



Doing Business in Afghanistan: 2009 Country

Commercial Guide for U.S. Companies

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Chapter 1: Doing Business Afghanistan

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Market Overview

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Afghanistan is rebuilding after nearly 30 years of conflict and is continuing its transition from a state-based model to a free market economy.

The Afghan government is working to improve the country's physical infrastructure, which was largely destroyed, while at the same time struggling to provide basic services and humanitarian assistance to a growing population with some of the lowest social indicators in the world. There have been marked improvements in education and healthcare, and the Afghan National Army is on its way to becoming credible and professional military force. The security situation remains critical, however, with Taliban insurgents in various parts of Afghanistan, the south and east in particular, as well as narco-traffickers and other groups that oppose the strengthening of a democratic government. Legal and regulatory frameworks are improving, but often do not provide the guarantees and protection that are customary in the United States. The World Bank, in its "Doing Business Report," ranked Afghanistan 162 out of 181 economies in ease of doing business.

In 2004, President Hamid Karzai declared Afghanistan "open for business." While the Government has taken numerous steps to create attractive conditions for foreign investment, there is much more to be done, particularly in the areas of security, infrastructure, and legal and regulatory framework. A multi-billion dollar international effort to help reconstruct Afghanistan is underway, led by the United States and other international donors. Many current business opportunities are linked to these reconstruction efforts.

Economic growth has been volatile over the past three years. GDP growth averaged 9.8 percent between 2005 and 2007 but only 3.4% nominal growth in 2008. GDP per capita estimates are not completely reliable, because the true population of Afghanistan is unknown.

Currency reform was completed in early 2003. Inflation spiked to 40% in 2008 because of high gas prices and food shortages resulting from drought. The current inflation rate is between 14-15%. The tax code was restructured and clarified in 2005. Customs tariffs have been rationalized, existing trade agreements have been renewed and new agreements entered into force.

The economy is dominated by small-farm agriculture and 80-90 percent of all economic activity remains informal. Illicit opium production remains a major activity. For 2008, opium production was estimated at USD 3.4 billion, or nearly one-third of licit GDP -- while still, this level is down from 61% in 2004 a significant figure down from 61% in 2004. (Estimated GDP for 2008 is USD 11.8 billion.)

Afghanistan's top export market is Pakistan, which the Afghan government estimates at USD 300.8 million for 2007. Following are India (USD 61.2 million), Iran (USD 9 million) Germany (USD 7 million), and Saudi Arabia (USD 4.6 million). Imports primarily come from China (USD 611.3 million), Japan (USD 494 million), Pakistan (USD 440.9), and Iran (138.3 million).

The U.S. Department of Commerce estimates U.S. exports to Afghanistan in 2008 were approximately USD 480 million and imports were approximately USD 80 million.

While Afghanistan's history and location give it the potential to develop into a vital trade and transit hub for the region, substantial challenge remain:

Market Challenges

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- A critical threat security situation;
- Poor infrastructure, in particular power, transport, and telecommunications;
- A weak legal framework, regulatory enforcement, and dispute-resolution mechanisms;
- Pervasive corruption;
- Land ownership: non-Afghans may not own land and securing clear title to land is a long, time-consuming, expensive process;
- A nascent commercial banking system, which provides limited commercial financing;
- Inconsistent and untransparent customs procedures;
- A shortage of skilled labor and trained personnel in both the government and the private workforce.

Market Opportunities

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Market opportunities are largely driven by Afghanistan's need to completely renovate its infrastructure. Substantial opportunities for U.S. firms are linked to donor and international finance institutions, including the World Bank, and Asian Development

Bank, that **fund** reconstruction efforts. Companies are advised to monitor donor and IFI programs for potential opportunities.

- Agricultural chemicals, machinery, equipment and services, agro-processing;
- Irrigation planning and technologies;
- Architectural, construction, and engineering services;
- Building materials for both residential and commercial properties;
- Computer hardware, software and peripherals (to include Dari language capability);
- Telecommunications services and equipment;
- Diesel generators for independent power supply;
- Education/training services;
- Heavy equipment, including trucks, trailers and buses; motor graders, concrete mixers, heavy-duty dumpers, paver finishers, and bull-dozers;
- Security and safety equipment;
- Automobiles/light trucks/vans and development of dealerships for 4x4 vehicles (sales, parts, and service);
- Translation services, including simultaneous, conference-style translation products;
- Office furniture;
- Printing and publishing;
- Aircraft and aircraft parts;
- Airport/ground support equipment;
- Electrical power systems;
- Oil and gas field machinery; oil, gas, and mineral exploration and production services;
- Road upgrades, lighting, and signage;
- Transportation services;
- Carpets and textiles;

- Leather and leather processing;
- Precious and semi-precious stones;
- Marble and natural stones;
- Cashmere.

Market Entry Strategy

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Strong local knowledge is a crucial.

- Be familiar with key players both in business and in government.
- Visit the country, get to know your potential partners and their capabilities to do business with U.S. firms, and meet with the Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) and the Afghan Investment Support Agency (AISA).
- Personal relationships are everything in Afghanistan. With the legal and regulatory framework still under development, businesses are built almost entirely on trust.

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Chapter 2: Political and Economic Environment

For background information on the political and economic environment of the country, please see the link below to the U.S. Department of State Background Notes.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5380.htm>

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Using an Agent or Distributor

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Many international companies find it essential to hire an Afghan individual or company as a local agent or partner. In many cases, local connections prove essential in navigating the business world. When looking for a partner, a good start is to contact the Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) and the U.S.–based Afghan American Chamber of Commerce.

Establishing an Office/Licensing

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Afghanistan ranks an impressive 22 out of 181 countries in ease of registering a business, according to the World Bank’s “Doing Business Report.”

The Afghan Investment Support Agency (AISA) is the investor’s “one-stop-shop” for registering and establishing a business in Afghanistan. AISA’s Investment Managers will assist the investor with the following procedures, which are necessary to obtain a business license:

- A. Completion of the Investment Application Form and Application Form for Tax ID Number;
- B. Registration of the Investment Application Form;
- C. Provision of guidance on the requirements for submission of a business plan and review of the project documents to ensure it is within the country’s legal framework;
- D. Registration of investment documents in commercial court and announcement of investors’ business/investment details in a reputable Afghan newspaper;

E. Payment of License Fee and Issuance of Investment License. (Fees are based on the type of business and are commensurate with the amount invested.)

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also asks that each company provide an introduction letter from its embassy. The U.S. Embassy can provide this letter upon provision of the company's Articles of Incorporation and evidence of an IRS Tax ID number. Please contact the U.S. Embassy's Commercial Section for more details (see Contacts section of this report.)

The entire process takes about four days. Licensing fees range from USD 100 to USD 1000, depending on the size of initial investment.

If the business will engage in import/export, additional steps are required. In addition to the Investment License, the Ministry of Commerce will also issue an export license. To obtain an export license, the Ministry requests businesses to provide the following information:

A. Bank statement;

B. Police Certificate (Clean Records Certificate) from any of the States in the U.S. as evidence that a person has no criminal record;

There are no separate licensing procedures for joint ventures.

In addition to providing investors with licensing services, AISA hosts business, trade and investment events and conferences. Investment managers can also refer companies to potential partners, sources of finance, and opportunities in industrial parks.

Establishing a physical office remains more of an art than a science. Potential investors face an overheated real estate market, with rents comparable to cities such as New York and Tokyo. Renters are also required to pay a 20% renters tax, which they must withhold from their monthly rent payment and remit to the Government of Afghanistan. Foreign investors are not allowed to purchase real estate in Afghanistan. Basic infrastructure, such as electricity, heating, and telecommunications, remains a constant challenge.

Potential investors should be aware that the Government of Afghanistan launched an Industrial Park Program in 2004 and is working with donors, including USAID and the World Bank, to develop these parks. The industrial parks offer clear land title, reliable power and water supply, and security. The industrial park in Bagrami (near Kabul) is currently operational and is under consideration for expansion. A second phase is also underway, which includes Industrial Parks in *Kamari*, a 120 hectares park located 13 km from central Kabul. Parks in Mazar-e-Sharif and Kandahar are just nearing completion and several more are planned for the future. The Industrial Park Program is administered by AISA.

Selling to the Government

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The Government of Afghanistan has established a procurement agency to facilitate the purchase of goods and services for the Government. This agency, the Afghanistan Reconstruction and Development Service (ARDS), uses internationally recognized procurement procedures. Companies that wish to receive procurement notices can do so by registering through email. Notices on new procurements are sent electronically to all companies registered with ARDS. ARDS also maintains a list of suppliers online.

Distribution and Sales Channels

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Formal distribution and sales channels are not well developed in Afghanistan. Most commerce is confined to small store fronts, markets and informal roadside trading. Major distribution centers are Kabul, Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif, Jalalabad, and Kandahar. Afghanistan is a land-locked country. Many commercial goods destined for Afghanistan are shipped through ports in Karachi or Port Qasim, Pakistan, moved overland and enter the country via the Torkham (Nangarhar province) or Chaman (Kandahar province) border crossings. Goods are then distributed throughout Afghanistan by truck. Another major overland route is through Iran via Bandar-i-Abbas, entering Afghanistan at the border with Herat province. There is no rail system in Afghanistan. Goods arriving from Central Asia via rail must be off-loaded to trucks in Heyratan, in Balkh.

U.S. law prohibits transshipment through Iran by American companies or individuals without written approval by the U.S. Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control.

Selling Factors/Techniques

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Because of limited understanding of English among Afghans, sales materials should be in Dari and/or Pashto if your market is primarily in the south and/or east of the country. Direct marketing is a relatively unused sales technique because the postal system is largely defunct, land-line telephone connections are limited and large segments of the population are unable to read in any language. However, with a growing population of cellular users, currently reaching over two million, direct marketing via cellular phone could likely become more widespread in the near future. Electronic commerce is not widespread in Afghanistan due to still developing telecommunications infrastructure. Surveys show that 15% of businesses use email to communicate with their clients and 9% have websites.

Trade Promotion and Advertising

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The Afghan Investment Support Agency (AISA), the quasi-government agency responsible for investment promotion, organizes trade promotion events. The Export Promotion Agency of Afghanistan (EPAA), the quasi-government agency responsible for export promotion, intends to organize export promotion events. The Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industries also engages in trade and investment promotion. Since 2007,

USAID has sponsored a semi-annual agricultural trade fair in Kabul and several fairs in other provinces throughout the country.

Businesses in Afghanistan spend limited resources on advertising. Only a handful of Western-style advertising agencies exist. One is Altai Consulting, whose marketing and communication branch is an affiliate of John Walter Thompson. Commercial advertising is available through major television and radio outlets such as Tolo TV, Ayna TV, Ariana TV, Radio Television Afghanistan and Radio Arman. Radio Khillid, Radio Salam Wastandar, and Afghan TV also offer such services. Advertisements in newspapers reach a limited audience.

Pricing

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Factors to consider in pricing are as follows:

- Corporate income tax of 20 percent, low by regional standards. Personal income tax ranges from 0-20 percent;
- Business Receipts Tax ranging from 2-10 percent based on sector, revenue and billing;
- Import tariffs in the range of 0-25 percent;
- High transport costs;
- Competition from cheap, low-quality goods and services from Pakistan, China, and Iran.

Sales Service/Customer Support

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Customers in Afghanistan are not accustomed to a high degree of sales service and customer support, with the possible exception of those who use mobile and internet service providers. However, appreciation for higher levels of service is increasing as the general population becomes more market savvy.

Protecting Your Intellectual Property

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While laws on patents and copyrights exist on the books, there is little or no active enforcement of intellectual property rights. Investors should have no expectation of protection.

Due Diligence

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It is essential to conduct adequate due diligence on potential local partners before entering into business in Afghanistan. As the country currently has no contracts law in place and the commercial court system is inadequate, businesses should tread carefully when entering into commercial agreements or partnerships. The Ministries of Commerce and Interior, AISA, the Afghan National Police, and the courts have all played roles in recent disputes involving Americans. If involved in a commercial dispute, hiring an Afghan attorney early can be beneficial. Visiting the country to learn more about the business environment and the potential partner is highly recommended. The Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) and the Afghan Investment Support Agency (AISA) can be helpful in providing background on a potential partner. In addition, there are a few local attorneys who specialize in business and commerce that can be contacted for assistance. The Embassy cannot recommend legal counsel but does have a list of attorneys available on the U.S. Embassy website.

Local Professional Services

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The Afghan Embassy in Washington, D.C. has developed a resource listing services available to facilitate investment. The resource can be downloaded at the Afghan Embassy's website.

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Chapter 4: Leading Sectors for U.S. Export and Investment

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Construction Materials

Overview

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Demand for all types of materials is booming and will remain strong over the next several years given the magnitude of the reconstruction process and a growing population. Projects range from large scale reconstruction of transportation, power, and water infrastructure to small-scale retail and residential construction. International donor demands for high quality and quantity represent opportunities for both the export market and local investment remains high. This sector offers perhaps the highest potential for both U.S. investment and exports.

Most available construction materials are currently imported and are of poor quality. Cement, for example, is primarily imported from Pakistan and Iran and is of such poor quality that it is considered not saleable in those countries.

High transportation costs, an abundance of raw materials, and a supply of local workers with adequate skills in this sector combine to offer promising opportunities for investment in local production that could under-price foreign rivals. The national market for materials is well integrated, with competitive wholesaling and retailing and established distribution channels. There is medium-term potential for local production for export as well, particularly in the marble and marble cutting industry, as Afghanistan's wealth of natural resources offers it a comparative advantage over neighboring countries.

Profitable investment opportunities also exist in the manufacture of final construction inputs, such as doors or windows. Often these activities are carried out on a small scale, but many opportunities exist to expand to mass production.

Opportunities in Construction

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- Cement and Cement Block

Afghanistan is in an earthquake prone region. Demand for quality cement is high and is forecasted to remain strong, both in Afghanistan and in regional countries where industries are operating at capacity levels. Local conditions for the production of cement

(i.e., adequate limestone) exist. Given the high transportation costs for this product, investment in locally produced cement has potential. The Ministry of Mines privatized a major state owned cement factory in 2006 to a local investment consortium in a less than transparent manner.

Cement blocks are a popular local construction material. Upgrading and expanding existing production facilities or establishing new facilities offers good investment potential.

- Bricks

Baked and unbaked bricks are used for construction in Afghanistan. Both are produced by small, local enterprises. Given high transportation costs, there are business opportunities in the expansion and upgrade of local production facilities.

- Doors and Windows

Current local production of doors and windows uses obsolete technology and does not meet local demand. Investment opportunities exist in the improvement and expansion of this process.

- Sand, Gravel and Aggregate

Many production sites for sand, gravel and aggregate are present. However, quality is mixed. Investment and U.S. export opportunities exist in upgrading the quality of production as well as in the exploitation of new mining sites.

- Asphalt

Local asphalt production capacity does not meet the booming demand from large scale road construction and reconstruction activities. High profit potential exists in expansion of local production.

Agro Processing

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Afghanistan is predominantly an agricultural country; agriculture represents approximately 80% of licit GDP. At one time, high quality Afghan agricultural product exports such as dried fruits, nuts, almonds and pistachios occupied a prominent share of the world market. Following almost three decades of conflict, farmers in Afghanistan have made strides in reviving agro business in the country. The first international agricultural fair of its kind, called AgFair'07, took place in the spring of 2007 in Kabul and again in 2008. The event attracted between 45,000 and 60,000 people. Regional agricultural fairs are slated to take place around the country in the coming year. Development of the agricultural sector is a high priority of the Government of Afghanistan and is the focus of international donor efforts to revive rural economic activity. Improvements in irrigation systems, fertilizer use and extension services, and a land-titling reform program have increased production and reduced input prices.

The domestic market potential for agricultural products is huge and demand is increasing with a rise in population. The drought Afghanistan has been experiencing over the past year creates a demand for imports of wheat and flour. Currently, most processed food is being imported, with Pakistan and India the major suppliers. Afghan agricultural products represent a potentially valuable export product for investors, particularly in regional markets such as India and Pakistan. There are also significant opportunities in processing, particularly cleaning and packaging, or in other elements of the value chain such as testing and certification for both international and domestic markets.

Opportunities

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- Fruits and Nuts

Afghanistan produces some of the world's top quality fruits and nuts. In pre-conflict times, Afghanistan was a large scale producer and continues to enjoy international recognition for quality for products such as pomegranates and raisins. In 2007, Afghanistan exported 212.73 tons (USD 61.6 million) of fresh and dried fruit, primarily to Pakistan. India and Russia offer large, nearby markets in which Afghan products could begin regaining market share. Existing raisin processors are ripe for new investment to increase and improve production. Ideal growing conditions exist for almonds, pistachios and apricots. The world's largest importers of these products - India for almonds and Russia for dried apricots – are natural regional markets. Low productivity of existing orchards and production facilities as well as a lack of machinery for sorting, drying and packaging, are challenges facing the industry.

- Juices, Pastes, Jam

Local demand for fruit juice, jams, and tomato paste is high. Industrially-processed products available on the local market are almost entirely imported, primarily from Iran and Pakistan. Markets in Afghanistan are estimated at approximately USD 20 million for fruit juice and USD 15 million for tomato paste. The abundance of local fruits and

tomatoes offers substantial business opportunities in import substitution. Afghan pomegranates are among the best in the world, so production of pomegranate concentrate for export has very good prospects.

- Dairy Products

Most industrially processed and packaged dairy products are imported. Many regions in Afghanistan have a well-established dairy production tradition, particularly in yoghurt, but lack the infrastructure to expand beyond local consumption. U.S. exports, local production for import competition, as well as investment in collection, processing, packaging, and a cold storage and transportation chain have good prospects.

- Karakul Skins and Leather

Karakul skins were formerly one of Afghanistan's major exports. With the number of livestock increasing, this industry has rebounded. Investment opportunities and potential for U.S. exports of machinery exist in skin processing and leather manufacturing.

- Meat Processing

Existing meat processing facilities do not meet international standards. Given the increase in livestock, good opportunities exist for U.S. exports and investment in the upgrade of these facilities and equipment.

- Cotton and Sugar

Afghanistan formerly produced substantial quantities of cotton and sugar (beet and cane) crops well suited to the climate of some regions of the country. Foreign investment has been involved in the rehabilitation of former state-owned enterprises in these areas as well as in greenfield operations. The Spinzar plant in Kunduz and the Balkh Gin and Press in Mazar-e-Sharif were privatized under a long term-leasing agreement with cotton specialist Dagrif of France, and KWS of Germany has successfully invested in a joint venture sugar factory in Baghlan. Similar opportunities exist for interested investors.

- Mills and Baking

Most baking and wheat processing activities currently are carried out on a very small scale. Substantial opportunities for expansion of the industry exist.

-- Non-traditional Products

Afghanistan has a number of native plants with unrealized commercial potential. Ideal climatic and ground conditions for many natural ingredients for the flavor, fragrance, and pharmaceutical industries exist. For example, conditions are ideal for the cultivation of roses and the production of rose oil. A number of spices, rare herbs and medicinal plants can also be found. Saffron is a high-value crop widely used both as a seasoning and a dye; conditions for growing saffron are ideal in Herat and the northwest of the country, where cultivation is beginning to pick up. Various market studies have demonstrated substantial possibilities in these areas.

- Processing and Packaging

Most processing and packaging facilities currently in use for agricultural goods are technologically outdated. This sector represents attractive opportunities for investment and U.S. export of technology and equipment to crush, press, pasteurize, filtrate, dry, sort, grade, fill, and package a variety of agricultural products.

- Cold Storage and Transportation

There are few cold storage facilities in Afghanistan. As the agro business sector strengthens and power and fuel supplies become more reliable, cold storage and cold transportation represent one area where U.S. investment and technology could achieve strong export growth and returns on investment.

Carpets and Textiles

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Carpets are Afghanistan's most important export, estimated at USD 117 million for 2007. The industry has a centuries-old tradition that enjoys world renown. Afghan carpets are internationally competitive, even with the challenges of a post-war economy—a reflection of the capabilities of generations of skilled Afghan weavers.

The Government of Afghanistan places a high priority on the development of the carpet sector, particularly because of its importance as a source of income for the rural population, including women and refugees. Government policy is directed to the benefit of the industry.

Production is concentrated in several regions of the country. While some carpet factories have been established in urban centers over the last two years, production remains primarily home-based and fragmented. A lack of available and appropriate land has inhibited the development of consolidated production sites.

As few local post-weaving facilities exist, most Afghan carpets destined for overseas markets are exported as unfinished products to Pakistan to undergo the final steps of washing, trimming, and drying. The carpets are then exported from Pakistan as Pakistani products to overseas markets. This process amounts to millions of dollars in lost revenue for Afghanistan.

Carpets are transported to foreign markets via land, sea or air, primarily through Pakistan. A growing number of air freight companies serve Kabul, and exporters are turning to this faster and more reliable freight carrier. To support the carpet industry, President Hamid Karzai has decreed that Ariana Afghan Airlines transport Afghan carpets at cost.

Hand-knotted Afghan carpets enjoy preferential access to important overseas markets. No customs duty is levied on their import into the United States, Canada or the European Union.

Opportunities in the Carpet Industry

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The Afghan carpet industry offers high potential for investment, particularly in re-establishing those elements of the production chain which now take place outside the country. It is estimated that the value of sector imports could increase two to five times if goods were sold directly to foreign markets rather than through intermediaries. Investment in information technology offers the potential to develop niche markets for customized, made-to-order carpets for foreign buyers. Improvements to wool and yarn inputs and consolidation of production facilities promise increased efficiency, quality and profitability.

- Post Weaving Facilities: Washing, Trimming, Finishing

Facilities for washing, trimming, and finishing carpets are limited in Afghanistan. The absence of such facilities has created a major bottleneck in the development of direct access to overseas markets. As a result, the carpet industry is dominated by Pakistan-based middlemen. The establishment of such facilities in Afghanistan represents the largest investment potential in this sector.

- Carpet Factories

While a few carpet factories exist, the industry is still largely dependant on home production. The establishment of additional factories means increased productivity and increased quality control.

- Wool Scouring and Spinning

Quality carpets require quality wool and yarn. While most producers of high quality carpets strive to exclusively use local, handspun wool, supply is insufficient to meet demand. Growing numbers of livestock in Afghanistan have created the potential for investment in additional wool scouring facilities. Spinning of high quality yarn, either from local or imported wool, also represents substantial opportunities.

- Design Technology

Most carpet designs are currently sketched and plotted by hand. Investment in Computer Aided Design (CAD) technology and associated training that would improve the efficiency of production and facilitate the niche market for custom ordered carpets has reasonable profit potential.

Logistics and Transportation

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Afghanistan has long been a trade hub connecting Asia, Europe and the Middle East. A landlocked country bordering Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, China and Pakistan, it is considered a “land bridge” connecting trading partners and offering a point of access to an expanded regional market of more than two billion people. Inadequate transportation infrastructure is a major obstacle to increased commerce. There is no rail system in Afghanistan. Major highway construction is underway, including the construction of a 2,400 km ring road circling the country and 700 km of links with neighboring countries. A majority of this construction has been completed, but security problems continue to plague construction. The reopening of the Salang Tunnel in 2002 was a major step forward in opening road links with northern Afghanistan. The reopening of the Termez-Hazarey bridge in 2002 opened links to Uzbekistan. A bridge linking Afghanistan to Tajikistan is currently being built in Kunduz province. The Amu Darya (Oxus) River, which forms part of Afghanistan's border with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, has increasing barge traffic.

Transport is a high-growth sector and the demand for transport services is expected to remain strong in the medium to long term. Transport of commercial goods is expected to rise as the commercial infrastructure improves and domestic production of products with strong export potential, such as carpets and dried fruits and nuts, increases. Improving security has also resulted in increased transshipment of goods through Afghanistan.

The market for logistics and transportation services offers first mover advantage to prospective investors with little competition and steady demand. Early investors have reported modest start-up costs, low overhead and high profit margins.

Opportunities

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- Cold cargo and perishables storage
- Overland transportation
- Truck maintenance
- Customs facilitation
- Air freight and cargo services
- Package and document delivery
- Procurement and supply
- Warehousing

Mining

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The mining industry offers considerable growth potential for U.S. investment and export of technology. A reconstruction boom is generating significant local demand for mineral-based construction materials, including paving stones, cement and cement blocks, bricks, gravel, wood, steel, sand, glass and tile. High transport costs provide an advantage to locally produced products. Domestic energy needs remain unmet, despite significant deposits of coal.

This sector represents medium to long term potential. Privatization of Afghanistan's state-owned enterprises, which control many of the country's mining resources, is not complete. A Minerals Law was passed in July 2004 and some accompanying regulations were adopted in 2005. Regulations to further clarify the regulatory environment are scheduled for adoption in 2009. The World Bank has estimated that the value of solid minerals produced in the country could reach USD 600 million by 2015, up from USD 60 million in 2004, if the necessary reforms are implemented.

Afghanistan has a large quantity of known mineral resources as well as vast areas where the potential is unknown. These resources include beryllium, chrome, coal, copper, gold, iron, lead, manganese, nickel, salt rock, silver, uranium and zinc. The country's known precious and semi-precious minerals include alabaster, amethysts, beryl, emeralds, jade, lapis lazuli, quartz, rubies, sapphires and tourmalines, which are currently mainly exploited in low-tech and small-scale local operations. The Sar-e-Sang deposits of lapis in Badakshan province is one of the oldest continuously running mines in the world, producing continuously for over 7,000 years. While some of these materials are used in the handicrafts market, few of the reserves are being commercially exploited and there is room for expansion of this industry.

The marble sector has tremendous potential but remains underdeveloped because of low investment, poor infrastructure, and transportation challenges. There are substantial marble deposits of high-quality marble throughout Afghanistan, including heat-resistant white marble, which is highly valued in the Gulf States, Italy, and other important marble markets. Only a small fraction of what is mined is processed locally for construction or handicrafts. Most is exported to Pakistan, where it is cut into blocks and slabs. Investment in the local cutting process has high profit potential. The abundance of natural stone also offers potential in mining and processing. Some of Afghanistan's natural marble deposits are being damaged by crude mining techniques, which render micro-cracks throughout the deposit. Extraction of marble by diamond blade cutting, the best practice, has begun, but it is still extremely limited. Wire-cutting machines and earth-moving equipment will represent good areas of opportunity for U.S. providers as the marble industry continues to develop.

Aynak a large copper deposit south of Kabul, was successfully tendered through the World Bank in 2008. MCC, a large Chinese consortium, pledged over \$800 million in payments and \$2 billion in investment (township, coal fired electricity plant, railway) to develop the deposit. A feasibility study and de-mining are currently underway. The

deposit is expected to produce hundreds of millions of dollars in revenues for Afghanistan as well as thousands of jobs and significant infrastructure improvements in the Aynak region.

A subsequent tender is being organized now for an even larger iron-ore deposit at Haji-Gak, an area northwest of Kabul. According to the World Bank and geological surveys it is seven times as large as Aynak and has already drawn interest from the largest mining companies in the world, including Rio Tinto, BHP Billiton, and Vale. This tender is expected to be released in late summer 2009. Other long term opportunities include industrial scale coal mines for power generation, gas to power development, and one or two gold mines.

The market for U.S. technology, equipment and expertise in this sector will be substantial. Foreign firms will also be accorded equal opportunity under the privatization program and opportunities for investment will be significant. Investments in this area are required to undergo screening by a sub-cabinet of Ministers and may be approved under terms that differ from 2005 Private Investment Law.

Best Prospects/Services

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(Subsectors with best opportunities)

- Exploration is not yet underway, but upstream and downstream products and services have potential;
- The need for storage tanks, additional tank farms and potential refinery capacity could provide build-operate-transfer opportunities.

Opportunities and Resources

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This chapter draws largely on research, market evaluations and case studies conducted by the organizations listed below. Complete materials can be found on their websites.

The Afghan Investment Support Agency: <http://www.aisa.org.af>
Investment opportunity brochures and market studies,

The Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency: <http://www.miga.org>
Investment Horizons: Afghanistan Study

The World Bank: <http://www.worldbank.org>
Investment Climate in Afghanistan

Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit: <http://www.areu.org.af>
Market case studies in raisins, carpets and construction materials

USAID-supported Emerging Markets Group: <http://www.emergingmarketsgroup.com>
Privatization of State Owned Enterprises Project

Ministry of Finance Privatization: <http://privatization.mof.gov.af/EN>
Privatization of State Owned Enterprises website

Donors and international financial institution-funded activities in the sectors discussed in this chapter generate business opportunities for interested companies. Please consult

the Project Financing section in Chapter 7 for more details on the activities of organizations such as USAID, World Bank and the Asia Development Bank and how firms can receive notification on procurements and contracting.

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Chapter 5: Trade Regulations and Standards

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Import Tariffs

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Afghanistan maintains the lowest import tariffs in the region. A new tariff regime has significantly reduced and simplified the customs duty rates to six major categories: essential food and non-food products, 2.5 percent; raw materials, 1 percent; machinery equipment 0 percent; petroleum products, 5 percent; others imports goods, 16 percent; and luxury and non-priority products, 25 percent. Further, planned customs rationalization will decrease the number of rates from six to four, increase the tariff rates charges on the bulk of imported products, and increase the weighted average tax rate from 3.9 percent to 6.9 percent. Even at these revised tariff rates, Afghan tariffs will remain the lowest in the region.

Afghanistan has few trade barriers for imported products. However, deficient infrastructure, a still evolving legal and commercial regime, high levels of corruption and a volatile security situation act as de facto trade barriers.

Import Requirements and Documentation

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All imported goods and products must have an original bill of lading and inventory documents. Transit permission is required for shipments transiting through Pakistan; the Central Board of Revenue's Customs Division in Islamabad, Pakistan, oversees transit permission.

U.S. Export Controls

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In June 2002, the U.S. lifted most restrictions on exports and re-exports to Afghanistan. Such transactions are now subject to export control policies applicable to most countries who are not members of multilateral export control regimes. The majority of everyday commercial goods do not require specific U.S. government authorization for export or re-export to Afghanistan. However, certain items on the Commerce Control List do require a license from the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS). These include items controlled for chemical and biological weapons, nuclear nonproliferation, national security, and missile technology reasons. There are also foreign policy controls in place for regional stability and crime control reasons. These requirements can be found in Part 742 of the Export Administration Regulations (EAR) (www.access.gpo.gov/bis/ear/ear_data.html).

The U.S. government generally reviews license applications to export controlled goods to Afghanistan on a case-by-case basis. Note that a license is required to export an item subject to the Export Administration Regulations even when one would not otherwise be necessary, if you know, have reason to know, or are otherwise individually informed by the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) with respect to a specific transaction that the item will be used in activities related to nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons or missile delivery systems as defined in part 744 of the Export Administration Regulations. In addition, certain restrictions administered by the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control continue in effect with respect to transactions involving members of the Taliban.

Detailed information on U.S. export policies can be found at the BIS website at www.bis.doc.gov. Specific guidance on U.S. export controls with respect to Afghanistan can be found at: <http://www.bis.doc.gov/policiesandregulations/RegionalConsiderations/Afghanistan.pdf>

You may also contact the BIS Export Counseling Division (<http://www.bis.doc.gov/licensing/ExporterFAQ.html>) at (202) 482-4811 for specific guidance.

Temporary Entry

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Afghanistan currently has no laws or regulations governing products entering the country temporarily.

Labeling and Marking Requirements

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Afghanistan currently has no laws or regulations governing labeling and marketing requirements for products.

Prohibited and Restricted Imports

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The following items are prohibited from entry in Afghanistan:

- firearms, explosives, daggers
- obscene and subversive literature
- alcohol (2 liter exception for personal use for commercial air passengers)

Customs Regulations and Contact Information

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Although there is a focused Afghan and donor country effort to improve facilities and practices at the major border crossing points, the customs regulations and procedures in Afghanistan are neither transparent nor consistent. Coordination between customs and other government authorities is minimal; customs officials receive minimal training, and infrastructure is still 2 to 3 years from being fully upgraded. Traders face unclear procedures at the borders as well as significant delays, extra-legal duties, and bureaucratic obstructions. Corruption is a significant problem.

Customs reform is a priority of the Government of Afghanistan. Large-scale reform efforts are underway to establish standardized fees and procedures for incoming goods and a trained cadre of professional staff. In December 2003 the Customs Department introduced a Single Administrative Document system pilot program, based on the European Union customs regime, for five key provinces. In March 2005, implementation of the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) system began on a limited scale and is being expanded. Simplified exemptions processing documentation is being introduced and a new Customs Code is under consideration. A system of Licensed Customs Brokers is also being designed.

The Afghan Customs Department, a division of the Ministry of Finance, can be contacted at:

Telephone: +(93)(75)200-4199
Email: info@mof.gov.af

Standards

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Afghanistan is currently in the process of developing a national standards regime. The Afghan National Standards Authority (ANSA) is an independent agency under the Ministry of Commerce and was established in 2005. ANSA is responsible for the establishment, maintenance, dissemination and enforcement of national standards and technical regulations. ANSA plans to have standards regulations in place for select goods and products in 2007.

ANSA can be reached at ansaafg@gmail.com

Trade Agreements

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As a least-developed country, Afghanistan is eligible for duty-free access to the U.S. market under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program. Afghanistan has signed a bilateral Investment Incentive Agreement with the United States to encourage

and protect investment activities in Afghanistan through the provision of insurance and investment guarantees under the OPIC program. In 2004, a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) was also signed with the United States.

Afghanistan is a member of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC). It became a full member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in the spring of 2007.

Afghanistan has signed bilateral Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreements with Russia and Turkey, a bilateral Reciprocal Promotion and Protection of Investments Agreement with Turkey, and a bilateral Preferential Trade Agreement with India. Afghanistan also has an Afghanistan Transit Trade Agreement (ATTA) with Pakistan.

Afghan products enjoy duty free and quota free access under an Least-developed Country (LDC) Market Access Initiative with Canada and a Generalized Preferences Treatment agreement with Japan. Afghan products also enjoy an "Everything but Arms" (EBA) agreement with the European Union.

Afghanistan became an observer to the World Trade Organization in December 2004 and has announced its intention to complete the WTO accession process within the next five years.

Telecommunications

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Local fixed-line telephone networks, operated by state-owned Afghan Telecom (AfTel), generally do not work reliably. AfTel has a subscriber base of roughly 250,000, including 160,000 wireless local loop lines installed in 2006. Cellular phone service is available in Kabul with coverage extending to 33 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces.

Teledensity is approximately 9 percent of the population. There are currently three wireless service providers: (i) Telephone Development Company Afghanistan (TDCA) (48 percent market share), operating under the brand name Roshan. TDCA is an international consortium led by the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development. (ii) Afghan Wireless Communications Company (AWCC) (35 percent market share), a joint venture between U.S.-based Telephone Systems International and the Afghan Ministry of Communications. (iii) Areeba (17 percent market share), a subsidiary of South Africa-based MTN Group, opened its network in 2006. A fourth wireless operator, a subsidiary of UAE-based Etisalat, began building a network in 2006 and began offering service in 2007. The country has multiple internet service providers.

Transportation

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Several commercial airlines serve Afghanistan at Kabul International Airport. Pakistan International Airlines has two weekly flights to and from Islamabad. Indian Airlines flies

five times a week to and from Delhi. Kam Air and Safi have flights between Kabul and Dubai six times a week. The U.S. Embassy does not recommend use of Ariana Afghan Airlines to any destination or Kam Air flights to and from destinations other than Dubai because existing civil aviation regulations in Afghanistan do not meet international aviation standards. Please see the State Department's Consular Information Sheet for more information.

Taxis around Kabul should range between Afs 50 to 100 (USD 1 or USD 2, depending on where you are going) per trip, but a dedicated car and driver are recommended. For travel within Kabul, a car and driver (no English) will run up to USD 15 to USD 50 per day, depending on the model of car. Public buses are not recommended.

Language

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Dari and Pashto are the official languages of the country. Few native Afghans speak English, but many returning expatriate Afghans speak English or German. Rates vary widely; a reliable interpreter fluent in English, Dari and Pashto may earn anything between USD 150 - USD 2,000 per month.

Health

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The climate in Afghanistan is dry. Summer temperatures reach into the 100s F and winter lows dip into the 20s F, sometimes with snow. Kabul is very dusty, and shoes and clothes are difficult to keep clean.

Well-equipped medical facilities are few and far between throughout Afghanistan. European and American medicines are available in limited quantities and may be expensive or difficult to locate. There is a shortage of standard medical supplies. Basic medicines manufactured in Iran, Pakistan, and India are available, but their quality can be questionable. Travelers should bring all necessary medications, both prescription and over-the-counter. A couple of western-style private clinics have opened in Kabul recently: the DK-German Medical Diagnostic Center (<http://www.medical-kabul.com>) and CURE International Hospital (ph. 0799-883-830) offer a variety of care; Americans seeking treatment should request American or Western health practitioners. American travelers may seek emergency medical services at the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) medical facilities in the Kabul area, but routine care is not available. The ISAF Hospital, which is under the command of different countries over time, is located about 10 kilometers from Kabul on Jalalabad Road, and the combined forces ISAF clinic, adjacent to Kabul International Airport, may provide medical care to American citizens who can show appropriate ID and who request emergency care. Shino Zada Private Hospital located in Microrayon 4, opposite the central heating center, provides general surgery, maternity care, ambulance and pharmacy facilities 24 hours a day. Imran Clinic, across from the Ministry of Interior, has limited laboratory and x-ray facilities.

Afghan public hospitals should be avoided. Individuals without government licenses or even medical degrees often operate private clinics; there is no public agency that monitors their operations. Travelers will not be able to find Western-trained medical

personnel in most parts of the country outside of Kabul, although there are some international aid groups temporarily providing basic medical assistance in various cities and villages. For any medical treatment, payment is required in advance. Commercial medical evacuation capability from Afghanistan is limited.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site. For information on outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's website.

Local Time, Business Hours, and Holidays

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Local time is GMT plus 4.5 hours and 9.5/8.5 hours ahead of the U.S. east coast. Note that Afghanistan does not "spring forward" to daylight-savings time. This means, for example, that Afghanistan is 9.5 hours ahead of the U.S. east coast in winter and 8.5 hours ahead in summer.

Afghanistan government officials observe a five and a half day workweek; Thursday afternoons and Fridays are off. Business hours are typically 8 AM to 4 PM. Commercial shops keep longer but varying hours, usually from 7am to 11pm.

Holidays vary year to year and are determined by the Islamic Calendar and the visibility of the lunar crescent. Holidays include three days for Eid-ul-Qurban in January, three days for Eid-Al-Fitr in December, one day for the Prophet's Birthday in May, February 9 (10th of Maharam), March 21 (Nawrooz) and August 18 (Independence Day).

Temporary Entry of Materials and Personal Belongings

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Afghan customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Afghanistan of items such as firearms, alcoholic beverages, religious materials, antiquities, medications, and printed materials. American travelers have faced fines and/or confiscation of items considered antiquities upon exiting Afghanistan. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Afghanistan in Washington D.C. for specific information regarding customs requirements.

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Chapter 6: Investment Climate

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Openness to Foreign Investment

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The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) recognizes that the development of a vibrant private sector is crucial to the reconstruction of an economy ravaged by decades of conflict and mismanagement. As such, it has taken significant steps toward fostering a business-friendly environment for both foreign and domestic investment.

The Law on Private Investment of Afghanistan of 2005 specifically prohibits discrimination against foreign investors. Investment in certain sectors, such as non-banking financial activities, insurance, natural resources, and infrastructure (defined to include power, water, sewage, waste-treatment, airports, telecommunications, and health and education facilities) is subject to special consideration by the High Commission on Investment (HCI), in consultation with relevant government ministries. Investments can be 100 percent foreign-owned. Foreign investors are not required to secure an Afghan partner. Private investors have the right to transfer their capital and profits out of Afghanistan as well as debt service for off-shore loans. Foreign and domestic investors enjoy equal treatment, including under ongoing privatization programs, except as noted in the sectors above. Foreigners may not own real estate, but they may lease it for periods up to fifty years. The Income Tax Law allows accelerated depreciation for capital assets and deduction of most business losses.

Seven major commercial laws are currently in effect by presidential decree covering partnerships, corporations, arbitration, mediation, copyrights, patents, and telecommunications. However, Parliament could still vote to amend those laws. Parliament has also passed a Labor Law. Additional laws on contracts, standards, trademarks, negotiable instruments, secured transactions for moveable property, mortgages, leasing, and agency are still pending.

The government has adopted progressive policies to foster trade and investment, including currency reform, rationalized customs tariffs, and a simplified tax code. It has also set up structures to help promote investment and investment-friendly policies. The High Commission on Investment (HCI), composed of the Ministers of Commerce, Agriculture, Mines, Foreign Affairs, Finance, and Economy, and Da Afghanistan (Central) Bank, is supposed to coordinate policy-making, but has been relatively inactive. The Afghan Investment Support Agency (AISA), a quasi-government agency under the Ministry of Commerce, operates a streamlined business registration process ("one-stop shop") and conducts a host of business and investment promotion and facilitation activities.

The privatization policy approved by the Cabinet of Ministers provides for the transfer of the assets of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) to the private sector. Consistent with this policy, the Cabinet of Ministers approved 21 SOE liquidation proposals for SOEs engaged in transportation, commerce, industry, and other sectors. The assessment of their assets and liabilities is in process, with 37 public auctions already held. One more SOE liquidation proposal has been submitted and is expected to be approved by the Cabinet of Ministers. Pursuant to the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS), 56 SOEs should be divested by March 2010. SOEs own large amounts of land and property around the country (currently, almost 1,400 parcels of land have been identified), and delays in the rationalization and liquidation of some SOE holdings inhibit competition and investments in some sectors. The latest amendments to the SOE Law introduce the requirement for two additional approvals by Parliament in the process for each SOE, further complicating matters.

A new chamber of commerce was formed in 2008 by the merger of two competing chambers: the private-sector based Afghanistan International Chamber of Commerce and the government-organized Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI), combining the market-economy orientation and energy of the private sector association with the assets and membership of the old ACCI, which has given its name to the reformed body. The new ACCI engages actively in the process of establishing a legal framework for private business in Afghanistan, represents the business community to leading government officials, and provides services to members.

Although officials express strong commitment to a market economy and foreign investment, many businesses maintain that this attitude has not yet trickled down to the staff level in some ministries. Many government officials -- some of whom reportedly demand bribes, levy unofficial taxes, and inflict bureaucratic delays -- are out of step with official government policy. However, with the arrival in late 2008 of a new Minister of Commerce & Industries (MOCI), it is hoped that the MOCI will be more effective in fostering growth of the private sector.

There are no restrictions on converting or transferring funds associated with investment into a freely usable currency and at a legal market clearing rate. The Private Investment Law states that an investor may freely transfer investment dividends or proceeds from a sale of an approved enterprise abroad. Afghanistan does not maintain a dual exchange-rate regime, currency controls, capital controls, or any other restrictions on the free flow of funds abroad.

Access to foreign exchange for investment remittances is not restricted by any law or regulation. However, in practice, particularly in the provinces, many banks may not have the capacity to deal with foreign exchange. The large, informal foreign-exchange markets in major cities and provinces such as Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif, Jalalabad, Kandahar, and Herat, where U.S. dollars, British pounds, and euros are readily available, are slowly starting to become formal markets. Da Afghanistan (Central) Bank has issued more than 100 licenses (for foreign exchange only) to money changers in Kabul. While more licenses are expected to be issued in the near future, there are thousands of unlicensed money changers that continue to practice their trade. Money service providers (i.e. hawaladars, many of whom also often perform currency exchange) continually cite the lack of enforcement in the currency exchange area and the resulting competitive disadvantage to licensed exchangers as a reason not to get money service provider licenses. U.S. investors should only use licensed hawaladar money service providers, who are listed on the web site of Da Afghanistan Bank.

There is no legally mandated delay period for remitting investment returns such as dividends, return of capital, interest, and principal on private foreign debt, lease payments, and royalties and management fees through normal, legal channels.

The government does not limit the inflow and outflow of funds for remittances of profits, debt service, capital, capital gains, returns on intellectual property, or imported inputs, provided that applicable taxes have been paid. The only requirements placed on the outflow of funds are to prevent money laundering. For example, any transfer abroad that equals or exceeds AFS one million (USD 20,000) or equivalent must be carried out through a duly authorized or permitted banking organization or licensed money service provider. The transport of more than AFS one million or equivalent in cash across the border of Afghanistan into another country must be reported in advance to the Financial Intelligence Unit (aka FinTRACA) of Da Afghanistan (Central) Bank.

The Private Investment Law states, "The State can expropriate an investment or assets . . . only for the purposes of public interest and on a non-discriminatory basis." It further states that the "State shall provide prompt, adequate and effective compensation in conformity with the principles of international law, equivalent to the fair market value." The State may confiscate private property in order to settle bad commercial debts. The law allows a majority investor to challenge the expropriation, but this right does not

accrue to "minority shareholders". Both the Afghan constitution and the Private Investment Law prohibit foreigners from owning real estate. There have been no reports of State expropriation of foreign assets, "creeping" or otherwise.

Dispute Settlement

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Afghanistan's legal system is only just beginning to rebuild itself. Much of the framework necessary for encouraging and protecting private investment is not yet in place, and the existence of three overlapping systems (the Sharia-Islamic Law, the Shura-traditional law and practice, and the formal legal system instituted under the 2004 Constitution) can be confusing to both investors and legal professionals. While a commercial court system exists, the lack of a Contracts Law and a commercial code, drafts of which are still under consideration, is a significant impediment to the arbitration of commercial matters. In addition, there is a shortage of qualified legal practitioners, and corruption in the judicial system is endemic.

The enactment in January 2007 of Arbitration and Mediation laws established the foundation for a viable alternative dispute settlement system. Afghanistan is a party to the Convention on the Settlement of Investment Disputes Between States and Nationals of Other States and the New York Convention of 1958 on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards. The Private Investment Law provides for dispute resolution under these mechanisms, under United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) rules, or under any mechanism that the investor has specified in a contract with another investor.

Under these conditions, the legal system plays a limited role in adjudicating commercial disputes and most businesses use informal mechanisms to resolve disputes and enforce property rights. The Afghan Investment Support Agency (AISA), for example, has some capability to assist investors in the mediation of certain disputes.

Investment disputes are common in the areas of land titling and contracts. The lack of a comprehensive land titling database due to confiscation by the former communist regime and destruction of records by the Taliban means that several individuals may hold deeds to the same property. Real estate agents are not reliable. Those foreign investors seeking to work with Afghan citizens to purchase property are advised to conduct painstaking due diligence. The Embassy maintains a list of legal advisors that businesses may consult. (As noted above, the Afghan constitution limits land ownership to Afghan citizens.) For this reason, U.S. investors almost always require an Afghan citizen as a partner in establishing an enterprise.

Performance Requirements and Incentives

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Afghanistan has no formal regulations or laws governing performance requirements.

The Private Investment Law prohibits discrimination against foreign investors, except in certain sectors, as noted above. Afghanistan's constitution restricts foreigners from owning real estate. There are no separate investment incentives or special treatment

accorded to foreign investors. There are no government-imposed conditions on permission to invest, beyond the procedures required for acquiring a business.

The government does not impose offset requirements on its procurements, and foreign firms are accorded equal treatment before the law with national firms, except as noted.

The government does not apply discriminatory or excessively onerous visa, residence or work permit requirements for foreigners. There are no discriminatory or preferential export and import policies affecting foreign investors. The Investment Commission under the Private Investment Law may choose to review and apply terms that are different from those generally applied to investments pursuant to this law for certain restricted sectors such as:

- non-banking financial activities;
- insurance activities; and
- investments in natural resources and infrastructure (energy related, airports etc.)

Right to Private Ownership and Establishment

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Under the Private Investment Law, foreign and domestic private entities have equal standing and may establish and own business enterprises, engage in all forms of remunerative activity and freely acquire and dispose of interests in business enterprises. The only exception is in real estate; foreigners may not own land but they may lease it for periods of up to fifty years. Some leases have been negotiated with an automatic renewal clause for terms of up to 99 years.

In principle, government policies and regulations apply the standard of competitive equality to private enterprises in competition with public enterprises with respect to access to markets, credit and other business operations. However, working-level government officials have in some instances exhibited anti-competitive and protectionist bias in some sectors in which SOEs are active.

While not sanctioned by law or official policy, small groups of businessmen, many of whom are alleged to have connections with former warlords and militias, dominate the trading market in many areas. These individuals, because of their wealth and insider access to land, credit and contacts, and their ability to manipulate prices, wield an excessive advantage that results in a non-competitive environment in some fields, notably fuel and construction. In addition, some industries, including money changing and carpet production, have well-organized guilds which protect existing firms and act to prevent newcomers from establishing themselves.

Property rights protection is weak due to a lack of property registries or a land titling database, disputed land titles, incapacity of commercial courts, and widespread corruption.

The acquisition of a clear land title to purchase real estate or a registered leasehold interest is complicated and cumbersome. It takes an average of six months and entails legal fees of almost 10 percent of the property value to register property. Many businesses cite access to land as one of the biggest impediments to investment in Afghanistan.

The country's Bankruptcy Law dates to the 1960s and is not effective. Laws on Secured Transactions for Moveable and Immoveable (Mortgage) Property are currently under consideration.

While Afghanistan did pass laws on Patents and Copyrights, implementing regulations have not yet been promulgated and there is no effective enforcement mechanism. Afghanistan is not a member of the WTO Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement or the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Internet Treaties. Pirated DVDs and software are sold throughout the country. Counterfeit pharmaceuticals and building materials are common.

In general, the GIRoA promotes transparent policies and effective laws to foster competition, establish "clear rules of the game" and promote, rather than hinder, foreign investment. The inadequacy of the regulatory system, and corruption among those working-level officials who administer it, are larger obstacles to investors than the transparency of the regulations.

Procedures for obtaining a business license were streamlined in 2003 with the establishment of AISA, which serves as a one-stop shop for investors, and which has greatly facilitated the process of establishing a business. Afghanistan now ranks an impressive 22nd out of 181 economies in ease of registering a business, according to the World Bank's 2009 "Doing Business Report." While registering a business is a relatively quick process -- six days and three procedures -- the same report ranks Afghanistan at 161st out of 181 economies for the ease of doing business overall. The October 2006 Adam Smith International "Initiative for Regulatory Reform to Enhance Private Sector Development in Afghanistan: An Investor Roadmap" details the cumbersome process of actually starting a business after the initial license is received. Information about the numerous necessary steps is often not publicly available. Due to existing information gaps, many investors utilize the services of expeditors to facilitate the processing of necessary documents.

There are no informal regulatory processes managed by non-governmental organizations or private sector associations.

Prior to December 2005, proposed laws and regulations were passed by presidential decree. Drafts were not published for public comment; however, relevant ministries occasionally forwarded draft legislation to interested bodies for informal comment. This process was criticized by the private sector as insufficient. The parliament that convened on December 19, 2005, now must approve all legislation., except that when Parliament is in recess, the President can issue decrees with the force of law. However, in these cases, Parliament has the right to review and amend the decrees.

Legal, regulatory, and accounting systems are inconsistent with international norms. The legal framework for investment is inadequate, accounting and standards regimes have yet to be set up, and regulatory bodies are often understaffed, weak, and corrupt. Reform programs, however, are in progress and rely heavily on foreign experts who base their initiatives on international best practices.

Efficient Capital Markets and Portfolio Investment

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Credit markets are fragmented and under-developed in Afghanistan. Bank credit is available, on limited "market" terms, to domestic and foreign investors in major urban centers. The variety of credit facilities and instruments is limited. Most bank credit is short-term (i.e., less than one year) and unsecured. Lending is under-developed because of a lack of adequate legislation and regulatory infrastructure to allow lending institutions to perfect security interests in pledged collateral. Afghanistan has a public debt market. The Central Bank issues a discount security (akin to US Treasury Bills) with maturities of one and six months. Licensed commercial banks, money service providers and foreign exchange dealers are eligible to participate in the primary auction of these Central Bank securities. Authorities are trying to encourage development of a secondary market in these securities, the interest rate on which has been running about 14 percent recently.

Access to credit has been identified as one of the largest obstacles to investment in Afghanistan. In the World Bank's 2009 "Doing Business Report," Afghanistan ranks 178th out of 181 countries for obtaining credit, a measure of the lack of credit information sharing and legal rights of borrowers and lenders. In response to this situation, investment funds, leasing, and micro-financing, and SME-financing companies have begun to enter the market.

As of June 2008, the total assets of the banking system of Afghanistan (16 duly-licensed banking organizations) reached USD 935 million.

The banking system can be described as generally sound. The Central Bank recently exercised its supervision authority and now has the Development Bank of Afghanistan (DBA) under conservatorship due to detected fraud. Deposits and loans are growing rapidly, and the Central Bank is exercising close supervision of all 16 commercial banks from both an on-site and off-site perspective. Non-performing loans are about 1 percent of the total loan portfolio of AFS 41 billion. However, most bank loans have traditionally been structured as lines of credit rather than term loans, which tends to obscure the true level of non-performing loans. Under the guidance of DAB, banks are converting lines of credit to term loans.

Political Violence

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Afghanistan is struggling toward political stability, and faced increased anti-government violence in 2008, further constraining economic activity. The peaceful parliamentary elections of 2005 were a notable achievement, and presidential and provincial council elections are scheduled for August 20, 2009. The government is taking steps to extend its reach into the provinces. However, the risk of violence continues to be high, and security remains a primary concern and an obstacle to foreign investment. Foreign firms operating in country report spending a significant percentage of their revenues on security infrastructure and operating expenses. The U.S. Department of State continues to warn Americans against travel to Afghanistan. U.S. citizens should review the Consular Information Sheet and Travel Warning for Afghanistan for the most up-to-date information on the security situation and possible threats.

Corruption

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Corruption is pervasive in Afghanistan. In 2008, the country ranked 176th out of 180 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index. While anti-corruption laws exist, and the practice of giving or taking a bribe is illegal, there has been limited enforcement. In 2008, Afghan President Hamid Karzai created the High Office of Oversight for the Implementation of Anti-Corruption Strategy ("HOO") to coordinate anti-corruption measures for the government. In January 2008, President Karzai chaired the first meeting of a high-level Decision-Making Committee on Specific Anti-Corruption Measures, which decided to give priority to addressing specific cases of official corruption and outreach to the public. Afghanistan acceded to the United Nations Convention against Corruption in August 2008 but is not a party to the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials.

U.S. firms identify corruption as one of the biggest obstacles to foreign direct investment and routinely report being asked for a bribe, called *sherini* or *bakshesh*. With working-level government salaries ranging from USD 80-300 per month, many officials see small bribes for government services as a necessary means of survival. U.S. companies are expected to comply with the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, which prohibits the bribery of foreign officials.

Bilateral Investment Agreements

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Afghanistan has Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs) with Turkey and Germany and currently is negotiating such an agreement with Pakistan. Afghanistan acceded to the South Asia Free Trade Area (SAFTA) in August 2008, but needs to bring its terms into force through ratification by Parliament or Presidential decree. Most products originating in Afghanistan can be imported into the U.S. duty-free under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) Program, and EU tariffs on Afghan products are also very low. Afghanistan is also a member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC).

Afghanistan signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) with the United States in 2004, but a BIT has not been negotiated. There is no Bilateral Taxation Treaty with the United States.

OPIC and Other Investment Insurance Programs

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OPIC, the U.S. private investment support agency, has an active and expanding portfolio of political risk insurance and provides both direct and indirect financial support to private business investments in country. OPIC makes direct loans of up to 60% of long-term investments that are at least 25% owned by a U.S. investor. OPIC provides political risk insurance coverage for the U.S. equity component as well as reinsurance support for insurance that is written in country.

Afghanistan is a member of the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA).

Labor

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There is a critical shortage of skilled labor in Afghanistan. Decades of war, a low level of education and lack of training facilities have resulted in a scarcity of skilled technicians, qualified managers and educated professionals.

U.S. companies that establish training programs for their employees should expect significant returns in enhanced productivity, but there is a risk of high turnover as skilled employees chase higher paying opportunities.

Labor-management relations are undeveloped. While there are ten major trade union organizations in the country, there is no knowledge or practice of collective bargaining. Existing employee associations function as commercial and trading organizations.

The new Labor Law, which is intended to be in accordance with Labor Organization (ILO) standards, was passed by Parliament in 2007. According to the ILO, the new law incorporates all ILO Conventions to which Afghanistan has acceded except ILO Conventions 138 and 182 concerning minimum age of employment and hazardous work, respectively.

A regulation on foreign workers was published in 2005. While allowing for the employment of foreign workers, it requires that priority be given to Afghan workers when they are equivalently qualified.

At present, the government has little to no capacity to enforce labor requirements.

Foreign-Trade Zones/Free Ports

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Afghanistan has no duty-free import zones or ports. Under Afghan law, foreign-owned firms have the same investment opportunities as host country entities. However, Afghanistan is considering the establishment of Trade Facilitation Zones and/or Export Processing Zones to enhance export potential.

Foreign Direct Investment Statistics

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Comprehensive foreign direct investment statistics for Afghanistan are unavailable. Available figures are not reliable because of inconsistencies in data collection. The United Nations (2008 World Investment Report) estimates new FDI in Afghanistan in 2007 at USD 288 million and total FDI stocks at \$1,116 million, representing 12.6% of GDP. According to the Afghan Investment Support Agency (AISA), the top FDI destination sectors were, in descending order, services, agriculture, and construction; the largest investors were the United States, Turkey, South Africa, Pakistan, and Iran. It is important to note that AISA's data track approved, rather than actual, investment.

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Chapter 7: Trade and Project Financing

- [How Do I Get Paid \(Methods of Payment\)](#)
- [How Does the Banking System Operate](#)
- [Foreign-Exchange Controls](#)
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How Do I Get Paid (Methods of Payment)

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Most local businesses operate on a cash basis. Import and export letters of credit are available at several banks as well as electronic funds transfer. Due to wide mistrust and general underdevelopment of the banking system, many local businesses depend on the informal hawala system to make payments and transfer funds. The hawala system is an informal value transfer system whereby money is transferred through a network of brokers, or hawaladars. Promissory instruments are not exchanged; the transaction is based on the honor system.

How Does the Banking System Operate

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The Da Afghanistan (Central) Bank has licensed 14 commercial banks. Out of 14, 11 banks are full-fledged commercial banks:

Bank Millie Afghan or National Bank (parastatal bank)
Pashtany Tejarati Bank (parastatal bank)
Export Promotion Bank (parastatal bank)
First Microfinance Bank (an Aga Khan/IFC joint venture)
Kabul Bank (a solely Afghan-owned bank)
Afghanistan International Bank
Arian Bank (joint venture of Bank-e-Mille “National Bank” of Iran and Bank-e-Saderat “Export Bank” of Iran)
Azizi Bank
BRAC Afghanistan Bank

Five Branches of Foreign Banks:

Standard Chartered Bank (UK)
National Bank of Pakistan (Pakistan)
Habib Bank Limited (Pakistan)
Punjab National Bank of India (India)
Bank Alfalah Limited (Pakistan)

Most of the 14 commercial banks licensed to operate in Afghanistan are concentrated in Kabul and provide services primarily to international donors and businesses, foreign NGOs and foreign government agencies. the Da Afghanistan (Central) Bank’s main

office in Kabul is no longer involved in commercial activities. However, in provinces with limited or no commercial banking services, the Central Bank continues to offer some commercial services.

The banking system has limited capacity to provide credit and non-credit services.

There is no long-term financing available from commercial banks in Afghanistan; most offer terms of a year or less, with a maximum tenure of three years. There is a small number of non-bank financial institutions (13 micro-finance institutions, one credit union and one leasing company), but these institutions meet only a small fraction of credit needs. There are no credit bureaus or credit rating agencies.

Because of widespread distrust of the banking system, many local businesses use the hawala system for short-term loans to finance working capital needs or rely on family and friends. Hawaladars are now required to be licensed by the Central Bank.

The legal and regulatory framework of the financial sector is still under development.

Foreign-Exchange Controls

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Exchange rate policy is determined by the Central Bank, and is implemented through a weekly foreign exchange (USD) auction. No foreign exchange restrictions or multiple currency practices are currently in place.

U.S. Banks and Local Correspondent Banks

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There are currently no U.S. banks operating in Afghanistan. However, Afghan Growth Finance LLC is a U.S.-owned non-bank financing company established to make working capital and long-term loans available to small and medium enterprises.

Project Financing

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Project financing is available from the following organizations:

- The Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC)

OPIC is an independent, self-sustaining, development agency of the U.S. government that provides political risk insurance (for losses due to political violence – including terrorism, expropriation, or currency inconvertibility), loans and guarantees to help U.S. businesses of all sizes invest and compete in more than 140 emerging markets and developing nations worldwide for projects that demonstrate substantial U.S. participation, promise significant benefits to the economic and social development of Afghanistan, and foster private sector competition in Afghanistan. OPIC gives preferential consideration to projects that significantly involve U.S. small businesses. OPIC is active in all regions of Afghanistan, from Kandahar, to Balkh and Kunduz, to Kabul. Some examples include up to USD 60 million in financing and political risk insurance for construction of a five-star international hotel in Kabul, managed by

Marriott; USD 20 million in capital for a financial institution; and direct loans of USD 3 million to support housing construction and a USD 1 million loan to expand a hand-woven carpet weaving and finishing operation.

- The International Finance Corporation (IFC)

IFC promotes sustainable private sector investment in developing countries and is the largest multilateral source of loan and equity financing for private sector projects in the developing world. IFC provides loans, equity finance and quasi-equity. It also offers financial risk management products and intermediary finance.

The U.S. Trade and Development Agency: USTDA advances economic development and U.S. commercial interests in developing and middle-income countries. The agency funds various forms of technical assistance, feasibility studies, training, orientation visits and business workshops that support the development of a modern infrastructure and a fair and open trading environment. USTDA moved quickly to establish its program and has provided more than USD 9 million in funds for projects benefiting Afghanistan since 2002. USTDA has financed projects in telecommunications, civil aviation, oil and gas, higher education, private sector development, and power.

- The Export-Import Bank of the United States

Ex-Im provides financing for the sale of U.S. products overseas. Although Ex-Im is currently not open for business in Afghanistan, it will continue to survey future opportunities.

Many business opportunities are connected to the reconstruction effort. The following agencies have large programs through which opportunities for interested businesses are available.

- U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)

USAID has taken a leading role in Afghanistan's reconstruction effort, focusing on health clinics and basic health services, school construction and education programs, legal and regulatory reform for the commercial sector, banking supervision, small and medium enterprise development, strengthening the financial sector, revitalizing agriculture through irrigation systems, farm-to-market roads, market centers, and infrastructure, including the Kabul-Kandahar-Herat highway. USAID is also funding programs that enhance the central government's capacity and provide it with the tools and technical assistance to govern effectively. Funding in 2006 exceed USD 1 billion. The USAID Web site, has a business and procurement link that lists upcoming procurements including solicitation documents, announcements, and other resources. This site is updated daily and offers e-mail notification when a new solicitation has been uploaded to the site. U.S. firms interested in bidding on USAID projects in Afghanistan can review requests for applications, proposals, quotations and invitation for bids on this web site. U.S. firms should also review the main portal for U.S. government procurements at <http://www.fedbizopps.gov>.

The World Bank

The World Bank strategy for Afghanistan primarily focuses on increasing accountability and improving the quality of services the Government of Afghanistan provides to the Afghan people; promoting economic growth in rural areas; and fostering the growth and

development of the private sector. Since resuming operations in Afghanistan in April 2002, the World Bank has committed approximately USD 1.69 billion for 41 projects and three budget support packages. In addition, the World Bank administers the multi-donor Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, which provides coordinated financing of priority expenditures in Afghanistan's reconstruction program as well as supporting the recurrent costs of government. The World Bank's website includes an information portal for the business community seeking to participate in opportunities that are generated from World Bank-financed projects. Projects can also be tracked at <http://www.dgmarket.com>

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB)

ADB's assistance is aimed at helping Afghanistan establish appropriate policy and institutional frameworks, build capacity, and finance the rehabilitation of essential infrastructure. Since resuming operations in Afghanistan in 2002 until the end of 2008, ADB has committed approximately USD 1.77 billion to Afghanistan's reconstruction through loan-and grant-financed projects, technical assistance, and private-sector investments. From 2009-2013, ADB expects to commit an additional USD 1.5 billion with a focus on energy, road transport, agriculture, and irrigation. ADB projects can be tracked at <http://www.dgmarket.com>

ADB business opportunities are posted and updated regularly at <http://www.adb.org/Business/Opportunities/default.asp>.

There are opportunities to bid on donor-funded projects administered by the Government of Afghanistan. The Afghanistan Reconstruction and Development Service (ARDS) manages the purchase of goods and services on behalf of the Afghan Government. Companies that wish to receive procurement notices can do so by registering through email.

Political risk insurance is available both through OPIC and the Afghanistan Investment Guarantee Facility, a program of the World Bank's Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency.

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Chapter 8: Business Travel

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Business Customs

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Business meetings are usually conducted in Dari, Pashto or English. Green or black tea, nuts and raisins are typically served. Alcohol is generally not offered. The form of greeting is "Asalam Aleikum" (Peace be with you), followed by a firm handshake and then, for courtesy and to pay homage to the host (you don't necessarily have to), briefly place your right hand over your heart. Some Afghans will not shake a woman's hand, instead placing their right hands over their hearts as a gesture of respect; it is appropriate for a woman to respond in kind. It is best to take a few minutes initially to engage in pleasantries about each other's country, rather than going straight to business. Afghan interlocutors may appear vague and non-committal during meetings. In order to build trust and "get to yes," be patient, share meals and other social events and discuss matters other than business, such as the health and wellbeing of family members. Capture the essence of your business meetings and agreements in a follow up letter to your Afghan interlocutor. Be clear about what you have committed yourself or your U.S. firm to do, or in many cases, have not committed to do. A promise to "look into" or "research" an issue, quote, or pricing policy may be interpreted as a firm commitment.

DOs and DON'Ts in Afghan Culture

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- Do greet everyone when entering a room. If you are a man, shake hands with the men, but not with a woman unless she extends her hand first. If you are a woman, shake hands with the women in the room and with men who offer hands; the hand over heart gesture is also acceptable.
- Do eat with your right hand as much as possible.
- Do dress modestly.
- Do accept a chair if someone brings you one to sit on, even if you would rather stand. This is a sign of respect.
- Do read about the country's history, culture, and people before you come, as this will be treated as a sign of respect for Afghanistan.
- Don't show impatience if your interlocutor isn't giving you direct answers. Afghans like to elaborate and want to be clear in communicating.

- Don't panic. Afghanistan's government can be bureaucratic. It may take you several days to get a simple authorization signed. Keep in mind that Afghanistan's government is undergoing a reform process.
- Don't call an Afghan "Afghani." Afghani is the currency; Afghans are the people of Afghanistan.
- Don't drink alcohol in front of an Afghan.

Travel Advisory

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While the U.S. Embassy in Kabul encourages U.S. companies to review business opportunities in Afghanistan, it is important to keep in mind the extremely volatile security situation in the country. The security situation remains critical for American citizens, who could be targets for kidnappings, terrorism, and other violent crime. Travelers should consult the State Department's web site prior to any travel and carefully review the Country Specific Information for Afghanistan at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1056.html.

Visa Requirements

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A passport and valid visa are required to enter and exit Afghanistan. Afghan entry visas are not available at Kabul International Airport. American citizens who arrive without a visa are subject to confiscation of their passport and face heavy fines and difficulties in retrieving their passport and obtaining a visa, as well as possible deportation from the country. Americans arriving in the country via military air usually have considerable difficulties if they choose to depart Afghanistan on commercial air, because their passports are not stamped to show that they entered the country legally. Those coming on military air should move quickly after arrival to legalize their status if there is any chance they will depart the country on anything other than military air. Visit the Embassy of Afghanistan web site at <http://www.embassyofafghanistan.org> for the most current visa information. The Consular office of the Embassy of Afghanistan is located at 2233 Wisconsin Avenue NW, Suite 216, Washington, DC 20007, phone number 202-298-9125.

U.S. companies that require travel of foreign business persons to the United States should know that it can take more than 60 days for an Afghan citizen to receive a visa to visit the United States. The U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan currently does not process visas for Afghan citizens. Please see the U.S. Embassy website for information on how Afghan citizens may apply in Islamabad, Pakistan.

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Chapter 9: Contacts, Market Research, and Trade Events

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Contacts

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U.S. Government Contacts:

Notices of contract opportunities and corresponding solicitations are also publicized at FedBizOpps (www.fbo.gov), the single source for federal procurement opportunities. .

To FIND and APPLY for federal government grants, please see <http://www.grants.gov>.

U.S. Department of Commerce
Diana Fonovich
Afghanistan Investment and Reconstruction Task Force
Washington, D.C. 20230
Tel: (202) 482-1812
Fax: (202) 482-0980
Email: afghaninfo@ita.doc.gov
<http://www.export.gov/afghanistan>

U.S. Embassy Kabul
Great Masood Road
Tel: +93 (20) 230-0436, +93 (0) 70-108-001,
+93 (0) 70-108-002
<http://kabul.usembassy.gov> and <http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/index.aspx>

William Wood, Ambassador
Christopher Dell, Deputy Chief of Mission
Thomas Engle, Economic Counselor
Michael Yates, USAID Mission Director
Melissa Kehoe, Commercial Officer
Brenden O'Brien, Consular Chief

USAID Washington Office
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Ronald Reagan Building
Washington, D.C. 20523-1000
Caroline Brearley, Afghanistan Desk Officer
Tel: (202) 712-0518
Email: cbrearley@usaid.gov

U.S. Trade & Development Agency (USTDA)
Dan Stein, Regional Director for Europe and Eurasia

Suite 1600
1000 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22209
Tel: (703) 875-4357
Fax: (703) 875-4009
Email: dstein@ustda.gov
<http://www.ustda.gov>

Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC)
John Aldonas
1100 New York Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20527
Tel: (202) 336-8400
Fax: (202) 408-9859
Email: John.Aldonas@opic.gov
<http://www.opic.gov>

Export-Import Bank (ExIm)
811 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20571
Tel: (202) 565-3946 (EXIM) or (800) 565-3946 (EXIM)
Grayson Wolfe
Tel: (202) 565-3450
Email: grayson.wolfe@exim.gov
<http://www.exim.gov>

International Financial Institutions :

World Bank
Mariam Sherman, Country Manager for Afghanistan
House 19, Street 15, Wazir Akbar Khan
Kabul, Afghanistan
Contact: Abdul Raouf Zia
Tel: +93 (0) 700 275 964
Email: msherman@worldbank.org
<http://www.worldbank.org>

Asian Development Bank
Afghanistan Resident Mission
Craig Steffensen
Country Director
Afghanistan Resident Mission
Asian Development Bank
House No. 126, Street 2
Haji Yaqob Roundabout, Shahr-e-Naw
(near District 10 Police Station)
Kabul, Afghanistan
Mobile: (+93-799) 020-462
Tel: (+93-20) 210-3602

e-m: csteffensen@adb.org

Afghan Government Contacts:
Afghan Investment Support Agency (AISA)
Tel: +93 (20) 210 3404
Email: info@aisa.org.af, invest@aisa.gov.af
<http://www.aisa.org.af>

Embassy of Afghanistan
Ms. Khaleda Atta, **Commercial Attaché**
Economic, Trade and Investment Department
2341 Wyoming Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
Tel: (202) 483-6410
Fax: (202) 483-6487
Email: contact@afghanistanembassy.org, commerce@embassyofafghanistan.org
<http://www.embassyofafghanistan.org/>, <http://www.afghanistan.business-gateways.com/>

Afghanistan Reconstruction and Development Service (ARDS)
Email: procurement@afghanistangov.org
<http://www.eafghanistan.gov.af/procurement>

Ministry of Commerce
Email: info@commerce.gov.af
<http://www.commerce.gov.af/>

Ministry of Finance
Email: info@mof.gov.af
<http://www.mof.gov.af/>

Other Useful Contacts:

Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI)
Chaman –e Huzuri
Next to Kabul Nendari
Kabul, Afghanistan
<http://www.acci.org.af>

Afghan-American Chamber of Commerce (AACC)
8201 Greensboro Drive, Suite #103
McLean, VA 22102
Tel: (U.S) (703) 658-2929
Fax: (U.S.) (703) 658-9103
Email: apanjshiri@a-acc.org
<http://www.a-acc.org>

Afghanistan Builders Association (ABA)
Naeem Yassin, President
Tel: +93 (0) 70-224-822
Email: yasincc@aol.com
<http://www.aba-af.org>

4/29/2009

Web Resources:

World Bank 2005 Doing Business Report: <http://www.doingbusiness.org>

U.S. Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control:
<http://www.ustreas.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac>

United Nations Development Program: <http://www.undp.org/afghanistan>

Altai Consulting: <http://www.altaiconsulting.com>

Tolo TV: <http://www.tolo.tv>

Ariana TV: <http://www.e-ariana.com>

Radio Television Afghanistan: <http://rtakabul.tripod.com>

Radio Arman: <http://www.arman.fm>.

Export Promotion Agency of Afghanistan:
<http://www.epaa.org.af>

International Finance Corporation <http://www.ifc.org>

Federal Business Opportunities <http://www.fedbizopps.gov>

Development Gateway Market Portal: <http://www.dgmarket.com>

Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency: <http://www.miga.org>

Country Limitation Schedule: http://www.exim.gov/tools/country/country_limits.html

SBA's Office of International Trade: <http://www.sba.gov/oit>

USDA Commodity Credit Corporation: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ccp/default.htm>

World Bank Doing Business Report: <http://www.doingbusiness.org>

United Nations Commission on International Trade Law: <http://www.uncitral.org>

U.S. Department of State Travel Website:
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html

Transparency International: <http://www.transparency.org>

U.S. Department of Justice, Foreign Corrupt Practices Act:
<http://www.usdoj.gov/criminal/fraud/fcpa.html>

International Monetary Fund: <http://www.imf.org>

U.S. Department of State Travel Website: <http://travel.state.gov>

U.S. Department of State Visa Website: <http://travel.state.gov/visa/index.html>

United States Visas: <http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov>

Center for Disease Control: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>

World Health Organization: <http://www.who.int/en> and <http://www.who.int/ith>

Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security: www.bis.doc.gov,
<http://www.bis.doc.gov/policiesandregulations/RegionalConsiderations/Afghanistan.pdf>
<http://www.bis.doc.gov/licensing/ExporterFAQ.html>

Export Administration Regulations: http://www.access.gpo.gov/bis/ear/ear_data.html

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC): <http://www.saarc-sec.org>

Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO): <http://www.ecosecretariat.org>

Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC): <http://www.carec.kz>

Office of the U.S. Trade Representative: <http://www.ustr.gov>

Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade: <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca>

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD):
<http://www.unctad.org>

Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs: http://www.mfa.gov.tr/MFA_tr

Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mofa.go.jp>

Gateway to the European Union: <http://www.europa.eu.int>

Indian Ministry of Commerce: <http://www.commerce.nic.in>

Market Research

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To view market research reports produced by the U.S. Commercial Service please go to the following website: <http://www.export.gov/mrktresearch/index.asp> and click on Country and Industry Market Reports.

Please note that these reports are only available to U.S. citizens and U.S. companies. Registration to the site is required, but free of charge.

Please click on the link below for information on upcoming trade events:
<http://www.export.gov/tradeevents/index.asp>.

For information on USAID-sponsored trade events:
<http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/index.aspx>

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Chapter 10: Guide to Our Services

The U.S. Commercial Service offers customized solutions to help your business enter and succeed in markets worldwide. Our global network of trade specialists will work one-on-one with you through every step of the exporting process, helping you to:

- Target the best markets with our world-class research;
- Promote your products and services to qualified buyers;
- Meet the best distributors and agents for your products and services;
- Overcome potential challenges or trade barriers.

To find an office near you, please visit <http://www.buyusa.gov/home/us.html>.

The U.S. Commercial Service does not have an office in Afghanistan. USFCS is represented by the U.S. Embassy Economic and Commercial Section, which does not provide “gold key” matching service. The Economic and Commercial Section can assist U.S. firms seeking information about business opportunities in Afghanistan and provide advocacy. In addition, the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Afghanistan Investment and Reconstruction Task Force is available to help U.S. firms answer questions about doing business in Afghanistan and operates a list serve of procurement notices. The U.S. Department of Commerce’s Advocacy Center provides advocacy services that can help level the playing field on behalf of U.S. business interests as they compete against foreign firms for specific international contracts or other U.S. export opportunities.

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Washington, D.C. 20230

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Fax No.: (202) 482-3508

<http://www.export.gov/advocacy>

Disclaimer: U.S. exporters seeking general export information/assistance or country-specific commercial information should consult with their nearest Export Assistance Center or the U.S. Department of Commerce's Trade Information Center at (800) USA-TRADE, or go to the following website: <http://www.export.gov>

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