

Information Report: Office of Inspector General's Analysis of Open Recommendations Specific to U.S. Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan, AUD-MERO-22-18, January 2022

Summary of Review

The purpose of this Information Report is to present the results of Office of Inspector General's (OIG) analysis of open recommendations that were specific to U.S. Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan, and awaiting implementation when Embassy Kabul suspended operations on August 31, 2021. Specifically, OIG sought to determine whether open recommendations specific to U.S. Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan, should be closed, redirected, or remain open, considering the embassy's suspended operating status.

OIG identified a total of eight recommendations specific to Embassy Kabul that are still open – five issued in OIG reports published prior to the suspension of embassy operations and three issued in a report published after the suspension. Of the five that were open and awaiting implementation when the embassy suspended operations: two recommendations involved the management of physical security construction projects at the embassy, two involved food service operations, and one involved staffing levels in Afghanistan. OIG determined that because U.S. Government personnel were no longer posted at the embassy and the recommendations directly pertained to specific operations that have been overtaken by events, it is prudent to close these recommendations to avoid the administrative burden and costs associated with tracking these recommendations. Therefore, with the issuance of this report, OIG considers all five of these recommendations closed, and no further action is required.

In addition to those five recommendations, OIG identified three other recommendations that were directed to Embassy Kabul in a report issued in September 2021 following the suspension of operations. The three recommendations were addressed to the embassy's Public Affairs section and were intended to improve grant management oversight of multiple grants and cooperative agreements being executed by that section. Because of events unfolding in Kabul at the time, Department of State (Department) officials did not respond to the recommendations, stating that they needed to focus their efforts on evacuating U.S. citizens and Special Immigrant Visa applicants from Afghanistan. Officials stated that they would address OIG's report and recommendations as soon as their resources allow. Therefore, OIG issued the report without comment and considered all three recommendations unresolved.

OIG reviewed these three recommendations for potential closure but determined they should remain open pending a formal response from the Department. These recommendations remain relevant, and implementation of them would improve assistance oversight, should a remote mission be established outside of Afghanistan and assistance in the form of similar grants and cooperative agreements be awarded for Afghanistan. Therefore, these three recommendations will remain open and unresolved until the Department formally notifies OIG whether assistance funding will continue to be provided in Afghanistan through grants and cooperative agreements. OIG will continue its tracking of

these recommendation through the audit compliance process and report the results in its semiannual report to Congress.