



OIG

Office of Inspector General

U.S. Department of State • Broadcasting Board of Governors

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Office of Audits

May 2015

Management Assistance Report: Embassy Tripoli Armored Vehicles Available for Redistribution and Use

MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE REPORT

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Summary

In November 2014, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted fieldwork at U.S. Embassy Tunis, Tunisia, in conjunction with an audit of Emergency Action Plans (EAP) for U.S. missions in North Africa. During the audit, OIG identified 26 U.S. Embassy Tripoli, Libya, vehicles that had been used to evacuate Embassy Tripoli personnel that were not being used by Embassy Tunis. Embassy Tunis and Embassy Tripoli had no plans for using, maintaining, or redistributing Embassy Tripoli's vehicles. In the absence of a plan for the use of the vehicles and the lack of an established timeframe for returning to Tripoli, the Department of State (Department) is at risk of losing the value and use of the 26 armored vehicles. At a cost of approximately \$200,000 per new armored vehicle, the Department could avoid spending approximately \$5 million by redistributing the existing 26 vehicles to other overseas posts that need them.

OIG recommended that Embassy Tripoli transfer its property rights to the 26 vehicles to Embassy Tunis, and that Embassy Tunis, in coordination with the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA) and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS), develop and implement a plan to redistribute and use the vehicles.

Embassy Tripoli did not provide comments on our recommendation that it transfer the property rights to the 26 vehicles to Embassy Tunis. On April 13, 2015, Embassy Tunis provided comments on a draft of this report (see Appendix A) but did not indicate whether it concurred with the recommendation to develop and implement a plan to redistribute and use the vehicles. Instead, Embassy Tunis stated that it now has a plan to maintain the vehicles until a decision is made regarding the future location of Embassy Tripoli personnel. Embassy Tunis believed consideration of the recommendation should be deferred. While neither recommendation was addressed to DS, on April 22, 2015, DS provided comments on the draft of this report (see Appendix B) and agreed with the need for a plan to redistribute and use the vehicles. However, DS stated that action should be deferred until after a determination was made about the future location of Embassy Tripoli personnel. OIG considers both recommendations unresolved and will monitor the implementation of the two recommendations during the audit compliance process.

BACKGROUND

Embassy Tripoli was evacuated in 2011 during civil unrest to remove then-President Muammar al-Qadhafi. In early 2013, the U.S. Mission returned to Libya and moved its embassy to the suburbs of Tripoli, close to Tripoli International Airport. In early 2014, civil unrest returned, and in July 2014, two major militias, the Zintanis and the Misratans, began vying for control of Tripoli International Airport. As the fighting drew closer to Embassy Tripoli, the security environment for conducting embassy operations deteriorated, and on July 26, 2014, more than 100 U.S. personnel were evacuated by land to Tunisia. Embassy Tunis provided extensive support and facilitated the process of getting all Embassy Tripoli personnel across the Tunisian

border and to a Tunisian military airbase near the coast. After the evacuation, Embassy Tunis took Embassy Tripoli's armored vehicles used in the evacuation back to Embassy Tunis, where they have remained since the evacuation.

RESULTS

Embassy Tripoli Armored Vehicles Available for Redistribution and Use

In November 2014, OIG conducted fieldwork at Embassy Tunis in conjunction with an audit of EAPs. During the audit, OIG observed that 26 Embassy Tripoli armored vehicles used to evacuate Embassy Tripoli personnel were not being used by Embassy Tunis. OIG asked about the vehicles and learned that Embassy Tunis and Embassy Tripoli had no plans for using, maintaining, or redistributing the Embassy Tripoli armored vehicles on Embassy Tunis's compound (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: Embassy Tripoli armored vehicles on Embassy Tunis's compound. (OIG photo)

Two offices manage the purchase, armoring, and distribution of Department armored vehicles to U.S. Missions. The Office of Motor Vehicles, within the Bureau of Administration (A/MV), is responsible for processing requests for vehicles and arranging their purchase. Once the vehicles are purchased, the Defensive Equipment-Armored Vehicles Division, within DS (DS/DEAV), is responsible for armoring and distributing the vehicles to overseas posts.

Upon receiving an armored vehicle, a post is responsible for the vehicle's general operations, maintenance, and, ultimately, its disposal.¹ A/MV and DS/DEAV managers stated that their offices have no direct oversight of posts' changing needs or the disposition of armored vehicles, including whether posts make the determination that they have vehicles that are unused or unneeded. According to DS/DEAV officials, posts can initiate the process for disposing of or redistributing unneeded vehicles by notifying DS/DEAV. Embassy Tunis officials stated that both A/MV and DS/DEAV were aware of the unneeded vehicles at Embassy Tunis. A/MV and DS/DEAV managers acknowledged that the issue had been discussed during an August 2014 meeting with officials from Embassies Tunis and Tripoli and NEA, but the managers stated that neither the embassies nor NEA had requested that DS/DEAV redistribute or otherwise dispose of the vehicles. In addition, the managers stated that, as of February 2015, they were unaware of any plan to redistribute the vehicles to other posts.

According to A/MV and DS/DEAV managers, purchasing, armoring, and delivering armored vehicles to overseas posts takes approximately 18 to 24 months and costs approximately \$200,000 per vehicle. The managers further stated that armored vehicles are both a "high value asset" and a "perishable asset" that require regular use and maintenance. The vehicles can deteriorate rapidly, particularly when they are stored outdoors or exposed to harsh weather conditions, such as those that can occur in Tunis. Embassy Tunis officials stated that they would continue to store the vehicles in a grass and dirt lot on the embassy compound and would set up covers over the vehicles to help minimize direct exposure to sunlight in the event that Embassy Tripoli might soon be re-established in Libya. However, according to the U.S. Ambassador to Libya, there is no established date for returning to Tripoli, and the earliest date for beginning to consider such a return would be 2016. According to DS/DEAV and A/MV managers, even under cover that minimizes direct exposure to sunlight, the vehicles at Embassy Tunis would deteriorate and become unusable before Embassy Tripoli would reopen.

A/MV and DS/DEAV managers stated that the fastest and least expensive method to get armored vehicles to posts that need the vehicles is to redistribute them from posts that have more vehicles than they need. However, they also stated that in order to use, redistribute, or dispose of Embassy Tripoli's armored vehicles, Embassy Tripoli would first need to relinquish its property rights and then Embassy Tunis could ship and export the vehicles, in coordination with NEA and DS/DEAV.

CONCLUSION

In the absence of a plan for the use of the vehicles by Embassy Tunis and the lack of an established timeframe for re-establishing an embassy in Tripoli, the Department runs the risk of

¹ 14 FAM 412.4-1, "Preventive Maintenance and Repair," states that an Accountability Property Officer must ensure that oversight is established to continuously monitor personal property, including motor vehicles, to assure maximum use and to promptly detect nonuse, improper use, unauthorized disposal, or destruction of personal property.

12 FAM 386, "Vehicle Maintenance," "As a post responsibility, armored vehicles must undergo top quality preventive and mechanical maintenance on a regular basis using post-designated local mechanics."

losing the value and use of the 26 armored vehicles. At a cost of approximately \$200,000 per new armored vehicle, the Department could avoid spending approximately \$5 million by redistributing the existing vehicles to other overseas posts that need them.

Recommendation 1: OIG recommends that U.S. Embassy Tripoli, in accordance with Department of State policies and procedures, formally transfer to U.S. Embassy Tunis the property rights to the 26 armored vehicles currently located at Embassy Tunis.

Management Response: Embassy Tripoli did not provide a response to our recommendation.

While not an action office for Recommendation 1, in its comments dated April 22, 2015, which are reprinted in full in Appendix B, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS) stated that it could take action on redistributing or using the vehicles after a decision was made on the future location of Embassy Tripoli personnel. However, DS did not address the primary issue of Recommendation 1, which involves Embassy Tripoli relinquishing the property rights to the vehicles.

OIG Response: OIG considers this recommendation unresolved and will follow up with Embassy Tripoli during the compliance process to ensure implementation of the recommendation. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation showing Embassy Tripoli has formally transferred to Embassy Tunis the property rights to the armored vehicles currently located at Embassy Tunis.

Recommendation 2: OIG recommends that U.S. Embassy Tunis, in coordination with the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, develop and implement a plan to redistribute and use the 26 U.S. Embassy Tripoli armored vehicles that are currently located at Embassy Tunis after property rights to the vehicles have been transferred by Embassy Tripoli, as specified in Recommendation 1.

Management Response: In its comments dated April 13, 2015, which are reprinted in full in Appendix A, Embassy Tunis did not state whether it concurred with the recommendation but instead stated that it believed consideration of the recommendation should be deferred. Embassy Tunis stated that the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs and Embassy Tripoli are in the process of requesting authorization from the Office of the Undersecretary for Management to allow the Embassy Tripoli External Office currently in Malta to transfer operations to Embassy Tunis. This would include the U.S. Ambassador to Libya and as many as 9 American staff members and 13 locally employed staff members. If the request is approved, Embassy Tunis stated it would need all 26 armored vehicles to support the operations of Embassy Tripoli. Embassy Tunis stated that while waiting for the decision regarding the transfer, it had completed construction of a temporary structure that provides protection for the vehicles to the same degree afforded existing covered parking areas. Lastly, Embassy Tunis stated that it had established a plan for the use and maintenance of the vehicles.

While Recommendation 2 is not addressed to the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS), DS agreed with the need for a plan to redistribute and use the vehicles, as stated in its comments dated April 22, 2015, which are reprinted in full in Appendix B. DS stated that once a determination was made about the location of Embassy Tripoli personnel, DS would evaluate the need for vehicles and redistribute them as appropriate. DS stated that Embassy Tripoli vehicles could be provided to Embassy Tunis to meet its armored vehicle needs and that any vehicles past their 5-year life cycle would be destroyed, in accordance with Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) requirements.

OIG Response: OIG disagrees with Embassy Tunis's rationale for deferring the recommendation's implementation. As stated in its comments, Embassy Tunis would accommodate the Ambassador to Libya and up to 9 American staff members and 13 locally employed staff members, if the transfer of operations is approved. However, Embassy Tunis is a self-drive post, which means American staff generally drive personally owned vehicles to and from the Embassy. Further, locally employed staff drive themselves to and from the Embassy. Even in a scenario where the Ambassador and each of the 9 possible American staff members had exclusive use of Embassy Tripoli armored vehicles, only 10 vehicles would be required.

In addition, while OIG acknowledges that the construction of the temporary structure may provide some protection from the elements, vehicles rapidly deteriorate when they remain idle. It is our understanding that the 26 vehicles in question have not been used in over 8 months. Moreover, officials from Embassy Tunis's General Services Office told us that Embassy Tunis was unable to absorb additional vehicles into its fleet. For example, Embassy Tunis received approval to add 6 vehicles from the Tripoli fleet to the Tunis fleet in December 2014, but the Embassy's General Services Office stated that it did not have the maintenance and repair labor force to sufficiently service the remaining 26. We therefore conclude that deferring implementation of the recommendation will likely result in further deterioration of the 26 vehicles.

The Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS) did not address OIG's primary concern regarding the need to immediately redistribute and use the vehicles to avoid further deterioration and waste of resources. As noted in the report, according to officials from the Defensive Equipment-Armored Vehicles Division within DS, and the Office of Motor Vehicles within the Bureau of Administration, the vehicles have begun to deteriorate, and they need to be used and maintained or will lose their functionality. Further, as noted in the report, these same officials acknowledged that the fastest and least expensive option for getting armored vehicles to posts that need them is to reassign existing vehicles not being used. The 26 vehicles at Embassy Tripoli offer that opportunity.

OIG considers this recommendation unresolved. It can be resolved when Embassy Tunis develops and implements a plan to redistribute and use the 26 U.S. Embassy Tripoli armored

vehicles. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation demonstrating Embassy Tunis has redistributed the 26 armored vehicles or has provided an acceptable alternative solution for the unused vehicles.

APPENDIX A: U.S. EMBASSY TUNIS RESPONSE TO DRAFT REPORT



Embassy of the United States of America

Tunis, Tunisia

April 13, 2015

Mr. Norman Brown
Assistant Inspector General for Audits
1700 North Moore Street
Arlington, Va 22209

Dear Mr. Brown,

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to comment on OIG's draft report, entitled: "Management Assistance Report: Embassy Tripoli Armored Vehicles Available for Redistribution and Use."

Subsequent to the fieldwork carried out by the OIG at Embassy Tunis in November 2014 relative to your audit of Emergency Action Plans for U.S. Missions in North Africa, a number of developments have occurred that have impacted OIG Recommendation 2, which stated: "OIG recommends that U.S. Embassy Tunis, in coordination with the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, develop and implement a plan to redistribute and use the 26 U.S. Embassy Tripoli armored vehicles that are currently located at Embassy Tunis after property rights to the vehicles have been transferred by Embassy Tripoli, as specified in Recommendation 1."

The NEA Bureau and Embassy Tripoli are in the process of requesting authorization from the Under Secretary for Management to allow the Embassy Tripoli Libya External Office currently in Malta to transfer its operations to Tunis, to include the Ambassador and up to nine American staff members and 13 locally employed staff members. If this request is approved, all 26 armored vehicles will be required to support the operations of the Libya Mission.

In the interim, I would note that Embassy Tunis completed the construction of the temporary structure designed to protect the vehicles from the elements. That structure is now complete and protects the vehicles to the same degree as afforded by our covered parking areas.

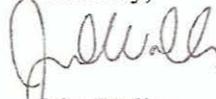
In addition, Embassy Tunis has reached agreement with the Government of Tunisia that vehicles evacuated from foreign diplomatic missions in Tripoli, which are in the possession of foreign missions accredited to Tunisia, may be registered for diplomatic use in Tunisia. Embassy Tunis has already received permission from the Government of Tunisia to operate the 26 armored vehicles owned by Embassy Tripoli in Tunisia temporarily and is currently registering those vehicles in accordance with the special procedures developed by the Government of Tunisia for the registration of such vehicles.

Finally, the Embassy has established a plan for the use and maintenance of the Tripoli vehicles in support of support of Embassy Tunis until a decision is made about opening a Libya external office in Tunis.

Until a decision is made about establishing a Libya external office at Embassy Tunis, I believe it would be advisable to defer consideration of Recommendation 2.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on this draft report.

Sincerely,



Jake Waller
Ambassador

Cc : M - Patrick F. Kennedy
NEA – Anne W. Patterson

APPENDIX B: BUREAU OF DIPLOMATIC SECURITY RESPONSE TO DRAFT REPORT



United States Department of State

*Assistant Secretary of State
for Diplomatic Security*

Washington, D.C. 20520

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April 22, 2015

INFORMATION MEMO TO INSPECTOR GENERAL LINICK – OIG

FROM: DS – Gregory B. Starr  APR 22 2015

SUBJECT: Draft Management Assistance Report: Embassy Tripoli Armored Vehicles Available for Redistribution and Use, March 2015

Attached are the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's (DS) comments to the draft Management Assistance Report: Embassy Tripoli Armored Vehicles Available for Redistribution and Use. Although DS is not the action office for any recommendations in this draft report, the comments provided address recommendations 1 and 2.

Attachments:

As stated.

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**Draft Management Assistance Report: Embassy Tripoli Armored
Vehicles Available for Redistribution and Use, March 2015**

Recommendation 1: OIG recommends that U.S. Embassy Tripoli, in accordance with Department of State policies and procedures, formally transfer to U.S. Embassy Tunis the property rights to the 26 armored vehicles currently located at Embassy Tunis.

Recommendation 2: OIG recommends that U.S. Embassy Tunis, in coordination with the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, develop and implement a plan to redistribute and use the 26 U.S. Embassy Tripoli armored vehicles that are currently located at Embassy Tunis after property rights to the vehicles have been transferred by Embassy Tripoli, as specified in Recommendation 1.

DS Comments (4/9/2015): In response to recommendations 1 and 2, the Department is determining the future location for the Mission Tripoli team. Once a determination is made, DS will evaluate the need for the vehicles and redistribute as appropriate. Any vehicles past their lifecycle will be destroyed in accordance with FAM procedures. Additional vehicles, not necessary for Mission Tripoli but within their lifecycle, can be used to replace any Tunis vehicles in need of replacement. Any additional vehicles will be repurposed as appropriate. If the vehicles still reside in Tunis at the end of the fiscal year they will be transferred to the Tunis business unit in ILMS in order to account for them as part of the FY 2016 annual inventory.

Analyst: DS/MGT/PPD – [Redacted] (b) (6)

Approved: DS – Gregory B. Starr ()

Cleared: DS/DSS – [Redacted] (b) (6)
DS/EX – [Redacted] (b) (6)
DS/EX/MGT – [Redacted] (b) (6)
DS/MGT/PPD – [Redacted] (b) (6)
DS/MGT/PPD – [Redacted] (b) (6)
DS/HTP – [Redacted] (b) (6)
DS/C – [Redacted] (b) (6)
NEA-SCA/EX – [Redacted] (b) (6)
M – [Redacted] (b) (6)
A – [Redacted] (b) (6)



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