



Office of Inspector General  
United States Department of State

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

GLOBAL EMERGENCIES AND EMERGING RISKS



# HIGHLIGHTS

Office of Inspector General  
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## **(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.

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## (U) OBJECTIVE

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(U) During an audit of the disposition of sensitive security assets in the lead-up to the evacuations of U.S. Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan, and U.S. Embassy Kyiv, Ukraine, OIG identified challenges related to the Department of State’s (Department) approach to documenting and applying lessons learned from post evacuations, including lessons learned related to safeguarding, managing, and disposing of special protective equipment and armored vehicles. This Management Assistance Report is intended to reveal those challenges and prompt corrective action to improve preparedness for posts facing emergency evacuation scenarios.

## (U) BACKGROUND

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(U) To ensure the safety of mission personnel during political instability or other security threats, the Department may evacuate personnel and suspend operations at an embassy or consulate. The Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) describes two types of evacuation procedures—an authorized departure or an ordered departure.<sup>1</sup> In some instances, the Department may eventually decide to suspend operations at the evacuated post, resulting in the complete closure of the post for an undetermined period of time and the departure of all personnel.<sup>2</sup> Since 2014, the Department has evacuated and suspended operations at seven overseas posts because of deteriorating security environments in the host countries, including Embassies Kabul and Kyiv.<sup>3</sup> The FAM and the Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAH) provide guidance on evacuations and suspensions of operations. The Department has also conducted temporary drawdowns of many other overseas posts by significantly reducing the number of personnel and limiting operations at those posts.

### (U) Terminology

(U) In this report, OIG uses the term “**sensitive security assets**” to refer collectively to both special protective equipment and AVs. OIG also refers to each type independently by name.

(U) In addition, OIG is using the term “**evacuation**” in a manner consistent with the Department’s use of the term in its publicly released *After Action Review on Afghanistan* (March 2022). Accordingly, in this report, OIG uses the term “evacuation” to refer to the emergency evacuation of all Department personnel from the Embassy Kabul compound. Similarly, with respect to Embassy Kyiv, “evacuation” refers to the drawdown of equipment and personnel from Embassy Kyiv facilities on February 15, 2022, prior to Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

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<sup>1</sup> (U) According to 3 FAM 3771, “Subchapter Definitions,” an authorized departure is an evacuation procedure in which post employees and/or family members are permitted to leave post in advance of normal rotation when U.S. national interests or imminent threat to life requires it. An ordered departure is a mandatory evacuation procedure by which the number of U.S. government employees, family members, or both, at a post is reduced. An ordered departure may be initiated by the Chief of Mission or the Secretary of State.

<sup>2</sup> (U) According to 3 FAM 3771, “Subchapter Definitions,” an overseas post in suspended operations is one that has ceased operating.

<sup>3</sup> (U) When OIG refers to an “evacuation” in this report, it does so consistent with the Department’s general usage of the term in its publicly released *After Action Review on Afghanistan*.

## **(U) Entities Responsible for Managing Sensitive Security Assets**

(U) Drawdowns and evacuations, especially in the face of high-threat security situations, can be chaotic. According to the FAH, when preparing for a drawdown or evacuation, a post must consider how it will safeguard, manage, or, if necessary, dispose of its sensitive security assets, including special protective equipment<sup>4</sup> and armored vehicles (AV) to prevent it from falling into the hands of hostile forces.<sup>5</sup> The Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS) manages the Department's special protective equipment and AV programs through its Defensive Equipment and Armored Vehicle Division. At each overseas post, Regional Security Officers (RSO) are the custodial officers responsible for managing DS accountable property including special protective equipment. During an evacuation, RSOs also have primary responsibility for managing, safeguarding, or disposing of sensitive security assets assigned to post.

## **(U) Evacuations and Suspensions of Operations at Embassies Kabul and Kyiv**

(U) In August 2021, Taliban forces began taking large swaths of land and capturing provincial capitals, culminating with their August 15, 2021, entry into Kabul. Embassy Kabul personnel initiated evacuation procedures on the afternoon of August 14 and completed the evacuation of all personnel from the primary embassy compound on the morning of August 16, 2021.<sup>6</sup> Embassy Kabul formally suspended operations on August 31, 2021. OIG is preparing a report regarding the challenges that Embassy Kabul faced in its efforts to safeguard its special protective equipment holdings and AV fleet. Embassy Kabul ultimately abandoned 26 percent of its special protective equipment holdings and 63 percent of its total AV fleet in Afghanistan.<sup>7</sup>

(U) In the case of Ukraine, the Department evacuated all personnel from U.S. Embassy Kyiv, Ukraine by February 15, 2022. Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, and the Department suspended operations at Embassy Kyiv on February 28, 2022. OIG found that Embassy Kyiv successfully safeguarded all special protective equipment and AVs by transporting these assets out of Ukraine in advance of or during the evacuation.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> (U) According to 12 FAM 041.2, "Definitions," special protective equipment is equipment required for law enforcement and/or security duties including firearms, other lethal weapons, and less-than-lethal weapons.

<sup>5</sup> (U) 12 FAM-1 Annex K Addendum 2.1, "Actions to take to Suspend Operations."

<sup>6</sup> (U) President Biden announced the initiation of Noncombatant Evacuation Operations and ordered the deployment of additional U.S. troops to Afghanistan to assist with the evacuation on August 14, 2021. By August 16, 2021, all U.S. personnel had departed the embassy compound though the Noncombatant Evacuation Operation continued from the Kabul Airport. By August 31, 2021, all U.S. personnel had left the country, and the Department formally announced the suspension of operations at Embassy Kabul.

<sup>7</sup> (U) OIG, *Audit of the Disposition of Sensitive Security Assets at U.S. Embassies Kabul, Afghanistan and Kyiv, Ukraine*, this report was in draft as of September 30, 2024.

<sup>8</sup> (U) Ibid.

## **(U) Entities Responsible for Documenting Lessons Learned Following an Evacuation**

(U) According to the FAM, the Office of Crisis Management and Strategy (CMS) is the Department entity with principal responsibility for both “formal and informal crisis management operations.”<sup>9</sup> CMS officials monitor potential crises and ensure that Department and post officials dealing with an evacuation have the necessary resources and support. CMS also oversees the process by which posts that undergo evacuations produce Lessons Learned Cables. Specifically, the FAH states that a Lessons Learned Cable must be produced following any “large-scale event, emergency, or crisis.” The FAH further clarifies that “within 30 days following the termination of an authorized or ordered departure, CMS requests the [Emergency Action Committee (EAC)<sup>10</sup>] at post to develop a lessons learned cable for upload into the shared lessons learned database.” The purpose of this cable is to identify best practices, highlight gaps, and document areas for improvement.<sup>11</sup> Lessons Learned Cables are intended to be broad, providing posts with an opportunity to highlight all of the issues encountered during an evacuation or other triggering event. For example, the FAH instructs posts to address issues such as preparedness, communications, staffing, accountability and personnel management, use of safe havens, and support from Washington in the Lessons Learned Cables.<sup>12</sup> Following an evacuation, CMS initiates the request for the post EAC to produce the cable, and once the cable is issued, CMS stores it in its virtual Lessons Learned Library, which is available to all Department personnel on the Department of State’s internal website.

(U) Created in 1976, CMS has primary responsibility for managing the Department’s response to crises and hosts a one-stop portal for crisis management information, including Lessons Learned Cables, generated following post evacuations. CMS is located within the Operations Center, the largest component under the Executive Secretariat, an office responsible for coordinating the work of the Department internally and serving as the liaison between the Department’s bureaus, posts, and the offices of the Secretary and Deputy Secretaries.

(U) Similarly, following a major security event such as a post evacuation, the RSO at the embassy or consulate that was evacuated may also document lessons learned in an After Action Review. After Action Reviews typically describe how the evacuation was planned and executed and contain observations about what went well from a security standpoint, the challenges encountered, and recommendations for posts that may face similar challenges in the future. DS collects and maintains these After Action Reviews in the DS Center for Lessons Learned, a virtual library accessible to all DS employees.

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<sup>9</sup> (U) 1 FAM 022.2-3, “Operations Center.”

<sup>10</sup> (U) EACs comprise officials from all relevant sections and agencies at post and are responsible for planning and coordinating each post’s response to contingencies such as environmental disasters and political unrest.

<sup>11</sup> (U) 12 FAH-1 H-235, “Lessons Learned.”

<sup>12</sup> (U) Ibid.

## (U) RESULTS

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### **(U) Finding A: The Department Did Not Take a Consistent Approach To Preparing Lessons Learned Reports Following Evacuations**

(U) OIG found that 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 Lessons Learned Cables. By not consistently defining when posts must produce lessons learned reports, the Department is neglecting opportunities to collect meaningful information on the challenges posts encounter during evacuations.

#### ***(U) Lessons Learned Cables***

(U) The FAH states that each EAC must produce a Lessons Learned Cable after any large-scale event, emergency, or crisis to identify best practices, recommend areas for improvement, and document lessons learned. Specifically, the FAH states, “within 30 days following the termination of authorized or ordered departure CMS requests the EAC at post to develop a lessons learned cable for upload into the shared lessons learned database.”<sup>13</sup> However, CMS officials told OIG that they do not require posts to produce Lessons Learned Cables after all large-scale events, emergencies, or crises. Specifically, CMS officials stated that they will not request a Lessons Learned Cable from a post that has indefinitely suspended operations or has permanently closed.<sup>14</sup> According to CMS officials, posts that have suspended operations are not required to produce a Lessons Learned Cable because once a post has closed, there is no opportunity for the EAC to reconvene.<sup>15</sup> CMS officials stated they do not have the authority to

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<sup>13</sup> (U) 12 FAH-1 H-235, “Lessons Learned.” Since 2005, the FAH has required EACs to produce lessons learned documents. In March 2021, this requirement was located at 12 FAH-1 H-234. In June 2023, the requirement was moved to 12 FAH-1 H-235. OIG reviewed Lessons Learned Cables produced by EACs from June 2018 through March 2023.

<sup>14</sup> (U) In June 2023, 12 FAH-1 H-235 was updated to state that posts *may* also develop an “interim” Lessons Learned Cable in the event of a “significant incident or protracted crisis.” However, this update did not define which events would qualify as a “significant incident or protracted crisis” nor does it require the development of a Lessons Learned Cable in these undefined circumstances.

<sup>15</sup> (U) Although a post’s EAC will not officially reconvene after a post has suspended operations or closed, there may still be opportunities to identify and interview former embassy staff including EAC members in order to solicit input for a Lessons Learned Cable. For example, even though Embassy Kabul suspended operations in August 2021, OIG located and interviewed 21 former Embassy Kabul staff members from August 2022 through January 2024 in

require that posts reconvene the EAC solely for the purposes of initiating a lessons learned review. Furthermore, the FAH does not specify whether or how a Lessons Learned Cable should be generated if an ordered departure<sup>16</sup> eventually leads to a full suspension of operations and post closure. For this reason, CMS did not request Lessons Learned Cables documenting the evacuation of Embassy Kabul, which remains under suspended operations status, or Embassy Kyiv, which resumed limited operations in May 2022 but, as of August 2024, continues to operate under ordered departure status.

(U) CMS officials emphasized the potential difficulties of contacting members of the EAC at a suspended post. Members may have moved on to other assignments and may have limited availability to generate a Lessons Learned Cable. However, following the evacuation of and subsequent suspension of operations at U.S. Embassy Khartoum, Sudan, in 2023, CMS initiated its own review of lessons learned. Despite the fact that the embassy suspended operations indefinitely, CMS solicited feedback from nearly 100 officials through interviews and surveys and subsequently generated a lessons learned report summarizing the key takeaways from the evacuation and making general recommendations to inform future crisis operations.<sup>17</sup> CMS's approach in the case of Embassy Khartoum demonstrates the potential value of exploring alternative methods for collecting and documenting lessons learned even when a post has suspended operations and the EAC cannot reconvene to generate a Lessons Learned Cable.

(U) Additionally, a post that has suspended operations may eventually reestablish temporary operations in a third-country location.<sup>18</sup> If feedback is solicited relatively soon after an evacuation and subsequent suspension of operations, these remote missions may also be able to contribute to Lessons Learned Cables. For example, following the suspension of operations at U.S. Embassy Caracas, Venezuela, the Department established the Venezuela Affairs Unit based at U.S. Embassy Bogota, Colombia. Staff from the Venezuela Affairs Unit, along with other Department officials, generated a Lessons Learned Cable detailing observations from prior to, during, and following the suspension of operations in Caracas. The cable included recommendations and best practices not only from the preparation for suspension of operations in Caracas, but also from the aftermath of the evacuation, including the creation of the remote mission.<sup>19</sup> The absence of a clear requirement to document lessons learned following every large scale event, emergency, or crisis, to include those evacuations that result

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support of its audit on the disposition of sensitive security assets (OIG, *Audit of the Disposition of Sensitive Security Assets at U.S. Embassies Kabul, Afghanistan and Kyiv, Ukraine*, this report was in draft as of September 30, 2024).

<sup>16</sup> (U) According to 3 FAM 3771, "Subchapter Definitions," an ordered departure is a mandatory evacuation procedure by which the number of U.S. government employees, family members, or both, at post is reduced.

<sup>17</sup> (SBU) (b) (5)

<sup>18</sup> (U) According to 2 FAM 422, "Process to Establish a Remote Mission," the Department may continue diplomatic relations with a country where post operations are suspended through establishing a remote mission. A remote mission is a diplomatic office located outside of the country to which it is assigned and includes its own dedicated staff.

<sup>19</sup> (U) The Embassy Caracas Lessons Learned Cable (U) was never formally issued, although the Venezuela Affairs Unit prepared and provided a draft to CMS.

in a suspension of operations, means the Department is missing important opportunities to collect meaningful information on the challenges posts encounter during evacuations.

***(U) After Action Reviews***

(U) DS also has not clearly defined when an After Action Review should be produced following a post evacuation. According to one DS official in the DS Center for Lessons Learned, the entity responsible for collecting and sharing After Action Reviews, as of September 2024, there was no requirement to produce an After Action Review following every post evacuation. He stated that whether an After Action Review is produced following an evacuation largely depends on the motivation and initiative of the RSOs at the post that was evacuated. Although the FAM outlines a deliberate planning process that requires DS officials to produce an After Action Review to document the outcome of a particular mission, the deliberate planning process is not consistently applied to every evacuation. Specifically, according to the FAM, the deliberate planning process is “a framework to ensure every mission critical task is identified, planned, prepared for, rehearsed, and assessed.”<sup>20</sup> Although the FAM states that the deliberate planning process is intended to provide leaders with a standardized, repeatable process to plan operations and solve problems across the broad range of DS investigative, protective, and overseas missions,<sup>21</sup> the FAM does not specify the types of operations that would necessitate use of the process. More specifically, the FAM does not clearly define whether the deliberate planning process should be applied to each and every evacuation. Furthermore, there is no other guidance, beyond the deliberate planning process, that clearly specifies the circumstances in which an After Action Review is mandated. A DS official explained that, in the absence of a clear mandate to produce an After Action Review after every evacuation, the production of an After Action Review is often subject to internal and external political pressures and that RSOs may feel some pressure not to produce an After Action Review.

(U) Without clearly defining when an After Action Review must be produced, DS is at risk of failing to document essential security-related lessons learned during its most difficult and dangerous operations. Although it may not be necessary to produce an After Action Review each time that a post reduces personnel through an authorized or ordered departure, the stakes are much higher when an ordered departure results in a suspension of operations and subsequent post closure. Notably, when a post suspends operations, all personnel must depart post and all Department physical property, including sensitive security assets and consular materials, must be secured, removed, or destroyed. Specifically, RSOs are responsible for shipping out or destroying all special protective equipment and AVs prior to departure.<sup>22</sup> Multiple security personnel who executed the evacuation and suspension of operations at Embassy Kabul highlighted the security-specific challenges of evacuating all personnel from post in a relatively short timeframe. OIG’s audit of sensitive assets describes the difficulties of managing the embassy’s excessive stockpile of sensitive security assets and post’s inability to

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<sup>20</sup> (U) 12 FAM 054.2-1, “DS Deliberate Planning Process.”

<sup>21</sup> (U) 12 FAM 054.2, “Bureau Operations Planning.”

<sup>22</sup> (U) 12 FAH-1 Annex K Addendum 2.1, “Actions to take to Suspend Operations.”

remove or destroy all of these assets prior to the final evacuation of all personnel from the embassy compound.<sup>23</sup>

### ***(U) Embassies Kabul and Kyiv Lessons Learned Reports***

(U) *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* state that management should identify, analyze, and respond to risks related to achieving defined objectives.<sup>24</sup> Lessons Learned Cables and After Action Reviews are the primary mechanisms through which the Department can identify, analyze, and respond to the risks presented by post evacuations. However, OIG found that the inconsistencies in the Department's approach to the development of Lessons Learned Cables and After Action Reviews has meant that some evacuations, including the recent evacuations of Embassy Kabul and Embassy Kyiv, did not result in the development of either type of report.<sup>25</sup> Because operations were suspended at Embassy Kabul and there was no opportunity to officially reconvene the EAC, a Lessons Learned Cable was never generated. Furthermore, Embassy Kabul security personnel told OIG that although they initiated efforts to generate a post-centric, security-specific After Action Review following the evacuation of Embassy Kabul, they discontinued their efforts because the Department planned to develop a comprehensive, Department-wide After Action Review instead.<sup>26</sup> However, OIG found that the Department-wide Afghanistan After Action Review did not include contributions from many of the Kabul security personnel who were on the ground during the evacuation of Embassy Kabul. In fact, the majority of security personnel whom OIG spoke with in the course of this audit reported that they were not contacted to comment on or contribute to the Department-wide After Action Review. OIG reviewed some of the observations gathered by Embassy Kabul security personnel during their initial efforts to generate their own After Action Review. These observations included thoughtful remarks on deficiencies in DS training on emergency planning, as well as observations on overseas management practices for special protective equipment and AVs that could have been used to inform and improve DS training, policies, and procedures. However, the Department's Afghanistan After Action Review did not include any of these observations, nor did it include a meaningful discussion of how Embassy Kabul managed, safeguarded, or disposed of its special protective equipment and AVs during the evacuation.

(U) Similarly, OIG found that observations from the Embassy Kyiv evacuation have not been documented in an After Action Review or a Lessons Learned Cable. Although Embassy Kyiv resumed limited operations in May 2022, as of August 2024, the embassy continued to operate under ordered departure status. Because the FAH states that a Lessons Learned Cable should

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<sup>23</sup> (U) OIG, *Audit of the Disposition of Sensitive Security Assets at U.S. Embassies Kabul, Afghanistan and Kyiv, Ukraine*, this report was in draft as of September 30, 2024.

<sup>24</sup> (U) Government Accountability Office, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, page 37 (GAO-14-704G, September 2014).

<sup>25</sup> (U) Similarly, OIG determined that there have not been Lessons Learned Cables produced for U.S. Embassy Moscow, Russia, which remains in authorized departure status as of June 2024 or U.S. Embassy Minsk, Belarus, which suspended operations in February 2022.

<sup>26</sup> (U) Department of State, *After Action Review on Afghanistan* (March 2022).

be generated within 30 days following the termination of an authorized or ordered departure,<sup>27</sup> as of September 2024, CMS has not yet solicited a Lessons Learned Cable from Embassy Kyiv.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, because there is no clear requirement regarding when an After Action Review must be produced, Embassy Kyiv security personnel did not produce an After Action Review following the February 2022 evacuation. In its audit, OIG found that Embassy Kyiv managed to remove all personnel, special protective equipment, and AVs from Ukraine.<sup>29</sup> By not recording lessons learned, the Department may be missing out on important opportunities to document some of the factors that contributed to positive outcomes in the case of Embassy Kyiv's evacuation.

(U) Generally, the evacuation of all Department personnel and subsequent suspension of operations at an embassy or consulate is one of the most difficult operations the Department undertakes. Documenting lessons learned from these evacuations is essential to ensuring that posts that may undergo future evacuations have the opportunity to adequately plan for the challenges they may encounter. Although the Department has taken important steps to document lessons learned from previous evacuations, it lacks a systematic method to determine when and how these reports should be produced. To improve the Department's approach to collecting and documenting lessons learned from post evacuations, OIG is offering the following recommendations:

**Recommendation 1:** (U) OIG recommends that the Office of Crisis Management and Strategy update the Foreign Affairs Handbook to clarify that a Lessons Learned Cable must be produced following every large-scale event, emergency, or crisis, including evacuations that result in a post (1) remaining in ordered departure status for an extended period of time, (2) suspending operations, or (3) closing permanently.

**Management Response:** (U) The Office of Crisis Management and Strategy concurred with the recommendation and stated it will work with DS and other relevant bureaus to update the Foreign Affairs Handbook to clarify a Department policy that a Lessons Learned Cable must be produced following every large-scale event, emergency, or crisis, including evacuations that result in any of the three scenarios mentioned in the recommendation.

**OIG Reply:** (U) Based on CMS's concurrence with the recommendation and planned actions, OIG considers the recommendation resolved, pending further action. This recommendation will be closed when OIG receives documentation demonstrating that CMS has updated 12 Foreign Affairs Handbook-1 to clarify that a Lessons Learned Cable must be produced following every large-scale event, emergency, or crisis, including evacuations that result in a post (1) remaining in ordered departure status for an extended period of time, (2) suspending operations, or (3) closing permanently.

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<sup>27</sup> (U) 12 FAH-1 H-235.

<sup>28</sup> (U) Despite the ongoing ordered departure at Embassy Kyiv, OIG confirmed that its EAC has reconvened since the limited resumption of operations in May 2022.

<sup>29</sup> (U) OIG, *Audit of the Disposition of Sensitive Security Assets at U.S. Embassies Kabul, Afghanistan and Kyiv, Ukraine*, this report was in draft as of September 30, 2024.

**Recommendation 2:** (U) OIG recommends that the Bureau of Diplomatic Security develop and implement a requirement in the Foreign Affairs Manual to produce an After Action Review following every evacuation that results in a suspension of post operations.

**Management Response:** (U) DS stated that it supports this recommendation with the understanding that post evacuations and drawdowns are a Department decision driven by the country team and involve multiple bureaus and should reflect a “whole of Department” response. DS stated that it agrees with the value of After Action Reviews after post evacuations and drawdowns and will develop and implement a FAM update in collaboration with relevant stakeholders to ensure a “whole of Department” approach.

(U) DS also recommended that OIG amend Recommendation 3 to refer to “After Action Reviews” rather than “Bureau of Diplomatic Security After Action Reviews” to reflect the “whole of Department” approach.

**OIG Reply:** (U) Based on DS’s concurrence with the recommendation and planned actions, OIG considers the recommendation resolved, pending further action. This recommendation will be closed when OIG receives documentation demonstrating that DS has updated 12 Foreign Affairs Manual to require the production of an After Action Review after every post evacuation. OIG also agreed with DS’s request and removed the words “Bureau of Diplomatic Security” from Recommendation 3, specifically with respect to who completes After Action Reviews.

## **(U) Finding B: The Department Did Not Consistently Apply Lessons Learned From Previous 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 in the future.

### ***(U) Recurring Challenges with Sensitive Security Asset Management***

(U) According to the FAM, DS after action reviews should be used to “drive improvement” and “assess mission performance.”<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, the FAH states that Lessons Learned Cables should be “used to assist post, including leadership, and the Department to emphasize best

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<sup>30</sup> (U) 12 FAM 054.2-1, “Deliberate Planning Process.”

practices and refine crisis management and response procedures.”<sup>31</sup> OIG reviewed 4 After Action Reviews drafted between 2014 and 2019 and 26 Lessons Learned Cables issued between 2018 and 2023 related to post evacuations and found that many of these reports documented similar, recurring challenges, including challenges specific to managing, safeguarding, and disposing of special protective equipment and AVs in the lead-up to a post evacuation.<sup>32</sup>

*(U) Posts Are Not Consistently Conducting Periodic Assessments of the Quantities of Special Protective Equipment and Armored Vehicles Needed To Support Daily Operations*

(U) OIG found that multiple After Action Reviews and Lessons Learned Cables concluded that posts would have benefitted from periodic assessments of their sensitive security equipment holdings including special protective equipment and AVs.

(U) For example, one After Action Review produced following a post evacuation in Asia stated that the post conducted a review of its AV fleet just days before the evacuation and found that one-third of the AVs were past their life expectancy and should have been disposed of earlier.<sup>33</sup> Some of these AVs were ultimately abandoned because the post in question did not have time to ship them out of the country prior to the evacuation.

(U) This observation is consistent with OIG’s findings related to the challenges faced by Embassy Kabul. Specifically, OIG found that Embassy Kabul also maintained a large AV fleet, many of their AVs were not being actively used for daily operations, and the size of the fleet was in excess of what was needed to support the day-to-day needs of the embassy.<sup>34</sup> Although some AVs were reportedly disabled through ad-hoc methods before U.S. personnel had to depart post, 63 percent of Embassy Kabul’s AV fleet was ultimately abandoned in Afghanistan.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> (SBU) 12 FAH-1 H-235a, “Lessons Learned.” (b) (7)(E), (b) (7)(F)

<sup>32</sup> (U) Of the four After Action Reviews reviewed by OIG, three are classified. In order to protect the sensitivity of the information recorded in the reports, OIG has not identified the names of the specific posts covered in the After Action Reviews.

<sup>33</sup> (U) 12 FAM 388, “Disposal and Transfer,” states that AVs must be destroyed at the end of their useful life. Officials from the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, Defensive Equipment and Armored Vehicles Division told OIG that, while the AV lifecycle used to be 5 years, there is no longer a Department-defined lifecycle because the Department now uses AVs beyond 5 years based on their condition and the cost of maintenance. The Defensive Equipment and Armored Vehicles Division approves AV disposal requests after a post documents operational problems with AVs and justifies why they have outlived their “useful life.”

<sup>34</sup> (U) OIG, *Audit of the Disposition of Sensitive Security Assets at U.S. Embassies Kabul, Afghanistan and Kyiv, Ukraine*, this report was in draft as of September 30, 2024.

<sup>35</sup> (SBU) (b) (7)(E), (b) (7)(F)

*(U) Posts Overestimate the Department of Defense's Ability to Assist With the Exfiltration of Assets*

(U) The same After Action Review noted that post officials had assumed that the Department of Defense would provide all necessary assistance to transport sensitive security assets, including special protective equipment and AVs, out of the country in the weeks leading up to the evacuation. However, the Department of Defense was only able to remove approximately 15 percent of assets identified for removal, and the post had to turn to contractors to extract its remaining assets. The After Action Review specifically recommended that, if the Department of Defense is assisting a post with an evacuation, the post should not overestimate the Department of Defense's capabilities to get equipment out of the country or rely too heavily on Department of Defense support.

(U) This challenge was also repeated in Kabul when security personnel decided not to execute their established destruction plans and instead made plans for the Department of Defense to fly some of their remaining special protective equipment out of Afghanistan on the day before the final evacuation.<sup>36</sup> However, the Department of Defense was ultimately unable to remove the assets in question, and although a portion of the special protective equipment was destroyed by Embassy Kabul's security staff through ad hoc methods, much of it was ultimately abandoned intact.<sup>37</sup>

*(U) Excess Stockpiles of Hazardous Materials Present Challenges During an Evacuation*

(U) Another After Action Review developed following a post evacuation in Africa reported that the post maintained a large amount of hazardous materials<sup>38</sup> which was ultimately abandoned when the post suspended operations.

(U) This challenge was echoed in Kabul, where the embassy also maintained an excessive stockpile of hazardous materials, all of which was ultimately abandoned at post during the evacuation.<sup>39</sup> Hazardous materials are particularly difficult to manage during an evacuation due to the unique safety requirements for shipping and handling. These materials can only be shipped out of country on special flights, and there are no approved emergency disposal methods. The Department has not yet developed specific guidance on how posts should prepare to deal with this issue in the lead-up to an evacuation. As a result, OIG is making

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<sup>36</sup> (U) OIG, *Audit of the Disposition of Sensitive Security Assets at U.S. Embassies Kabul, Afghanistan and Kyiv, Ukraine*, this report was in draft as of September 30, 2024.

<sup>37</sup> (U) It is unclear why the Department of Defense could not take the equipment in question. Some Embassy Kabul officials assumed that Department of Defense personnel ran out of time while others heard through word-of-mouth that the equipment was not packed properly and therefore could not be loaded onto Department of Defense flights.

<sup>38</sup> (U) Hazardous materials are materials that would be dangerous to individuals or the environment without special precautions.

<sup>39</sup> (U) OIG, *Audit of the Disposition of Sensitive Security Assets at U.S. Embassies Kabul, Afghanistan and Kyiv, Ukraine*, this report was in draft as of September 30, 2024.

several recommendations on this issue in its audit report related to the disposition of sensitive security assets.<sup>40</sup>

*(U) Posts Failing To Vet Emergency Plans With Key Stakeholders*

(U) This same After Action Review also discussed the fact that post officials failed to adequately coordinate with the Department of Defense on the movement of special protective equipment, which later led to much of this equipment being abandoned at post. As a result, the After Action Review recommended that RSOs should identify and collaborate with all relevant security stakeholders to prepare for future crises in a unified, synchronized way.

(U) OIG found that this issue was also repeated during the evacuation of Embassy Kabul. Specifically, Embassy Kabul security personnel developed a destruction plan that called for the burning the AVs that would potentially be left behind in Afghanistan. However, Department of Defense personnel who assisted in the evacuation of Embassy Kabul ultimately directed embassy personnel not to destroy the AVs using their originally planned methods. This was because the resulting fires might further incite hostile forces and the smoke would interfere with evacuation flights. This resulted in Embassy Kabul security personnel struggling to come up with alternative destruction methods in the final days leading up to the evacuation. OIG found that this occurred, in part, because Embassy Kabul staff failed to fully vet the destruction plan with key stakeholders, including their Department of Defense counterparts, in advance of the evacuation.<sup>41</sup>

*(U) Posts May Not Be Adequately Prepared to Execute Destruction Plans*

(U) A Lessons Learned Cable generated by Embassy Addis Ababa *after* the Embassy Kabul evacuation also reported that post maintained large equipment holdings, including a large AV fleet.<sup>42</sup> Post officials stated that they did not realize, until they ran some destruction drills, just how long it would take them to destroy a single armored vehicle. In their Lessons Learned Cable, post officials recommended that other posts conduct regular destruction exercises to help them determine how long it will take to destroy equipment onsite and to determine well in advance of an evacuation which tools are necessary to execute planned destruction procedures.

(U) OIG also found that Embassy Kabul failed to develop precise timelines for each of the steps required to destroy sensitive security assets prior to the evacuation and that they had not acquired all of the tools and equipment necessary to execute their destruction plans.<sup>43</sup> For example, although officials planned to use heavy equipment to destroy AVs, they did not procure the heavy equipment in time to use it prior to the evacuation. In this case, if Embassy

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<sup>40</sup> (U) Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> (U) Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> (U) Cable 22 Addis Ababa 308, "Ethiopia: Lessons Learned Following the Termination of Ordered Departure," March 4, 2022.

<sup>43</sup> (U) OIG, *Audit of the Disposition of Sensitive Security Assets at U.S. Embassies Kabul, Afghanistan and Kyiv, Ukraine*, this report was in draft as of September 30, 2024.

Kabul security personnel had generated their own After Action Review or if Embassy Kabul had developed a Lessons Learned Cable following the evacuation in August 2021, they could have potentially documented these valuable observations to benefit other posts, including Embassy Addis Ababa.

**(U) Updates to Department Policies, Procedures, and Requirements**

(U) Despite the fact that multiple posts have documented many of the same challenges and generated related recommendations, the Department has failed to consistently and systematically evaluate these documented lessons learned to determine when they should result in changes to Department policies, procedures, or guidance.<sup>44</sup> Specifically, OIG found that neither CMS nor DS has a formal process in place to systematically review lessons learned reports and to subsequently make determinations about needed changes to Department policies and procedures.

(U) OIG found that CMS does not have a formal process to systematically review Lessons Learned Cables and to subsequently evaluate whether changes to Department policy or procedure are warranted.<sup>45</sup> CMS officials stated that they have informally conducted reviews to collate lessons learned, but stated that there is currently no requirement to systematically perform these reviews. They further noted that whether and when such reviews are conducted largely depends on whether CMS staff are available. Furthermore, OIG found that any recommendations that arise from these informal reviews are limited to only those issues which CMS has purview over. For example, as a result of the Khartoum Lessons Learned Cable, CMS updated its own internal guidance for operating a task force.

(U) Similarly, one DS official told OIG that responsibility for After Action Reviews currently rests within the DS Center for Lessons Learned. He stated that the After Action Reviews may occasionally be used to make policy recommendations, but that there is no standardized process in place within DS to systematically review the reports or to determine when documented lessons learned should result in updates to DS policies and procedures. The DS official further stated that, at the time of OIG's review, he was the only member of staff assigned to the Center for Lessons Learned and acknowledged that he alone did not have the bandwidth to review every After Action Review. He further noted that because the DS Center for Lessons Learned is part of the Foreign Affairs Security Training Center, he is limited to using After Action Reviews to inform needed changes to the DS training curricula. He stated that any

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<sup>44</sup> (SBU) (b) (7)(E), (b) (7)(F)

the FAH does not specify how Lessons Learned Cables should be analyzed to inform *other* posts' preparedness for a potential evacuation.

<sup>45</sup> (SBU) (b) (5)

other needed changes to DS policy and procedure, including updates to evacuation-specific guidance, would be outside of his purview.

(U) OIG found that both After Action Reviews and Lessons Learned Cables have documented many of the same, recurring challenges from multiple posts that encountered exigent evacuations. Although these reports may sometimes include salient recommendations, the implementation of these recommendations has been limited by the absence of a clear requirement to systematically review lessons learned reports and to translate those reviews into needed changes to Department policies, procedures, and guidance. One Department official told OIG that the Department “keeps learning the same lessons over and over again.” Until the Department has established clear requirements to take concrete actions in response to documented lessons learned, it will not fully realize the benefit of these essential documents and will be limited in its ability to improve outcomes for posts that undergo evacuations in the future. As a result, OIG is offering the following recommendation:

**Recommendation 3:** (U) OIG recommends that, following the implementation of Recommendations 1 and 2, the Under Secretary for Management, working in conjunction with the Executive Secretariat, develop and implement a process to (1) systematically review After Action Reviews developed in response to post evacuations and Lessons Learned Cables generated in compliance with 12 Foreign Affairs Handbook-1 H-235 and (2) make recommendations for action based on the results of these reviews, including identifying needed changes to Department policies, procedures, and guidance.

**Management Response:** (U) The Under Secretary for Management concurred with the recommendation and stated that, after implementation of Recommendations 1 and 2, it will develop and implement a whole-of-organization process to systematically review outcomes following evacuations, which may include reviewing After Action Reviews, Lessons Learned Cables, and other documents or evidentiary reporting consistent with 12 Foreign Affairs Handbook-1 H-235. The Department will review current processes and implement appropriate changes as necessary based on the result of these reviews.

**OIG Reply:** (U) Based on the Department’s concurrence with the recommendation and planned actions, OIG considers the recommendation resolved, pending further action. This recommendation will be closed when OIG receives documentation demonstrating that the Department has (1) developed and implemented a process to systematically review After Action Reviews developed in response to post evacuations and Lessons Learned Cables generated in compliance with 12 Foreign Affairs Handbook-1 H-235 and (2) subsequently made recommendations for action based on the results of these reviews.

## (U) RECOMMENDATIONS

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**Recommendation 1:** (U) OIG recommends that the Office of Crisis Management and Strategy update the Foreign Affairs Handbook to clarify that a Lessons Learned Cable must be produced following every large-scale event, emergency, or crisis, including evacuations that result in a post (1) remaining in ordered departure status for an extended period of time, (2) suspending operations, or (3) closing permanently.

**Recommendation 2:** (U) OIG recommends that the Bureau of Diplomatic Security develop and implement a requirement in the Foreign Affairs Manual to produce an After Action Review following every evacuation that results in a suspension of post operations.

**Recommendation 3:** (U) OIG recommends that, following the implementation of Recommendations 1 and 2, the Under Secretary for Management, working in conjunction with the Executive Secretariat, develop and implement a process to (1) systematically review After Action Reviews developed in response to post evacuations and Lessons Learned Cables generated in compliance with 12 Foreign Affairs Handbook-1 H-235 and (2) make recommendations for action based on the results of these reviews, including identifying needed changes to Department policies, procedures, and guidance.

## (U) APPENDIX A: PURPOSE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

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(U) During an audit of the disposition of sensitive security equipment in the lead-up to the evacuations of U.S. Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan, and U.S. Embassy Kyiv, Ukraine, OIG identified challenges related to the Department's approach to documenting and applying lessons learned from post evacuations, including lessons learned related to safeguarding, managing, and disposing of special protective equipment and armored vehicles. This Management Assistance Report is intended to reveal those challenges and prompt corrective action to improve preparedness for posts facing emergency evacuation scenarios.

(U) The Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted this review from December 2022 to June 2024 in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area. OIG reviewed relevant requirements and procedures outlined in the Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) and Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAH) as well as bureau-specific guidance. OIG identified and reviewed 26 Lessons Learned Cables maintained by the Office of Crisis Management and Strategy (CMS) issued from 2018 through 2023. OIG also identified and reviewed four After Action Reviews produced by the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS) from 2014 through 2019. OIG then analyzed the After Action Reports and Lessons Learned Cables to determine whether posts reported encountering similar or recurring challenges in the emergency management of sensitive security assets including special protective equipment and armored vehicles and to what extent documented lessons learned had resulted in changes to relevant Department policy, procedures, or guidance. Finally, OIG conducted interviews with officials from CMS and DS to better understand the process of preparing and analyzing lessons learned reports as well as to gain additional insight into some of the specific documented lessons learned.

(U) OIG is reporting these findings in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. These standards require that OIG plan and perform the evaluation to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for the finding and conclusions based on the evaluation objective. OIG believes the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for the information presented in this report. This report relates to Overseas Contingency Operations Enduring Freedom and Enduring Sentinel and was completed in accordance with OIG's oversight responsibilities described in section 419 of the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended.<sup>1,2</sup>

### **(U) Data Reliability**

(U) OIG used computer-processed data to determine the universe of Lessons Learned Cables maintained by CMS and After Action Reviews produced by DS. Specifically, OIG obtained an Excel spreadsheet from the internal CMS SharePoint site that identified every post that had

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<sup>1</sup> (U) 5 United States Code § 419, "Special provisions concerning overseas contingency operations."

<sup>2</sup> (U) On October 1, 2021, the Department of Defense terminated the Operation Freedom Sentinel mission and initiated Operation Enduring Sentinel, a new mission to protect U.S. national interests by disrupting violent extremist organizations and their external operations that threaten the U.S. homeland, partners, and allies from Afghanistan.

been put under authorized departure or ordered departure status, dating back to September 2015. OIG verified the completeness of this data by comparing it to the Post in Evacuation Status reports maintained by the Office of Emergencies in the Diplomatic and Consular Service published from September 2015 through July 2023. The CMS spreadsheet identified whether there was a Lessons Learned Cable associated with each authorized or ordered departure. OIG identified 21 authorized and ordered departures for which there was no associated Lessons Learned Cable and inquired to CMS about the status of these 21 missing Lessons Learned Cables. CMS subsequently provided OIG ten of the Lessons Learned Cables that had been indicated as missing in the spreadsheet. The remaining 11 Lessons Learned Cables did not exist, in part, because the posts remained in evacuation status and, as discussed in Finding A of this report, posts that have not terminated their evacuation status are not required to produce Lessons Learned Cables.

(U) OIG also obtained access to the DS Center for Lessons Learned website, where After Action Reviews are stored. As discussed in Finding A of this report, DS had not clearly established when an After Action Review should be produced. As a result, OIG found that the DS Center for Lessons Learned did not contain After Action Reviews for all evacuations.

(U) Neither Lessons Learned Cables nor After Action Reviews are produced after every evacuation because of deficiencies covered in Finding A of this report. Nevertheless, OIG's communications with CMS and DS have led OIG to conclude that it has obtained all available Lessons Learned Cables and After Action Reviews and that the data are sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

### **(U) Sampling Methodology**

(U) OIG identified a project universe of 43 Lessons Learned Cables maintained by CMS dating back to June 2018. OIG then identified a target universe of 26 Lessons Learned Cables, which excluded any cables produced prior to 2018 and any cables which covered posts that evacuated due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For the After Action Reviews, OIG obtained access to the DS Center for Lessons Learned and worked with DS officials to identify four After Action Reports produced since 2014 that documented suspensions of operations.

### **(U) Work Related to Internal Control**

(U) OIG considered a number of factors, including the subject matter of the project, to determine whether internal control was significant to the audit objective. Based on its consideration, OIG determined that internal control was significant. OIG then considered the components of internal control and the underlying principles included in the *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*<sup>3</sup> to identify internal controls that were significant to the objective. Considering internal control in the context of a comprehensive internal control framework can help determine whether underlying internal control deficiencies exist.

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<sup>3</sup> (U) Government Accountability Office, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* (GAO-14-704G, September 2014).

(U) OIG concluded that two of five internal control components from the *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*—Risk Assessment and Control Activities—were significant to the objective. The Risk Assessment component relates to how management assesses the risks facing the entity as it seeks to achieve its objectives and develops responses to those risks. The Control Activities component includes the actions management establishes through policies to achieve objectives and respond to risk in the internal control system.

**(U) Table A.1: Internal Control Components and Principles Identified as Significant**

<b>(U) Components</b>	<b>(U) Principles</b>
Risk Assessment	Principle 7: Management should identify, analyze, and respond to risks related to achieving the defined objectives.
Control Activities	Principle 12: Management should implement control activities through policies.

**(U) Source:** OIG-generated from an analysis of internal control components and principles from the Government Accountability Office, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* (GAO-14-704G, September 2014).

(U) OIG reviewed Department policies and procedures and conducted interviews of Department officials to obtain an understanding of the internal controls related to the components and principles identified as significant. OIG performed the following procedures to assess the design of key internal controls.

- (U) To determine whether the Department implemented control activities through policies to ensure that lessons learned reports are consistently produced following a suspension of operations, OIG:
  - (U) Reviewed Department guidance on the development of lessons learned reports, specifically 12 FAH-1 H-235, “Lessons Learned” and previous iterations of the 12 FAH-1 H-230, including the March 2021 version of 12 FAH-1 H-234, “After Action Review and Lessons Learned,” which outline the circumstances in which CMS is required to request the production of a Lessons Learned Cable.
  - (U) Tested the Department guidance by identifying overseas posts which have suspended operations and determined whether a Lessons Learned Cable or After Action Review was subsequently produced for those posts.
- (U) To determine whether the Department implemented control activities through policies to ensure that lessons learned reports are periodically reviewed and used to inform policies, OIG:
  - (U) Reviewed Department guidance and bureau-specific guidance to determine whether CMS and DS established processes to periodically review lessons learned reports and use those reports to inform policies, procedures, and guidance, specifically 12 FAM 054.2, “Bureau Operations Planning,” which outlines DS’s operations planning and assessment procedures.
  - (U) Tested the Department policies and procedures by identifying whether overseas posts that suspended operations encountered similar issues and

determining whether recurring challenges related to the management of sensitive security assets were addressed through changes to Department policies, procedures, and guidance.

- (U) To determine whether the Department identified, analyzed, and responded to risks, OIG:
  - (U) Reviewed Lessons Learned Cables and After Action Reports to assess whether these documents identified risks associated with sensitive security asset management during evacuations and suspensions of operations.
  - (U) Analyzed recurring sensitive security asset management challenges encountered by overseas posts that suspended operations across multiple years to identify the extent to which posts encountered similar, recurring challenges or appropriately responded to previously-identified risks.
  - (U) Determined the extent to which recurring challenges resulted in changes to Department policies, procedures, or guidance to address previously-identified risks.

## **(U) Prior Office of Inspector General Reports**

**(U) *Supplemental Classified Report on the Audit of the Disposition of Sensitive Security Assets at U.S. Embassies Kabul, Afghanistan, and Kyiv, Ukraine (AUD-GEER-24-31, September 2024).***

OIG reported on information regarding the management, safeguarding, and disposition of sensitive security assets at Embassy Kabul and Embassy Kyiv.<sup>4</sup>

**(U) *Audit of Emergency Action Plan for U.S. Embassy Tripoli, Libya (AUD-MERO-16-24, March 2016).*** OIG reported on the emergency action plan for U.S. Embassy Tripoli, Libya.<sup>5</sup>

**(U) *Management Alert: Evacuation of Embassy Tripoli (MA-15-02, July 2015).*** OIG reported on the evacuation of U.S Embassy Tripoli, Libya.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> (U) AUD-GEER-24-31 is a classified report and is not available for public viewing.

<sup>5</sup> (U) AUD-MERO-16-24 is a classified report and is not available for public viewing.

<sup>6</sup> (U) MA-15-02 is a classified report and is not available for public viewing.

## (U) APPENDIX B: UNDER SECRETARY FOR MANAGEMENT RESPONSE



2024011612

United States Department of State

*Under Secretary of State  
for Management*

Washington, D.C. 20520


UNCLASSIFIED

September 24, 2024

Read by \_\_\_\_\_

### Information Memorandum

TO:           OIG – Cardell Richardson

FROM:       M – Alaina B. Teplitz 

SUBJECT:    Compliance Update - Response to Draft Report - Management Assistance Report: The Department Would Benefit from a Formal, Systematic Methodology to Capture and Utilize Lessons Learned Following Post Evacuations (AUD-GEER-24-XX)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a response to the “Management Assistance Report: The Department Would Benefit from a Formal, Systematic Methodology to Capture and Utilize Lessons Learned Following Post Evacuations”. This memorandum responds to two of the recommendations in the report. DS has responded separately regarding recommendation 2 on September 24 (Tab). The Department supports the recommendations and values lessons learned, after actions, and opportunities to reflect on what went well and what could be improved following post evacuations.

#### **Recommendation 1:**

OIG recommends CMS update the Foreign Affairs Handbook to clarify that a Lessons Learned Cable must be produced following every large-scale event, emergency, or crisis, including evacuations that result in a post (1) remaining in ordered departure status for an extended period of time, (2) suspending operations, or (3) closing permanently.

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-2-

**Management Response (9/24/2024):**

The Department concurs with the above recommendation with a clarification regarding the procedures for updating the FAM and FAH. CMS will work with DS and other relevant bureaus to update the Foreign Affairs Handbook to clarify a Department policy that a Lessons Learned Cable must be produced following every large-scale event, emergency, or crisis, including evacuations that result in any of the three scenarios named above.

**Recommendation 3:**

OIG recommends that, following the implementation of Recommendations 1 and 2, the Under Secretary for Management, working in conjunction with the Executive Secretariat, develop and implement a process to (1) systematically review Bureau of Diplomatic Security After Action Reviews developed in response to post evacuations and Lessons Learned Cables generated in compliance with 12 Foreign Affairs Handbook-1 H-235 and (2) make recommendations for action based on the results of these reviews, including identifying needed changes to Department policies, procedures, and guidance.

**Management Response (9/24/2024):**

The Department concurs with the above recommendation. After implementation of Recommendations 1 and 2, the Department will develop and implement a whole of organization process to systematically review outcomes post evacuation, which may include after action reviews, lessons learned cables, other documents or evidentiary reporting consistent with 12 Foreign Affairs Handbook-1 H-235, and the Department best practices. The Department will review current processes and implement appropriate changes as necessary based on the results of these reviews.

I have the authority to take this action pursuant to Delegation of Authority 514-2.

Attachment  
Tab – (U) DS IM to OIG

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-3-

Approved: M – Alaina B. Teplitz (ABT)

I confirm the drafter received guidance on this paper’s intent, objectives, topics, scope, and structure.  Yes  No

Drafted: M/SS/PGP/SG – Hugo Jimenez, (b) (6)

Cleared:

Bureau	Name	Clearance Status
M/SS:	Eric Stein	(OK)
M/SS/PGP:	Alexander (Ted) Bryan	(OK)
M/SS/PGP/SG:	Todd Tiffany	(OK)
M:	Catherine Roden	(OK pending M/SS)
D:	John Tegeler	(Info)
D-MR:	Stephanie Oviedo	(OK)
S/ES – O/CMS:	Jake Lipp	(OK)
S/ES – O/CMS:	Cody Giddings	(OK)
S/P:	Leslie Thompson	(Info by request)
DS/DSS:	CMatus	(OK)
DS/DSS/OPI:	CFraser	(OK)
DS/T:	JCabus	(OK)
DS/IP:	SLindenfeld	(OK)
DS/HTP:	TOsterhout	(OK)
DS/C:	MBohman	(OK)
DS/EX:	JSchools	(OK)
DS/EX/MGT:	MCaramelo	(OK)
DS/MGT/PPD:	CSatre	(OK)
L/M:	Amanda Wall	(OK)

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(U) APPENDIX C: BUREAU OF DIPLOMATIC SECURITY REPSONSE

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United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

UNCLASSIFIED

September 23, 2024

**Info Memo for Inspector General Richardson – OIG**

FROM: DS – Carlos F. Matus, Acting 

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

**Recommendation 2:** OIG recommends that the Bureau of Diplomatic Security develop and implement a requirement in the Foreign Affairs Manual to produce an After Action Review following every evacuation that results in a suspension of post operations.

**DS Response (9/23/2024):** DS supports this recommendation with the understanding that post evacuations and drawdowns are a Department decision driven by the country team and involve multiple Bureaus and should reflect a “whole of Department” response. DS agrees with the value of After Action Reviews following post evacuations and drawdowns and will develop and implement a FAM update, together with Recommendation 1, and in collaboration with relevant stakeholders to ensure a “whole of Department” approach.

DS also recommends that per the above, OIG amend Recommendation 3 to remove the words “Bureau of Diplomatic Security” so that the recommendation aligns with the above DS Response.

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Approved: DS – Carlos F. Matus, Acting A/S



Drafted: DS/MGT/PPD – Wungram Shishak, (b) (6)

Cleared: DS/DSS: CMatus (OK)  
DS/DSS/OPI: CFraser (OK)  
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DS/MGT/PPD: WShishak, Acting (OK)  
M: CRoden (Info)  
M/SS: HJimenez (Info)

## (U) ABBREVIATIONS

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AV	armored vehicle
CMS	Office of Crisis Management and Strategy
DS	Bureau of Diplomatic Security
EAC	Emergency Action Committee
FAH	Foreign Affairs Handbook
FAM	Foreign Affairs Manual
OIG	Office of Inspector General
RSO	Regional Security Officer

## (U) OIG AUDIT TEAM MEMBERS

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