication, the GAO spokesman responded to our request for comment, “the State Department requested we temporarily remove and review reports on Afghanistan to protect recipients of US assistance that may be identified through our reports and thus subject to retribution.” However, these reports only have numbers and no recipient information.

Furthermore, unless noted, when estimating “acquisition value,” our source is the Department Logistics Agency (DLA) and their comprehensive databases of military equipment.

Vehicles and airplanes

Between 2003 and 2016, the U.S. purchased and provided 75,898 vehicles and 208 aircraft, to the Afghan army and security forces, according to a Government Accountability Office report.

Figure 5: Quantities and Examples of Key U.S.-Funded Vehicles for the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, Fiscal Years 2003–2016

	Category	Quantity	Examples
	Light tactical vehicles	42,604	Ford Ranger pickup, cargo truck
	Humvees	22,174	Ambulance, cargo, troop enclosure, gun truck variants
	Medium tactical vehicles (MTV)	8,998	MTV International, 5-ton cargo and general transport truck
	Recovery vehicles	1,005	Navistar 7000-MV unarmored recovery truck, M1249 wrecker
	Mine resistant ambush protected (MRAP) vehicles	928	MRAP MaxxPro, ambulance, combat
	Armored personnel carriers	189	M113A2, M577A2
	Total	75,898	

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) data. | GAO-17-667R

Quantities and examples of key U.S.-funded Military Vehicles for Afghanistan.
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Here is a breakdown of estimated vehicle costs:





- Armored personnel carriers such as the M113A2 cost \$170,000 each and recent purchases of the M577A2 post carrier cost \$333,333 each.
- Mine resistant vehicles ranges from \$412,000 to \$767,000. The total cost could range between \$382 million to \$711 million.
- Recovery vehicles such as the ‘truck, wrecker’ cost between for the base model \$168,960 and \$880,674 for super strength versions.
- Medium range tactical vehicles include 5-ton cargo and general transport trucks were priced at \$67,139. However, the family of MTV heavy vehicles had prices ranging from \$235,500 to \$724,820 each. Cargo trucks to transport airplanes cost \$800,865.
- Humvees - ambulance type (range from \$37,943 to \$142,918 with most at \$96,466); cargo type, priced at \$104,682. Utility Humvees were typically priced at \$91,429. However, the 12,000 lb. troop transport version cost up to \$329,000.
- Light tactical vehicles: Fast attack combat vehicles (\$69,400); and passenger motor vehicles (\$65,500). All terrain 4-wheel vehicles go up to

\$42,273 in the military databases.

U.S.-Funded Aircraft for the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF)

According to Department of Defense (DOD) data, the United States funded 208 aircraft for the ANDSF in fiscal years 2007 through 2016; more than half were helicopters, and more than a quarter were transport/cargo airplanes (see fig. 10). These aircraft were for the Afghan National Army's two air components, the Afghan Air Force and the Special Mission Wing.²²

Figure 10: Quantities and Types of U.S.-Funded Aircraft for the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, Fiscal Years 2007–2016

	Category	Quantity	Types
	Helicopters	110	Mi-17, MD-530
	Transport/cargo airplanes	60	C-208, C-182, C-130, T-182, G-222, AN-32 ^a
	Light attack airplanes	20	A-29
	Intelligence, reconnaissance, and surveillance airplanes	18	PC-12
	Total	208	

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) data. | GAO-17-667R

U.S.-Funded Aircraft For the Afghan Forces – OPENTHEBOOKS.COM

This month, the Taliban seized Black Hawk helicopters and A-29 Super Tucano attack aircraft. As late as last month, Afghanistan's Ministry of Defense posted photos on social media of seven newly arrived helicopters from the U.S., Reuters reported.

Black Hawk helicopters can cost up to \$21 million. In 2013, the U.S. placed an order for 20 A-29 Super Tucano attack aircraft for \$427 million – that's \$21.3 million for each plane. Other specialized helicopters can cost up to \$37 million each.

The Afghan air force contracted for C-208 light attack airplanes in March 2018: seven planes for \$84.6 million, or \$12.1 million each. The airplanes are very sophisticated and carry HELLFIRE missiles, anti-tank missiles and other weaponry.

The PC-12 intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance airplanes use the latest in technology. Having these planes fall into Taliban control is disconcerting.

Civilian models sell new for approximately \$5 million each and the military planes could sell for many times that price.

Basic fixed-wing airplanes range in price from \$3.1 million to \$22 million in the DLA database.

Of course, helicopter prices also range widely depending on the technology, purpose, and equipment. For example, according to the DLA, general purpose helicopters range in price from \$92,000 to \$922,000. Observation helicopters can cost \$92,000 and utility helicopters up to \$922,000.

Even if the Taliban can't fly our planes, the parts are very valuable. For example, just the control stick for certain military planes has an acquisition value of \$17,808 and a fuel tank sells for up to \$35,000.

Lost drones






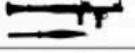

In 2017, the U.S. military lost \$174 million in drones that were part of the attempt to help the Afghan National Army (ANA) defend itself. But the ANA didn't immediately use the drones and then lost track of them.

This week, the SIGAR audit on the \$174 million drone loss disappeared from its website.

Weapons, communications equipment, and night vision goggles

Since 2003 the U.S. gave Afghan forces at least 600,000 infantry weapons, including M16 rifles, 162,000 pieces of communication equipment, and 16,000 night-vision goggle devices, according to the GAO report.

Figure 7: Quantities and Examples of Key U.S.-Funded Weapons for the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, Fiscal Years 2004–2016

	Category	Quantity	Examples
	Rifles	358,530	M16, M4 carbine, AK-47, Dragunov sniper rifle
	Pistols	126,295	M9, G19
	Machine guns	64,363	M249 5.56mm, RPK 7.62mm, M240 7.62mm, NSV 12.7mm
	Grenade launchers	25,327	40mm non-lethal, GP-25/30 underbarrel, M203 underbarrel ^a
	Shotguns	12,692	M500, M590A1, M870
	Rocket-propelled weapons	9,877	RPG-7, SPG-9
	Indirect fire weapons	2,606	60mm mortar, 82mm mortar, D-30 122mm howitzer
	Total	599,690	

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) data. | GAO-17-667R

Key Weaponry funded by U.S. into Afghanistan OPENTHEBOOKS.COM

The howitzer is the modern cannon for the U.S. military and each unit can cost up to \$500,000; however most are in the \$200,000 price range. At the higher end, there's GPS guidance on fired shells.

A common price of a M16 rifle is \$749, according to DLA. Adding a grenade launcher can push the price of the M16 to \$12,032. M4 carbine rifles are slightly more expensive with unit prices as high as \$1,278.

Just the sights on night-vision sniper rifle scopes can run as high as \$35,000, however, most vary in price between \$5,000 and \$10,000.






Here are the costs of other types of weaponry provided to Afghan forces:

- Machine guns, i.e. the M240 model, were priced between \$6,600 and \$9,000 each.
- Grenade launchers cost between \$1,000 and \$5,000 each; however, in 2020, the manufacture sold 53 for \$15,000 each.
- Army shotguns were acquired for only \$150 each, according to DLA.
- Military pistols cost \$320 each, such as the .40 caliber Glock Generation

Key U.S.-Funded Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) Equipment for the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF)

According to Department of Defense (DOD) data, the United States funded more than 16,000 key ISR equipment items for the ANDSF in fiscal years 2007 through 2016 (see fig. 9).

Figure 9: Quantities and Types of Key U.S.-Funded Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Equipment for the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, Fiscal Years 2007–2016

Category	Quantity	Types
 Night vision devices	16,035	Passive vision system (PVS-14, PVS-7) and aviator night vision imaging system (ANVIS-6, ANVIS-9)
 Radio monitoring systems	120	Wolfhounds
 Ground-based operational surveillance systems	22	Rapid Aerostat Initial Deployment Tower
 Unmanned air systems	8	ScanEagle
 Surveillance balloons	6	Aerostat
Total	16,191	

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) data. | GAO-17-667R

Key U.S.-Funded Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Equipment into Afghanistan

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Each Aerostat surveillance balloon costs \$8.9 million. Each ScanEagle drone costs approximately \$1.4 million according to recent procurement news. Even as late as 2021, U.S. appropriations for the Wolfhounds radio monitoring systems approached \$874,000.

Night vision devices: The total cost for the 16,000 night-vision goggles alone could run as high as \$80 million. Individually, the high-tech goggles were priced between \$2,742 and \$5,000 by the DLA. Other equipment like image intensifiers are commonly priced at \$10,747 each; however, sophisticated models run as high as \$66,000 each.

Radio equipment: the cost of equipment adds up - receiver-transmitters (\$210,651); sophisticated radio sets (\$61,966); amplifiers (\$28,165); repeater sets (\$28,527); and deployment sets to identify frequencies run up to \$18,908.

However, if the Taliban doesn't have the expertise or technologies to program the equipment, it will become obsolete quickly. Or it could be sold off to other

countries who wanted to acquire U.S. technology.

And there's more... years 2017 through 2019

From 2017 to 2019, the U.S. also gave Afghan forces 7,035 machine guns, 4,702 Humvees, 20,040 hand grenades, 2,520 bombs and 1,394 grenade launchers, according to the since removed 2020 SIGAR report, reported by The Hill.

An unnamed official told Reuters that current intelligence assessment was that the Taliban took control of more than 2,000 armored vehicles, including American Humvees, and as many as 40 aircraft that may include UH-60 Black Hawks, scout attack helicopters and ScanEagle military drones.

Crucial quote

“We don’t have a complete picture, obviously, of where every article of defense materials has gone, but certainly a fair amount of it has fallen into the hands of the Taliban,” White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said Tuesday, The Hill reported. “And obviously, we don’t have a sense that they are going to readily hand it over to us at the airport.”

Critic

Republican Senators have demanded that there be a full count of U.S. military equipment left in Afghanistan.

In a letter to Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, the lawmakers said they were “horrified” to see photos of Taliban militants taking hold of military equipment, including Black Hawk helicopters.

“It is unconscionable that high-tech military equipment paid for by U.S. taxpayers has fallen into the hands of the Taliban and their terrorist allies,” the lawmakers said in the letter. “Securing U.S. assets should have been among the top priorities for the U.S. Department of Defense prior to announcing the withdrawal from Afghanistan.”

Further reading

Planes, guns, night-vision goggles: The Taliban’s new U.S.-made war chest

Billions in US weaponry seized by Taliban

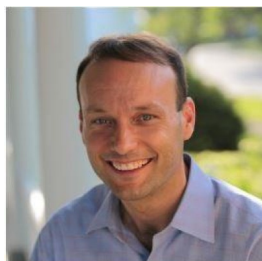
US military equipment left in Afghanistan needs full accounting, GOP senators say

Billions spent on Afghan army ultimately benefited Taliban

Note:

Procurement prices can vary widely over a 20-year period. Factors influencing prices include when the item was purchased, quantities, and other acquisition details.

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Adam Andrzejewski (say: And-G-F-ski) is the CEO/Founder of OpenTheBooks.com. Our mission: “Every Dime, Online, In Real Time.” Last year we filed 40,000 FOIA requests and captured \$6 trillion in government spending (2020). Harvard Law and the Columbia School of Journalism hosted my presentations on big data and forensic auditing. Our work has been featured at Good Morning America; ABC World News Tonight; USA Today; The Wall Street Journal; and The New York Times. My presentation to the Hillsdale College National Leadership seminar posted on YouTube has nearly 3 million views. Our 171 investigations published at Forbes have nearly 14 million views.

Source:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/adamandrzejewski/2021/08/23/staggering-costs-us-military-equipment-left-behind-in-afghanistan/?sh=1111307741db>

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