SIX YEARS LATER, US STILL TRYING TO FIND A WAY TO KEEP CORRUPT CONTRACTOR IN AFGHANISTAN

The most depressing part of this McClatchy article on the corrupt USAID contracting in Afghanistan by the construction company, Louis Berger, are six-year old quotes calling for an alternative to Berger.

> Behind the scenes, U.S. officials repeatedly have voiced frustration about the company's work.
>
> In May 2004 – three months after then-President George W. Bush publicly praised the company for its quick construction of a section of the Kabul-to-Kandahar Highway – then-U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad raised concerns about Louis Berger.
>
> "These problems are now beginning to interfere with the credibility of the U.S. Mission in Afghanistan, and require immediate corrective action," he wrote.
>
> Later that year, Patrick Fine, USAID's top official in Afghanistan, questioned the quality of schools and clinics whose construction was overseen by Louis Berger. "It is time to cut our losses and put in place an alternative strategy," he wrote.

Yet six years later, DOJ is preparing to sign either a non-prosecution or a deferred prosecution agreement with the company so that Louis Berger can continue to work in Afghanistan.

> The decision to brush aside the

> allegations and the evidence and keep doing business with Louis Berger, underscores a persistent dilemma for the Obama administration in Afghanistan and elsewhere.
>
> Cutting ties with suspect war-zone contractors in Afghanistan would threaten the administration's effort to rebuild the country and begin withdrawing some of the nearly 100,000 U.S. troops there next July.

You know all those articles about the corruption of Karzai's government? The claims that Afghans are just more tolerant of corruption than Americans? The suggestions that, because it's a developing country, Afghans have to and do learn to tolerate corruption?

Either we've become a banana republic sooner than most people realized (perhaps with the FL county in 2000? Or before that?). Or all those attempts to blame Afghan culture for the corruption there are just lame excuses invented to help us overlook our own apparently intractable tolerance for corruption.

But one way or another, it helps to make Afghanistan far too expensive to achieve whatever "victory" our government pretends to be pursuing.