

UNOPS to fully cooperate with US authorities in Afghan investigation

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As UNOPS announced earlier, an independent investigation has been conducted by the Procurement Task Force – United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (PTF – OIOS) into the alleged misconduct of a former UNOPS staff member in Afghanistan between 2002-2006. UNOPS itself initiated the first independent investigation in 2006 after senior management was alerted to alleged wrongdoing by UNOPS staff. The PTF – OIOS report was completed on December 31, 2008 and was subject to internal United Nations review.

As a result of this review the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs has now provided a copy of the report to the United States Mission to the United Nations. It is up to US authorities to decide if any legal action should be taken in regard to the allegations. UNOPS will cooperate fully with US authorities in any future investigations.

In order to respect due process UNOPS is unable to comment on the details of the allegations more than to say they involve the alleged misuse of UNOPS project and administrative funds and serious breaches of accounting and procurement policies said to have occurred between 2002 and 2006.

UNOPS continues to work tirelessly to improve the quality of life of the people of Afghanistan, supporting the national government and donor partners build roads, schools and clinics and strengthening the capacity of the country's own institutions to deliver the infrastructure and services the people so desperately need.

The alleged misuse of UNOPS funds and breaches of accounting and procurement policies are grave charges. Such misconduct is totally unacceptable to UNOPS, and any wrongdoing that is ultimately proven to have occurred would cause UNOPS profound regret. Furthermore UNOPS would take all steps possible to make good any outstanding damages.

Any such misdeeds would betray UN values and breach the organizations fiduciary obligations to its partners.

UNOPS has already rectified many of the problems revealed and will deal fairly but firmly with proven wrongdoers. UNOPS has reimbursed money owed to its clients as a result of errors or misuse, and will address any new issues if they come to light. UNOPS has already implemented all the PTF recommendations included in their report.

Today's UNOPS is more professional than ever. Since mid-2006 the UNOPS financial control and management structures have improved significantly.

Actions taken to date include creation of an internal audit function, recruitment of better qualified senior managers and financial staff, application of robust financial controls including mandatory use of electronic financial management tools, stricter procurement rules and training, more competitive staff recruitment, circulation of clear rules and limits regarding hospitality expenses, full financial disclosure by personnel, and the introduction of a UNOPS ethics officer and whistleblower protection.

UNOPS pledges to continue to bring desperately needed goods and services to bear on critical problems around the world. It remains proud of the difference it has helped make in the lives of countless people in need.

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