

oversight. Here, OIG determined that the contract did not contain clear, specific, and measurable performance metrics. OIG noted that remedying these deficiencies was “paramount” in posts such as Kabul. Because staff are assigned to 1-year rotations, “the learning curve for managing a large and complex contract is high, and the staff have to respond to continuous threats against and changes at the embassy.”<sup>92</sup> In the same report, OIG found that the Contracting Officer had not assigned an alternate Contracting Officers Representative, which created oversight gaps that were particularly concerning in this security environment. For example, the report described an instance in which someone without authorization to do so approved a change in offloading fuel tanks necessitated by “safety and security concerns” because of the Contracting Officer Representative’s unavailability.<sup>93</sup>

In another example, OIG’s report addressing oversight of the antiterrorism assistance program in Pakistan focused on the unique staffing challenges associated with work in this location. In particular, OIG found that difficulty in obtaining visas for oversight personnel contributed to the Department’s inadequate oversight of this program.<sup>94</sup> OIG also identified ways that the Department’s own practices contributed to problems, notwithstanding the fact that oversight personnel could not be located in Pakistan. For example, the Contracting Officer waived—without formally modifying the terms of the contract—many reporting requirements that would have allowed the Department to verify satisfactory contractor performance. OIG accordingly recommended that the Department develop and implement procedures to confirm compliance with contract reporting requirements; OIG also recommended that, in situations where the operating environment warrants a contract modification, Department personnel with oversight responsibility should execute such modifications in line with appropriate guidelines.

OIG notes, though, that the challenges associated with contingency environments are not limited to those pertaining

to contracts and grants. In the inspection of Mission Pakistan, OIG concluded that the mission’s security policies restricting staff travel in country made it difficult to meet with Pakistani contacts and audiences; this, in some cases, impeded operations or program implementation.<sup>95</sup> For example, the types of public diplomacy programs the Public Affairs Section conducted were necessarily constrained—although OIG noted that the section made innovative use of exchange program alumni and virtual programming to work around this limitation. The inspection report also noted that travel restrictions were partly to blame for a backlog of immigrant visa fraud investigations.

Other OIG inspections also revealed the unique obstacles affecting work in unstable environments. The inspection of Embassy Monrovia in Liberia served as an example of how a difficult operating environment can contribute to and exacerbate weaknesses in internal controls at an embassy. Management staff there stated that the strain the Ebola crisis put on the mission in 2014 and 2015 was at the root of a wide range of problems that included everything from driver certifications, collection of travel advances, spot checks of inventory, and grants management procedures.<sup>96</sup>

The OIG inspection of Embassy Freetown in Sierra Leone further illustrated the effect of the Ebola crisis on Department programs and operations.<sup>97</sup> As in Monrovia, the crisis strained the embassy’s internal controls, and during the inspection, OIG identified numerous and significant deficiencies in facility maintenance and security. Furthermore, OIG found the Consular Section was still working to address associated problems, including eliminating immigrant visa genetic testing backlogs and rebuilding the consular warden system. The embassy’s focus on responding to the Ebola crisis—including dealing with an influx of funding and additional U.S. Government personnel when staff was already short in certain embassy sections—hampered its ability to attend to ordinary operational functions.

<sup>92</sup> OIG, *Management Assistance Report: Contract Management—Lessons Learned from Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan, Operations and Maintenance Contract* (AUD-MERO-17-04, October 2016).

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> AUD-MERO-17-37, May 2017.

<sup>95</sup> ISP-I-17-11A, February 2017.

<sup>96</sup> ISP-I-17-12, May 2017.

<sup>97</sup> ISP-I-17-16, May 2017.

