

publicly available information illustrates the challenges the Department faces in this area. For example, in one of two reports relating to Embassy Kabul in Afghanistan, OIG found that, after installation and inspection by DS, two security doors at the embassy were improperly altered, which potentially affected their overall security performance.<sup>3</sup> In a separate report on the construction of two buildings at Embassy Kabul, OIG found that poor quality assurance and oversight of the construction process led to myriad instances of failure to adhere to electrical and fire safety standards<sup>4</sup>. Throughout FY 2017, OIG inspections of U.S. embassies identified numerous facility maintenance deficiencies, including partially collapsed and leaky roofs, and nonfunctioning fire alarms.<sup>5</sup>

Constructing and maintaining safe and secure diplomatic facilities is always a challenge, and that challenge is compounded in regions afflicted by conflict and humanitarian crises. For several years, OIG has, however, recommended various steps the Department could take to improve adherence to its own policies and processes. For example, the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) and DS should develop and implement formal, standardized processes to prioritize physical security-related deficiencies at posts by category.<sup>6</sup> OBO should also implement an effective process to respond to posts' formal requests for physical security-related funding.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, the Department should modify the security certification process to include a follow-up inspection by DS that would prevent alterations such as those identified at Embassy Kabul from going unnoticed.<sup>8</sup> Finally, overseas posts should follow the Department's facilities maintenance policies, including implementing required comprehensive

preventive, routine, and special maintenance programs. OIG has, for the most part, made recommendations directed toward the practices of particular posts but encourages the Department to consider whether similar concerns at other locations could be addressed as well.

## Ensuring the Health and Safety of Personnel Abroad

The Department pays serious attention to the security, and more generally, the overall health and safety of its personnel abroad. OIG reviewed its findings on executive direction from the past 3 years of inspection reports and concluded that, in more than 70 percent of the reports, embassy leadership was engaged on security issues and supported the Regional Security Officer and other mission elements that contributed to an effective security, health, and safety posture.<sup>9</sup> This is, however, an area that requires constant attention, and, throughout its FY 2017 reports, OIG identified specific areas in which the Department could do better. As described below, OIG noted continuing concerns with the operations of official vehicles overseas and certain aspects of residential security.

## Operations of Official Vehicles Overseas

In several FY 2017 reports, OIG detailed deficiencies in the management and operation of official vehicles at overseas posts. For example, in an audit of the administration of the armored vehicle program, OIG found that some posts used armored vehicles that did not meet required protective standards; OIG also found that some posts did not have

<sup>3</sup> OIG, *Management Assistance Report: Improvements Needed to the Security Certification Process To Ensure Compliance With Security Standards at Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan* (AUD-MERO-17-28, March 2017).

<sup>4</sup> OIG, *Management Assistance Report: Building Deficiencies Identified at U.S. Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan Need Prompt Attention* (AUD-MERO-17-44, June 2017).

<sup>5</sup> OIG, *Inspection of Embassy Monrovia, Liberia* (ISP-I-17-12, May 2017); OIG, *Inspection of Embassy Freetown, Sierra Leone* (ISP-I-17-16, May 2017).

<sup>6</sup> OIG, *Management Assistance Report: Department Attention Needed to Address Overdue Responses on Selected Open Recommendations* (AUD-ACF-17-55, July 2017); OIG, *Compliance Follow-up Audit of the Process To Request and Prioritize Physical Security-Related Activities at Overseas Posts* (AUD-ACF-16-20, December 2015); OIG, *Audit of the Process To Request and Prioritize Physical Security-Related Activities at Overseas Posts* (AUD-FM-14-17, March 2014).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> In particular, OIG recommended that OBO, in coordination with DS, revise the physical security certification process to include a follow-up inspection by DS to confirm that OBO took actions to address all identified deficiencies in accordance with physical security standards before occupancy. AUD-MERO-17-28, March 2017. OBO did not concur with this recommendation, and, as of September 30, 2017, OIG considers the recommendation unresolved.

<sup>9</sup> OIG, *Management Assistance Report: Department Can Take Steps Toward More Effective Executive Direction of Overseas Missions* (ISP-17-38, July 2017).