



Lawmaker rips Afghan corruption on supplies

By Rick Maze

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A Colorado lawmaker is requesting that the House Armed Services Committee investigate what happened to \$42 million in medical and pharmaceutical supplies that were supposed to help Afghanistan security forces.

Republican Rep. Mike Coffman, an Army and Marine Corps veteran who serves on the armed services committee, said the donated supplies disappeared before reaching hospitals and clinics, which he sees as a sign of the corruption problems plaguing the Afghan government.

Coffman has asked Rep. Robert Wittman, R-Va., chairman of the committee's oversight and investigations panel, to look at what happened to the drug and medical supply shipments and to look into reports that Afghan soldiers and police are dying of untreated wounds and malnutrition "because their families could not come up with the bribes" demanded by hospital personnel, Coffman said in a letter sent Wednesday requesting the investigation.

Wittman's office did not respond to questions about Coffman's request for an investigation.

"Nothing speaks more about corruption in Afghanistan than allegations that U.S.-donated medical supplies are either sold for profit by Afghan officials or withheld from wounded soldiers and police officers until their families first come up with the bribes demanded by hospital personnel," Coffman wrote in the letter.

Coffman said he is worried about whether Afghans will be able to continue to recruit soldiers

and policemen if things like medical care are subject to corruption and about what this means to the U.S. military if Afghanistan is unable to field an adequate security force.

“U.S. military advisors attached to the Afghan National Army’s medical corps report that up to \$42 million in U.S.-donated medical supplies failed to reach the Afghan military clinics they were intended for in 2010,” Coffman said. “Once the supplies were turned over to the Afghan government, U.S. forces were unable to account for them, but suggested that it was likely Afghan officials sold the medical supplies rather than use them for their intended purpose. This corruption is not limited to U.S.-donated medical supplies; the central Afghan military hospital also appears to be rife with graft and abuse.”

Staff members of the Dawood National Military Hospital, which is supposed to treat Afghan National Security force members, are accused of selling medical supplies for personal profit, extorting bribes from patients and their families, and giving inadequate care to those who don’t pay, Coffman said.

“I believe that congressional oversight is necessary to put an end to the deplorable conditions at the hospital and root out the endemic corruption there,” Coffman said.

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