



A number of Afghan construction companies working on contracts for American and NATO military bases in Afghanistan have accused American middlemen of reneging on payments for supplies and services, and in one case of leaving the country owing Afghan companies hundreds of thousands, even millions, of dollars.

The failure of American companies to pay for contracted work has left hundreds of Afghan workers unpaid in southern Afghanistan, and dozens of factories and small businesses so deep in debt that Afghan and foreign officials fear the fallout will undermine the United States-led counterinsurgency effort to win the support of the Afghan people.

While there have been many accusations of corruption on the part of Afghan officials over recent years, there has been less heard about misconduct of the foreign companies working in Afghanistan, not least because Afghans have no organized system of recourse.

Yet the few cases of misconduct by foreign companies that have come to light may be just the “tip of the iceberg,” said a military official with the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. It concerns not only American companies, he added.

“Without being too dramatic, American contractors are contributing to fueling the insurgency,” said the official, who could speak only on the condition of anonymity in keeping with the policy of his organization.

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