



HIGHLIGHTS

Office of Inspector General
United States Department of State

AUD-GEER-24-32

(U) What OIG Audited

(U) To ensure the safety of mission personnel during political instability or other security threats, the Department of State (Department) may evacuate personnel and suspend operations at an embassy or consulate. Since 2014, the Department has evacuated and suspended operations at seven overseas posts because of deteriorating security environments in the host countries, including Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan, in August 2021 and Embassy Kyiv, Ukraine, in February 2022.

(U) During an audit of the disposition of sensitive security assets in the lead-up to the evacuations of Embassy Kabul and Embassy Kyiv, OIG identified challenges related to the Department's approach to documenting and applying lessons learned from previous post evacuations. This Management Assistance Report is intended to reveal those challenges and prompt corrective action.

(U) What OIG Recommends

(U) OIG made one recommendation to the Office of Crisis Management and Strategy, one recommendation to the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, and one recommendation to the Under Secretary for Management, in conjunction with the Executive Secretariat. Based on Management's response to a draft of this report, OIG considers all three recommendations resolved, pending further action. A synopsis of management's comments and OIG's reply follow each recommendation in the Results section of this report. Management's responses to a draft of this report are reprinted in their entirety in Appendices B and C.

September 2024

OFFICE OF AUDITS

GLOBAL EMERGENCIES AND EMERGING RISKS

(U) Management Assistance Report: The Department Would Benefit From a Formal, Systematic Methodology To Capture and Utilize Lessons Learned Following Post Evacuations

(U) What OIG Found

(U) The Department had not established a consistent, comprehensive method to capture lessons learned following post drawdowns, evacuations, and suspensions of operations. Specifically, OIG identified two types of Department reports intended to document lessons learned following a post evacuation: (1) Lessons Learned Cables, collected by the Office of Crisis Management and Strategy, and (2) After Action Reviews, produced by the Bureau of Diplomatic Security. Both types of reports are intended to document significant lessons learned following post evacuations and may include recommendations to aid other posts facing emergency evacuation scenarios. However, OIG found that the Department had not established clear requirements as to when Lessons Learned Cables and After Action Reports must be produced. For example, although Lessons Learned Cables are required after any large-scale event, emergency, or crisis, posts that have suspended operations or closed are not required to produce a Lessons Learned Cable. By not consistently requiring lessons learned reports, the Department is neglecting opportunities to collect meaningful information on the challenges posts encounter during evacuations.

(U) OIG also found that, even when lessons learned reports were produced following a post's evacuation, the Department had not established a process to systematically review documented lessons learned or determine when lessons learned should necessitate changes to Department policies, procedures, or guidance. As a result, OIG found that many of the same difficulties experienced by posts that underwent evacuations prior to 2021 were repeated during the evacuation of Embassy Kabul. Until the Department has established clear requirements to take formal, systematic actions in response to documented lessons learned, it will not fully realize the benefit of the lessons learned and will thereby limit its ability to improve preparedness for posts facing emergency evacuation scenarios.