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Office of Audits

May 2023

(U) Review of Emergency Action Planning Guiding the Evacuation of U.S. Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan

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MIDDLE EAST REGION OPERATIONS

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HIGHLIGHTS

Office of Inspector General
United States Department of State

AUD-MERO-23-15

(U) What OIG Reviewed

(U) On August 31, 2021, the Department of State (Department) officially suspended operations at U.S. Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan. This followed the August 15, 2021, entry of the Taliban into Kabul, the Afghan President fleeing the country, and, with his departure, the government—along with its security forces—collapsing. On August 15, 2021, the embassy was evacuated and the remaining Department operations were conducted from the Hamid Karzai International Airport. From there, the Department, along with the Department of Defense (DoD), oversaw a chaotic, noncombatant evacuation operation (NEO) in which 13 U.S. service members and many Afghan nationals lost their lives.

(U) OIG conducted this review to determine whether Embassy Kabul followed established Department guidance in preparation for and execution of the evacuation of U.S. government personnel, private U.S. citizens, Afghans at risk, and other individuals from Afghanistan in August 2021.

(U) What OIG Recommends

(U) OIG offered 10 recommendations to improve other posts' preparedness in the event of another crisis resulting in the need for an evacuation. On the basis of the Department's response to a draft of this report, OIG considers all 10 recommendations resolved, pending further action. A synopsis of the Department's response to the recommendations offered and OIG's reply follow each recommendation in the Review Results section of this report. The Department's response is reprinted in its entirety in Appendix C.

(U) May 2023

(U) OFFICE OF AUDITS

(U) MIDDLE EAST REGION OPERATIONS

(U) Review of Emergency Action Planning Guiding the Evacuation of U.S. Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan

(U) What OIG Found

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(U) OBJECTIVE

(U) The Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted this review to determine whether U.S. Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan, followed established Department of State (Department) guidance in preparation for and execution of the evacuation of U.S. government personnel, private U.S. citizens, Afghans at risk, and other individuals from Afghanistan in August 2021.¹

(U) BACKGROUND

(U) Embassy Kabul was closed from January 1989, following the end of the Soviet-Afghan War, until January 17, 2002. The George W. Bush Administration reopened the embassy shortly after the U.S. military engagement began in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, against Al Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban government that harbored and supported it. Over the next 20 years, the U.S. Mission to Afghanistan grew into one of the largest U.S. missions in the world.

(U) In 2018, the United States increased its diplomatic efforts to reach an accord with the Taliban, culminating in the February 29, 2020, agreement commonly known as the "Doha Agreement."² Under the Doha Agreement, the United States committed to reducing its troop levels to 8,600 by July 2020 and to withdrawing all military forces of the United States, its allies, and coalition partners from Afghanistan by May 1, 2021. Under the agreement, the Taliban committed to, among other things, not allow any of its members, other individuals, or groups, including Al-Qaeda, to use the soil of Afghanistan to threaten the security of the United States and its allies.³

(U) By January 2021, President Donald Trump had withdrawn all but 2,500 U.S. troops, the lowest U.S. force level since 2001.⁴ On April 14, 2021, President Joseph Biden announced that U.S. troops would not meet the agreed upon May withdrawal deadline but would begin their final withdrawal in May 2021, with the goal of removing all U.S. military personnel, Department of Defense (DoD) civilians, and contractors by September 11, 2021. In the April announcement, President Biden stated, "over the next few months, we will also determine what a continued U.S. diplomatic presence in Afghanistan will look like, including how we'll ensure the security of our diplomats."⁵

¹ (U) For a complete description of OIG's approach to performing this review, including sites visited and interviews conducted, see Appendix A: Purpose, Scope, and Methodology.

² (U) "The Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan which is not recognized by the United States as a state and is known as the Taliban and the United States of America," February 29, 2020.

³ (U) OIG, *Operation Enduring Sentinel/Operation Freedom's Sentinel, Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress, January 1, 2022-March 31, 2022*, page 9 (May 2022).

⁴ (U) Congressional Research Service, *Afghanistan: Background and U.S. Policy: In Brief*, page 1 (February 17, 2022).

⁵ (U) Remarks by President Biden on the Way Forward in Afghanistan (April 14, 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/04/14/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-way-forward-in-afghanistan/>.

(U) In the months following President Biden's announcement, Taliban forces took large swaths of land, capturing their first provincial capital on August 6, 2021, and culminating with their August 15, 2021, entry into Kabul.⁶ As the Taliban entered Kabul, the Afghan President fled the country and, with his departure, the government, along with its security forces, collapsed. On August 31, 2021, the Department officially suspended operations at U.S. Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan.

(U) U.S. Mission Afghanistan

(U) In its Integrated Country Strategy⁷ for Afghanistan, dated November 2020, the Department stated that "U.S. policy in Afghanistan—and the work of Embassy Kabul—are grounded in the fundamental objective of preventing attacks on the United States by terrorists enjoying safe haven or support in Afghanistan."⁸ Thousands of personnel were stationed in Afghanistan to carry out this policy. Government personnel worked at the embassy and various U.S. facilities around Kabul⁹ and the country, including regional platforms integrated with the U.S. military regional commands at Kandahar and Bagram Airfields.¹⁰ Personnel supporting Mission Afghanistan worked under numerous U.S. government departments and agencies.

(U) Emergency Planning Guidance

(U) The Department's responsibilities for evacuating U.S. government personnel and private U.S. citizens from dangerous situations abroad are codified in law and executive orders. The United States Code (U.S.C.) states:

(U) The Secretary of State shall develop and implement policies and programs to provide for the safe and efficient evacuation of United States Government personnel, dependents, and private United States citizens when their lives are endangered.¹¹

(U) The State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956, as amended, authorizes the Secretary of State to incur expenses for the evacuation of (1) U.S. government

⁶ (U) Congressional Research Service, *Afghanistan: Background and U.S. Policy: In Brief*, page 2 (February 17, 2022).

⁷ (U) 18 FAM 301.2, "Department of State Strategic Planning," states the Department is committed to using "strategic planning to achieve the most effective U.S. foreign policy outcomes and provide greater accountability to its primary stakeholders and the American people." One such plan is the Integrated Country Strategy. An Integrated Country Strategy is a 4-year strategic plan that articulates "whole-of-government priorities in a given country and incorporates higher level of planning priorities."

⁸ (U) According to Department officials, as of May 2022, the integrated country strategy is being updated to reflect the suspension of operations and the return of the Taliban as the official government of Afghanistan.

⁹ (U) OIG, *Audit of the Department of State's Approach to Adjust the Size and Composition of U.S. Missions Afghanistan and Iraq* (AUD-MERO-20-38, August 2020).

¹⁰ (U) OIG, *Inspection of Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan* (ISP-I-14-22A, August 2014).

¹¹ (U) 22 U.S.C. § 4802(b), Responsibility of Secretary of State, Overseas Evacuations.

employees and their dependents, (2) private U.S. citizens, and (3) third-country nationals¹² (on a reimbursable basis to the maximum extent practicable).^{13,14}

(U) Executive Orders 12656 and 13074 charge the Department with the “[p]rotection or evacuation of United States citizens and nationals abroad and safeguarding their property abroad, in consultation with the Secretaries of Defense and Health and Human Services,” and charge DoD with “the deployment and use of military forces for the protection of United States citizens and nationals and, in connection therewith, designated other persons or categories of persons, in support of their evacuation from threatened areas overseas.”¹⁵

(U) Department Emergency Planning Guidance

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(U) Guidance for a Noncombatant Evacuation Operation

(U) In the event of an emergency abroad, the Department can request DoD assistance to evacuate U.S. citizens and other designated persons through a noncombatant evacuation

¹² (U) Third-country nationals are neither U.S. citizens nor citizens of the country in which the embassy is located.

¹³ (U) 22 U.S.C. § 2671(b)(2)(A).

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¹⁵ (U) Executive Order 12656, Assignment of Emergency Preparedness Responsibilities, November 18, 1988; Executive Order 13074, Amendment to Executive Order 12656, February 9, 1998.

¹⁶ (U) 12 FAH-1 H-012, “Purpose.”

¹⁷ (U) 1 FAM 262.3-3, “Office of Special Programs (DS/HTP/SP).”

operation (NEO).¹⁸ According to a 1998 memorandum of agreement between the two departments, "[i]n the event of an emergency abroad affecting the safety of U.S. citizens, it is the policy of the United States Government" to, among other things, "[p]rotect U.S. citizens and nationals and designated other persons, to include, when necessary and feasible, their evacuation to and welfare in relatively safe areas."¹⁹ A 2016 memorandum of agreement between the two departments also established a shared planning and decision-making framework to enhance cooperation on scenarios requiring security augmentation for overseas posts.²⁰ The memorandum of agreement outlined roles and responsibilities of the Secretaries of State and Defense (or their designees), as well as of the Chiefs of Mission. These two memoranda dictate Department-DoD post emergency management activities.²¹

(U) Roles and Responsibilities Related to Emergency Planning and Evacuations

(U) As noted in 12 FAH-1, "Emergency Planning Handbook," "An emergency that affects U.S. foreign relations usually commands the attention of numerous Departmental offices and other Federal agencies, as well as the post(s) involved."²²

(U) Department Principal Action Offices

(U) The Emergency Planning Handbook includes details regarding the roles of the principal action offices in the Department, including the Operations Center, which maintains a 24-hour watch for any emergency worldwide, and the Office of Crisis Management and Strategy, which "serves as the crisis monitor/advisor for the Department's senior leadership and the Departmental coordinator for evacuations."²³

(U) With regard to emergency planning, the Under Secretary of State for Management is "responsible for all matters involving the allocation of Department resources . . . including:"

1. (U) Decisions regarding drawing down or augmenting staff, closing a post, and termination or extension of posts' evacuation status.
2. (U) Decisions regarding the emergency movement of Department personnel and/or dependents, whether by early transfer, separate maintenance, or evacuation orders for authorized or ordered departure.
3. (U) Decisions regarding the eligibility of and funding for evacuation of U.S. citizens in times of crisis.²⁴

¹⁸ (U) A NEO is an operation directed by the Department and supported by DoD, whereby noncombatants are evacuated from foreign countries when their lives are endangered by war, civil unrest, or natural disaster to safe havens as designated by the Department.

¹⁹ (U) "Memorandum of Agreement Between the Departments of State and Defense on the Protection and Evacuation of U.S. Citizens and Nationals and Designated Other Persons from Threatened Areas Overseas," 1998.
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²² (U) 12 FAH-1 H-021, "General."

²³ (U) 12 FAH-1 H-023.1-2, "Operations Center (S/ES-O)."

²⁴ (U) 12 FAH-1 H-023.3(b), "Under Secretary for Management (M)."

(U) The Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs has a role in emergency planning as the Department's "crisis manager"²⁵ and is responsible for developing policy guidelines to respond to a given crisis. Additionally, the Under Secretary is the day-to-day manager of overall regional and bilateral policy issues, assisting the Secretary in giving foreign policy guidance to other departments and agencies, coordinating interdepartmental activities of the U.S. government abroad, and providing general policy direction on political-military and intelligence matters.²⁶

(U) Chief of Mission

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(U) Emergency Action Plan

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²⁵ (U) 1 FAM 041.1(9), "Responsibilities."

²⁶ (U) 12 FAH-1 H-023.2, "Under Secretary for Political Affairs (P)."

²⁷ (U) 2 FAM 113.1(c)(13), "Chief of Mission and Principal Officer."

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²⁹ (U) The composition of the EAC varies based on the size and location of the post and may include positions such as the Deputy Chief of Mission, Principal Officer, Defense Attaché, Political Officer, Economic Officer, Regional Security Officer, Management Officer, Consular Officer, Public Affairs Officer, Human Resources Officer, Medical Officer, U.S. Agency for International Development Mission Director, Community Liaison Office Coordinator, and others including non-Department officials, as appropriate.

³⁰ (U) 12 FAH-1 H-031(d), "General."

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³² (U) 12 FAH-1 H-031(a), "General."

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(U) REVIEW RESULTS

(U) Finding A: Embassy Kabul Developed its Emergency Action Plan in Accordance With Guidance

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(U) Embassy Kabul's EAP Included Provisions for Evacuating Personnel

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³⁵ (U) 12 FAH-1 H-036(a), "Annual Certification."

³⁶ (U) 12 FAH-1 H-031(e), "General."

³⁷ (U) 12 FAH-1 Annex K 2.2, "Determining the Need for and Scope of Drawdown;" 12 FAH-1 Annex K-6, "Implementation of Military Assisted Evacuation;" 12 FAH-1 Annex K Addendum 3.3, "Priorities for Evacuation."

(U) Table 1. Embassy Kabul EAP, Annex K, Drawdown

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(U) Source: Generated by OIG from Embassy Kabul 2021 EAP, Annex K.

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(U) Table 2. Embassy Kabul EAP, Annex K, Priorities for Evacuation

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* (U) Foreign Service National employees are a specific category of LE staff who are hired using direct hire authorities provided by Section 303 of the Foreign Service Act, codified at 22 U.S.C. § 3943.

(U) Source: Generated by OIG from Embassy Kabul 2021 EAP, Annex K.

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³⁸ (U) 12 FAH-1 Annex K Addendum 1.1(d), "Drawdown Options," and Addendum 3.1(1), "Who Can Be Ordered To Leave."

³⁹ (U) See e.g., 12 FAH-1 Annex K Addendum 3.2(3), "Eligible for Assistance but Cannot be Ordered to Leave."

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⁴⁰ (U) 12 FAH-1 Annex K Addendum 1.3 "Assistance to Private U.S. Citizens"

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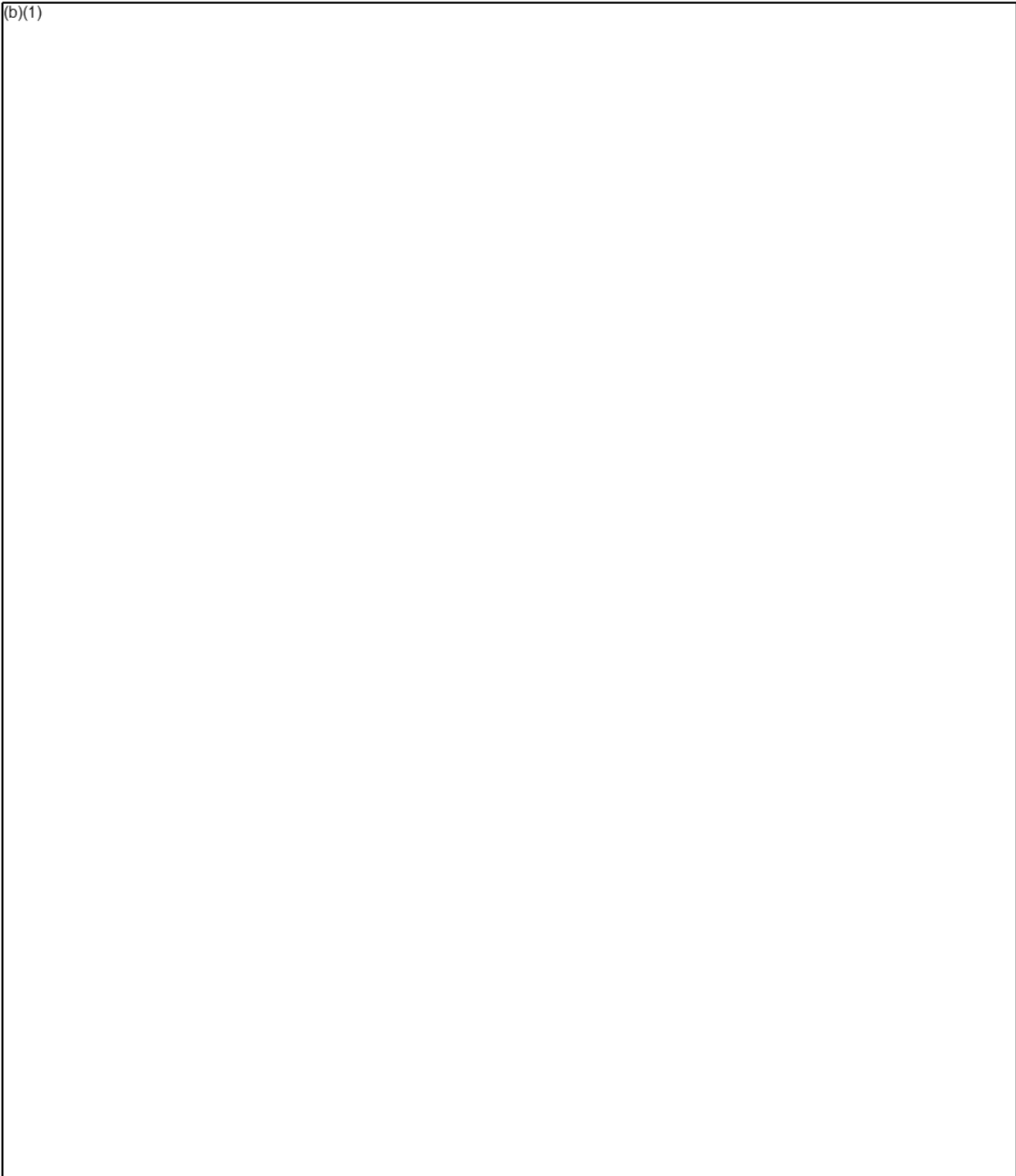
⁴² (U) As noted previously, third-country nationals are neither U.S. citizens nor citizens of the host country in which the embassy is located, whereas host-country nationals are citizens of the country in which the embassy is located.

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⁴⁵ (U) In 2009, Congress passed the Afghan Allies Protection Act, codified at 8 U.S.C. § 1101 note, which established an SIV program to resettle Afghan nationals who were employed in Afghanistan by the U.S. government or by the International Security Assistance Force and who experienced or were experiencing an ongoing and serious threat because of their employment. The Emergency Security Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021, Public Law 117-31, enacted on July 30, 2021, amended the eligibility requirements for the program, including by reducing the minimum time in service requirement. As of July 30, 2021, the SIV program requires applicants to have been employed for a minimum of 1 year between October 7, 2001, and December 31, 2023.

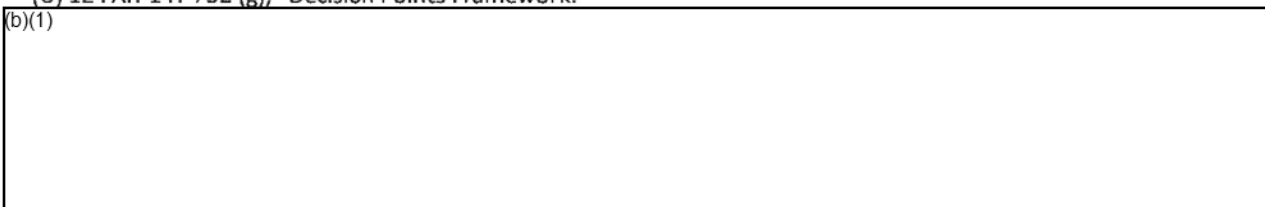
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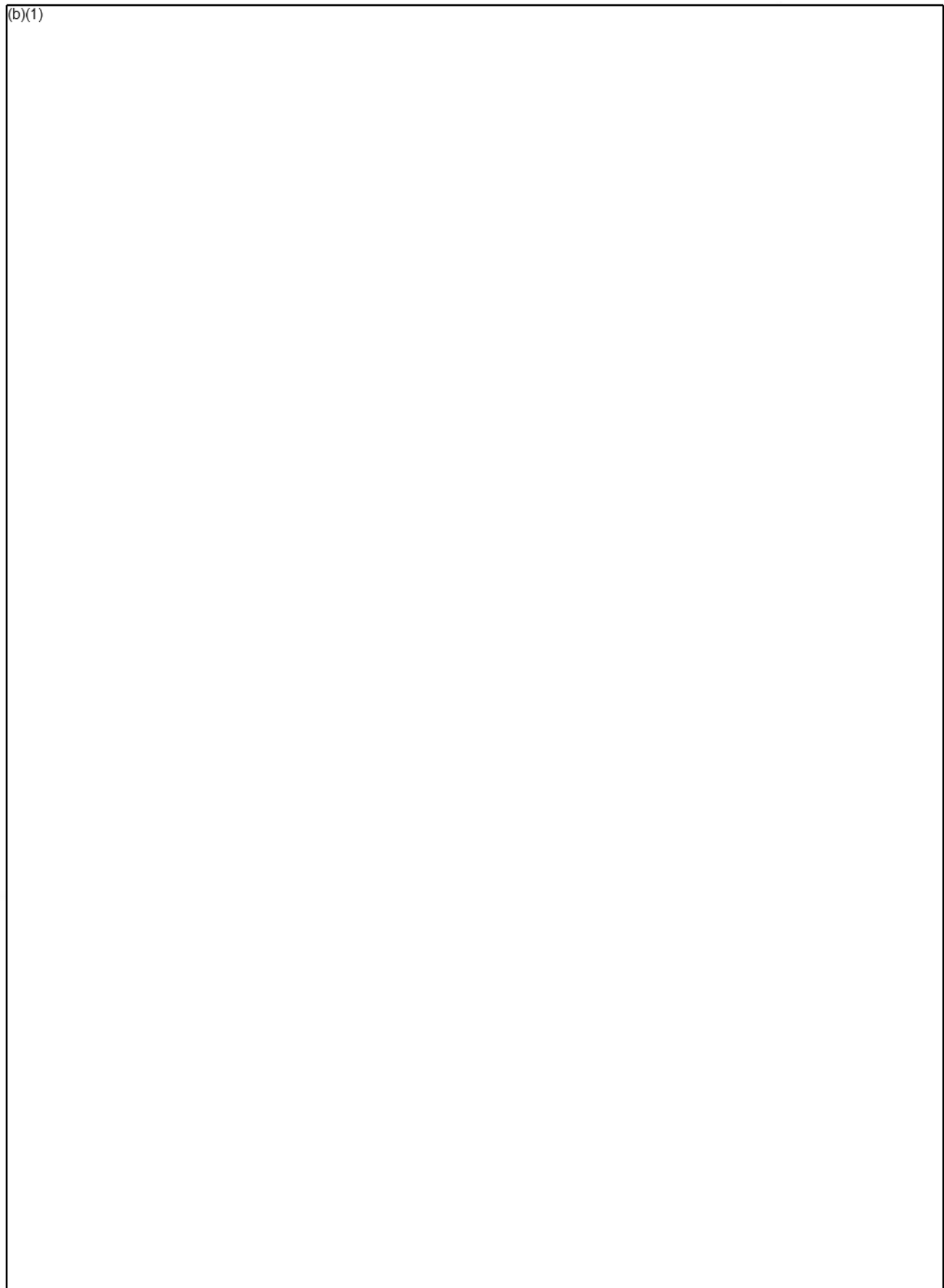


⁴⁹ (U) 12 FAH-1 H-752 (g), "Decision Points Framework."

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(U) Embassy Kabul's EAP Was Certified and Approved Annually

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- **(U) Viable.** The information in the EAP accounts for Embassy Kabul's unique circumstances and those outlined procedures have been repeatedly drilled and exercised to confirm they are likely to function as stated.
- **(U) Accurate.** The EAP has been kept up-to-date to reflect changing information on operating locations, contacts, inventories, and procedures.
- **(U) Useable.** The EAP includes the necessary information for the various audiences that need it but is not bogged down with information and contacts that are not needed to prepare for, or respond to, emergencies.

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(U) Embassy Kabul Emergency Action Committee Took Emergency Preparation Seriously

(U) OIG's review of Embassy Kabul's 2021 EAP found that it included the provisions outlined in Department guidance and was reviewed, certified, and approved before the annual review deadline set by DS. During interviews with OIG, embassy EAC members reported that they took emergency planning seriously and were attentive to EAP requirements. OIG determined that Embassy Kabul met the EAP's intent for emergency planning. However, as noted in the guidance, and ultimately demonstrated in August 2021 during the evacuation of Embassy

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⁵⁵ (U) Prior to 2021, the embassy's EAP had been reviewed, verified, and approved by DS on March 5, 2020, and February 1, 2019.

Kabul, “[h]aving a written Department-approved plan does not automatically mean the post is prepared for a crisis.”⁵⁶

(U) Finding B: Embassy Kabul Was Not Fully Prepared for Challenges it Encountered in Evacuating Individuals

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(U) Embassy Kabul Took Some Preparatory Actions in the Months Prior to the Evacuation

(U) When President Biden announced that the United States would fully withdraw its troops from the country, he stated that the withdrawal would begin on May 1, 2021, and be completed before September 11, 2021. In the intervening months, Embassy Kabul took some actions to prepare for potential emergencies. For example, it:

- **(U) Urged private U.S. citizens to leave.** On April 27, 2021, Embassy Kabul posted an alert on its website advising U.S. citizens in Afghanistan to make plans to leave the country as soon as possible. According to Secretary Blinken (in a press conference on August 25, 2021), since March 2021, the Department had issued 19 separate messages to Americans enrolled with the embassy encouraging—and then urging—they to leave the country. The Department also issued “Level 4 – Do Not Travel” advisories on its website and social media platforms warning of the dangerous conditions for U.S. citizens in Afghanistan.

⁵⁶ (U) 12 FAH-1 H-031(e), “General.”

⁵⁷ (U) On April 27, 2021, the Department approved an Ordered Departure for all non-emergency direct hire personnel and eligible family members from Embassy Kabul due to increased security concerns. The Department also authorized extensions of the Ordered Departure every 30 days thereafter. However, prior to the ordered departure in April 2021, the embassy reported that it had a total of 3,938 personnel (including 301 American direct hires) at the embassy. By June 23, 2021, that number had increased to 4,091 personnel (including 433 U.S. direct hires).

- **(U) Entered into agreements with foreign governments.** Throughout April 2021, Embassy Kabul signed memoranda of agreement with foreign embassies including those of Canada, Germany, France, South Korea, and Sweden. In the memoranda of agreement, Embassy Kabul agreed to provide emergency evacuation support services and safe haven services. In return, the foreign embassies agreed to pay the costs incurred for the services and “indemnify and hold harmless the United States of America . . . including but not limited to the Department of State and the U.S. Embassy.”

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(U) Embassy Kabul Was Not Fully Prepared To Address Challenges It Encountered in the Evacuation

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⁵⁸ (U) Joint Task Force Crisis Response was a U.S. Central Command established joint task force to plan and conduct a NEO in Kabul. It was activated on May 21, 2021.

⁵⁹ (U) U.S. Central Command is one of DoD’s 11 combatant commands. It directs and enables military operations and activities in support of U.S. interests in the Middle East. On July 12, 2021, the U.S. Forces Afghanistan transitioned into the U.S. Forces Afghanistan-Forward. Its mission was to protect diplomats after the U.S. military withdrew from Afghanistan. U.S. Forces Afghanistan-Forward was disbanded on August 31, 2021, when the last remaining U.S. forces departed Afghanistan.

⁶⁰ (U) In a meeting with OIG on March 20, 2023, Department officials noted that the Department did not “evacuate” Afghans at risk. Rather, the Department “relocated” Afghans at risk, because the Department does not have the authority to incur expenses to “evacuate” host-country nationals (see 22 U.S.C. § 2671(b)(2)(A)). However, to minimize confusion, the Department used “evacuate” when referring to all individuals evacuated from Afghanistan. For consistency purposes, OIG also uses “evacuate” throughout this report in the same manner.

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(U) The F-77 Report of Potential Evacuees Was Unreliable

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(U)

Categories of Potential Evacuees

U.S. Citizens

U.S. Government Employees*

U.S. Government Employees'

Family Members

Residents and Visitors

Subtotal

⁶¹ (U) 12 FAH-1 Annex K 2.3-1, "Actions for Emergency Action Committee;" 12 FAH-1 Annex K 5.1-1(a), "Actions for Incident Commander."

(U)

Categories of Potential Evacuees

Non-U.S. Citizens

Third-Country National Contractors

LE Staff

LE Staff's Family Members

Other Host-Country Nationals[†]

Third-Country Nationals

Subtotal

Total

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* (U) According to Department officials, the "U.S. Government Employees" category includes U.S. citizen contractors.

† (U) According to Department officials, the "Other Host-Country Nationals" category includes individuals who are "other non-U.S. citizens/non-[legal permanent residents] host-country nationals to whom it may be in the [U.S. government's] best interest to provide evacuation assistance, including host-country nationals escorting U.S. citizen minors." The "Other Host-Country Nationals" category focused on DoD contractors, Department contractors, and U.S. Agency for International Development contractors.

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(U) The reduced estimate aside, the number of individuals considered potential evacuees whom the embassy included in both the February 2021 and June 2021 F-77 Reports was far fewer than the number of individuals that Secretary Blinken indicated the U.S. government and its partners evacuated. OIG found that one reason for the embassy's underestimation in the F-77 Reports was that the data used were unreliable. Embassy officials told OIG that the F-77 Report is created from sources that depend on user input, and therefore, its reliability depends on the accuracy and completeness of the data entry. For example, the embassy used the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, an internet-based service operated by the Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs that allows U.S. citizens traveling or living abroad to enter their travel information (passport number, address, emergency contact number, and itinerary), to track the number of U.S. citizens traveling within or visiting Afghanistan. However, enrollment in the

program is voluntary.⁶² Embassy Kabul documented the difficulties in accounting for U.S. citizens in Afghanistan in its EAP, noting that "many of the U.S. citizens in Afghanistan are either contractors, non-governmental workers, or security personnel, who frequently travel in and out of the country, or Afghan-Americans, who enter on their Afghan passports. Any list or count of U.S. citizens in Afghanistan is unlikely to be very accurate."

(U) Embassy officials also stated that they used information requested from the Afghan government on the number of U.S. citizens coming into Afghanistan using their U.S. government-issued passports to inform the F-77 Report. However, these officials told OIG that they did not trust the accuracy of the data received. This was because, as previously noted, many U.S. citizens were dual citizens who entered Afghanistan using their Afghan passports, rather than their U.S. passports. This would have resulted in Afghan-Americans not being documented as U.S. citizens in Afghanistan and being excluded from the information provided by the Afghan government based on passport entry data.

(U) Finally, embassy officials stated that they used information from the Kabul Embassy Personnel Accountability System to account for personnel working at the embassy. The system relied on individual embassy sections and agencies inputting correct and up-to-date information on their staff. Because of this reliance, embassy officials said that it made for very uncertain numbers and "that the exact number, location, and identity of the . . . American and [third-country national] staff was never known precisely. . . ." Embassy officials suggested that there should be a universally accepted program for tracking people. It could include using a card reader to check people in at post. Adding such controls would help ensure that embassy sections and agencies under COM authority accurately account for their personnel.

(U) The purpose of the F-77 Report is to estimate the total number and location of U.S. citizens and other potential evacuees. Although it is an estimate, and only one of multiple planning tools used,⁶³ it is intended to provide Department and DoD planners with the best chance at ensuring that all people who require evacuation assistance are accounted for in advance when planning for an evacuation. Improving the accuracy and completeness of the data used to compile the F-77 Report of Potential Evacuees will better prepare posts to obtain an accurate accounting of potential evacuees. Therefore, OIG is offering the following recommendations.

⁶² (U) According to 2 FAH-2 H-116.1(c), "Secretary of State and [Chief of Mission] Security Responsibility and Evacuations," a "[Chief of Mission] may not maintain information on the whereabouts of private U.S. citizens without their consent, compel them to register with the [e]mbassy, or force them to participate in government-organized evacuations. The [Chief of Mission] may provide assistance to those U.S. citizens who request it, but it must be handled within the limitations of the Privacy Act."

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Recommendation 1: (U) OIG recommends that the Under Secretary of State for Management, in coordination with the Bureau of Consular Affairs, assess options for increasing U.S. citizen participation in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program for the purpose of facilitating their evacuation.

Management Response: (U) The Under Secretary concurred with the recommendation and stated that their office will work with CA to assess options for increasing U.S. citizen participation in the "Smart Traveler Enrollment Program." In addition, the Under Secretary requested that all recommendations contained in this report be assigned to the Under Secretary for Management as the primary action office because addressing the intent of each recommendation requires consultations with senior officials across multiple federal agencies and Department bureaus. The Department's response to a draft of this report is reprinted in its entirety in Appendix C.

OIG Reply: (U) On the basis of the Under Secretary of State for Management's concurrence with the revised recommendation and planned actions, OIG considers this recommendation resolved, pending further action. As requested, OIG revised the recommendation making the Under Secretary of State for Management the primary action office and corrected the name of the "Smart Traveler Enrollment Program." This recommendation will be closed when OIG receives documentation that demonstrates the Under Secretary has coordinated with CA to assess options for increasing U.S. citizen participation in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program.

Recommendation 2: (U) OIG recommends that the Under Secretary of State for Management identify and implement internal controls to be used by embassy sections and agencies at posts worldwide to effectively account for and include in the F-77 Report of Potential Evacuees the number of employees working at the post.

Management Response: (U) The Under Secretary concurred with the recommendation, subject to revision that "posts worldwide *effectively* account for and include" The Under Secretary noted that, in a discussion with OIG on March 20, 2023, Department officials clarified that "the purpose of the F-77 Report of Potential Evacuees ('F-77 Report') is to provide an estimate, not an actual tally, of the number of evacuees at a given post," and that the F-77 Report is one of many contingency planning tools. The Under Secretary further stated that they "will work with stakeholder bureaus to identify and implement internal controls to obtain better data and personnel accountability of employees to ensure contingency planning documents, such as the F-77 Report, are more effective."

OIG Reply: (U) On the basis of the Under Secretary of State for Management's concurrence with the revised recommendation and planned actions, OIG considers the recommendation resolved, pending further action. OIG modified the recommendation to reflect the acceptable alternative proposed by the Under Secretary. This recommendation will be closed when OIG receives documentation that demonstrates the Under Secretary of State for Management has coordinated with stakeholder

bureaus to identify and implement internal controls to be used by embassy sections and agencies at posts worldwide to effectively account for and include in the F-77 Report of Potential Evacuees the number of employees working at the post.

(U) Embassy Kabul Did Not Clearly Define Eligibility Criteria for Evacuation

(U) In addition to unreliable data used in the F-77 Report, OIG found that the eligibility criteria used for the evacuation of Afghan nationals was unclear at the onset and that the criteria expanded as the evacuation evolved. For example, embassy officials stated that they were not provided a clear definition of "Afghans at risk" or "vulnerable Afghans" or criteria for determining their eligibility for evacuation. The terms "Afghans at risk" and "vulnerable Afghans" were used in planning prior to the evacuation, but were not defined. In statements made to the media during the evacuation,⁶⁴ both President Biden and Secretary Blinken broadly referred to "Afghans at risk" using the following terms:

- (U) LE staff.
- (U) SIV "participants."
- (U) Women.
- (U) Women organizations.
- (U) Journalists.
- (U) Non-government organizations.
- (U) Afghan allies and partners.
- (U) Afghans who might be targeted because of their association with the United States.

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⁶⁴ (U) The White House, "Remarks by President Biden on Evacuations in Afghanistan," August 20, 2021. See also the Department, "Secretary Antony J. Blinken on Afghanistan," August 25, 2021.

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Recommendation 3: (U) OIG recommends that the Under Secretary of State for Management convene senior policymakers to examine the merits of establishing criteria to assist host country nationals with evacuation in advance of a crisis and determine a mechanism to implement criteria. All applicable sections of the Foreign Affairs Handbook must be updated to reflect the revised criteria, including as a separate category on the F-77 Report of Potential Evacuees.

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Recommendation 4: (U) OIG recommends that the Under Secretary of State for Management require posts to implement the results of senior policymakers' examination of the merits of establishing criteria to assist host country nationals with evacuation in advance of a crisis (Recommendation 3), determine whether they have host-country nationals that meet the criteria, and update their post-specific emergency planning documentation (such as the Emergency Action Plan and F-77 Report of Potential Evacuees or alternative mechanisms) accordingly.

Management Response: (U) The Under Secretary suggested that this recommendation could potentially be removed during a discussion with OIG on March 20, 2023, and therefore did not concur with the recommendation at that point.

OIG Reply: (U) OIG considered the removal of this recommendation but chose to retain it based on the Under Secretary of State for Management's concurrence with Recommendation 3 and the presumption Recommendation 3 will be implemented as stated. OIG therefore revised this recommendation (Recommendation 4) to reflect other actions that must be taken to address the deficiency identified once Recommendation 3 has been fully implemented. OIG therefore considers Recommendation 4 resolved, pending further action. This recommendation will be closed when OIG receives documentation that demonstrates the Under Secretary has implemented the results of senior policymakers' examination of the merits of establishing criteria to assist host country nationals with evacuation in advance of a crisis (Recommendation 3), and has required posts to determine whether they have host country nationals that meet the criteria, and updated their post-specific emergency planning documentation (such as the Emergency Action Plan and F-77 Report of Potential Evacuees or alternative mechanism) accordingly.

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⁶⁶ (U) Third-country nationals are neither U.S. citizens nor citizens of the host country in which the embassy is located, while host-country nationals are citizens of the country in which the embassy is located.

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⁷⁰ (U) In 2009, Congress passed the Afghan Allies Protection Act, codified at 8 U.S.C. § 1101.

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(U) LE staff are the continuity staff of U.S missions abroad; they provide institutional knowledge and perform vital mission program and support functions. Embassy Kabul, according to their EAP, should have identified any Afghan LE staff as eligible for evacuation because of severe personal risk due to U.S. employment. In addition to an inaccurate accounting of LE staff who needed to be evacuated, the Embassy did not establish an executable plan to get them to safety. To avoid similar situations for other host nation LE staff, OIG is offering the following recommendations.

Recommendation 5: (U) OIG recommends that the Under Secretary of State for Management convene senior policymakers to determine which locally employed host country nationals may be eligible for evacuation or relocation assistance, as appropriate, and how posts might account for such individuals.

Management Response: (U) The Under Secretary requested that OIG revise the recommendation to read "OIG recommends that the Under Secretary [of State] for Management convene senior policymakers to determine which locally employed host country nationals may be eligible for evacuation or relocation assistance, as appropriate, and how posts might account for such individuals." In addition, the Under Secretary plans to convene senior policymakers to consider the merits of OIG's recommendation but noted that "the Department is not in a position to assess whether this would result in any changes to the FAH or Department policy" until those discussions occur.

OIG Reply: (U) On the basis of the Under Secretary of State for Management's concurrence with the revised recommendation and planned actions, OIG considers the recommendation resolved, pending further action. In a draft of this report,

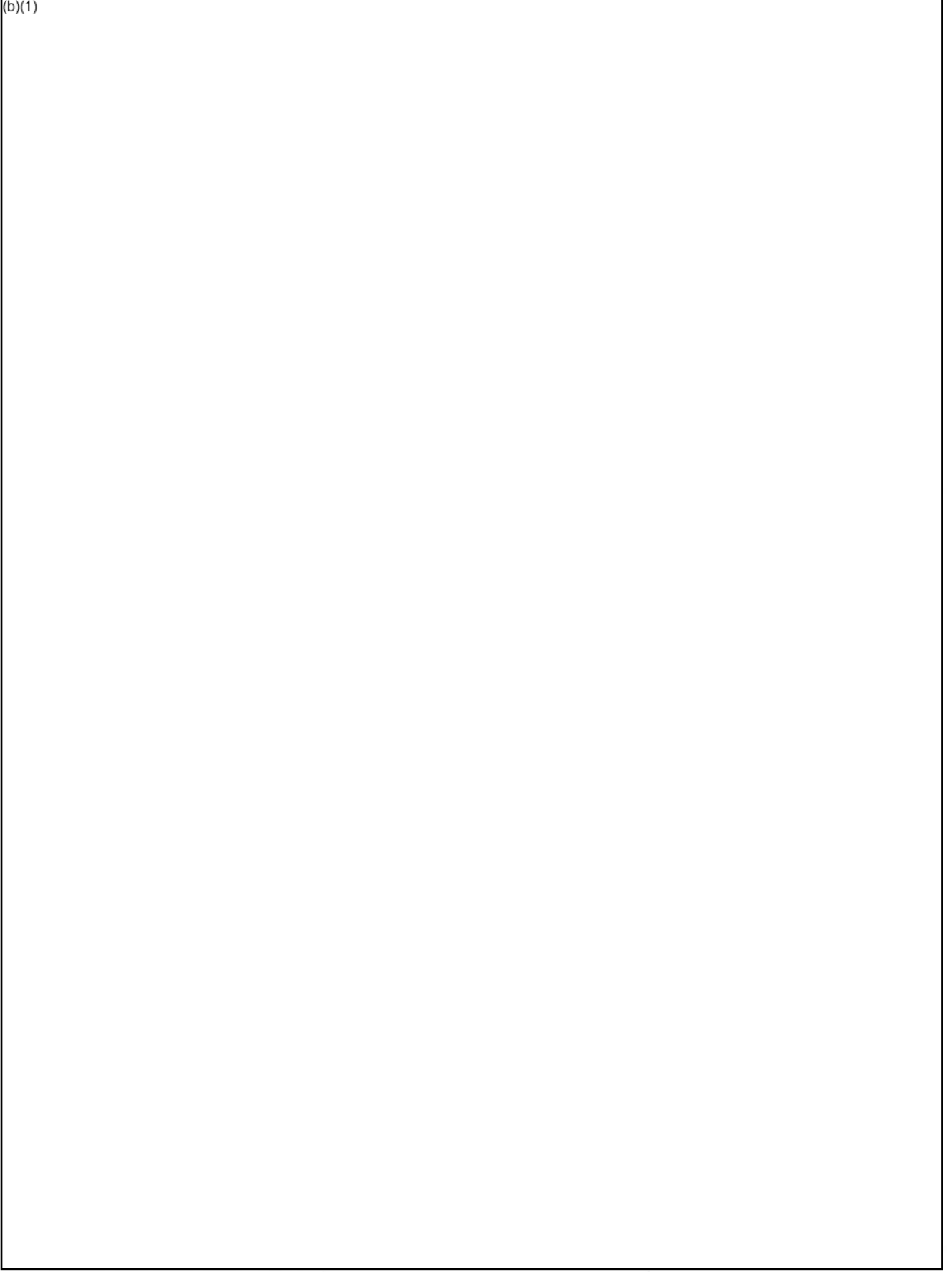
Recommendation 5 was originally addressed to the Bureau of Diplomatic Security to clarify guidance in the Foreign Affairs Handbook to “identify any locally employed staff—regardless of citizenship—eligible for U.S. government evacuation assistance.” However, the proposed revision to the recommendation and actions outlined in the Under Secretary’s response to a draft of this report, when implemented, represent an acceptable alternative that meets the intent of the original recommendation. OIG also agreed to revise Recommendation 5 to make the Under Secretary of State for Management the primary action office. In addition, OIG modified the original recommendation to reflect acceptable alternative language proposed by the Under Secretary. This recommendation will be closed when OIG receives documentation that demonstrates the Under Secretary has taken action to convene senior policymakers to determine which locally employed host country nationals may be eligible for evacuation assistance and how posts might account for such individuals and subsequently provide documentation of changes to the FAH or Department policy as appropriate.

Recommendation 6: (U) OIG recommends that the Under Secretary of State for Management require posts that employ host country nationals deemed eligible for evacuation (Recommendation 5) to (1) develop an evacuation plan for host country nationals and their eligible family members and (2) incorporate this plan into Annex K of the Emergency Action Plan.

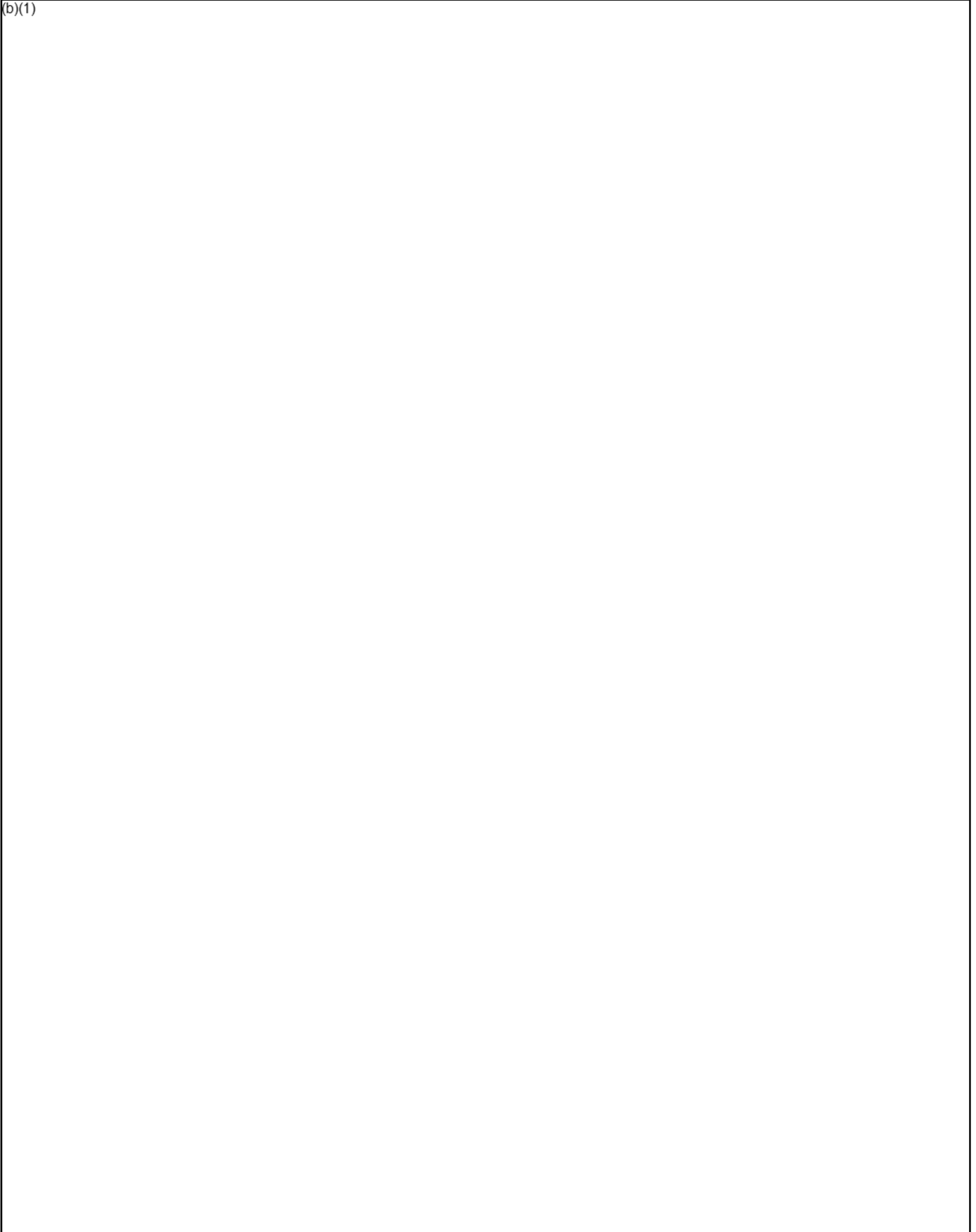
Management Response: (U) The Under Secretary of State for Management suggested that this recommendation could potentially be removed during a discussion with OIG on March 20, 2023, and therefore did not concur with the recommendation at that point.

OIG Reply: (U) OIG considered the removal of this recommendation but chose to retain it based on the Under Secretary of State for Management’s concurrence with Recommendation 5 and the presumption Recommendation 5 will be implemented as stated. OIG therefore revised this recommendation (Recommendation 6) to reflect other actions that must be taken to address the deficiency identified once Recommendation 5 has been implemented. OIG therefore considers Recommendation 6 resolved, pending further action. This recommendation will be closed when the Under Secretary provides documentation that demonstrates posts that employ host country nationals deemed eligible for evacuation (Recommendation 5) are required to (1) develop an evacuation plan for host country nationals and their eligible family members and (2) incorporate this plan into Annex K of the Emergency Action Plan.

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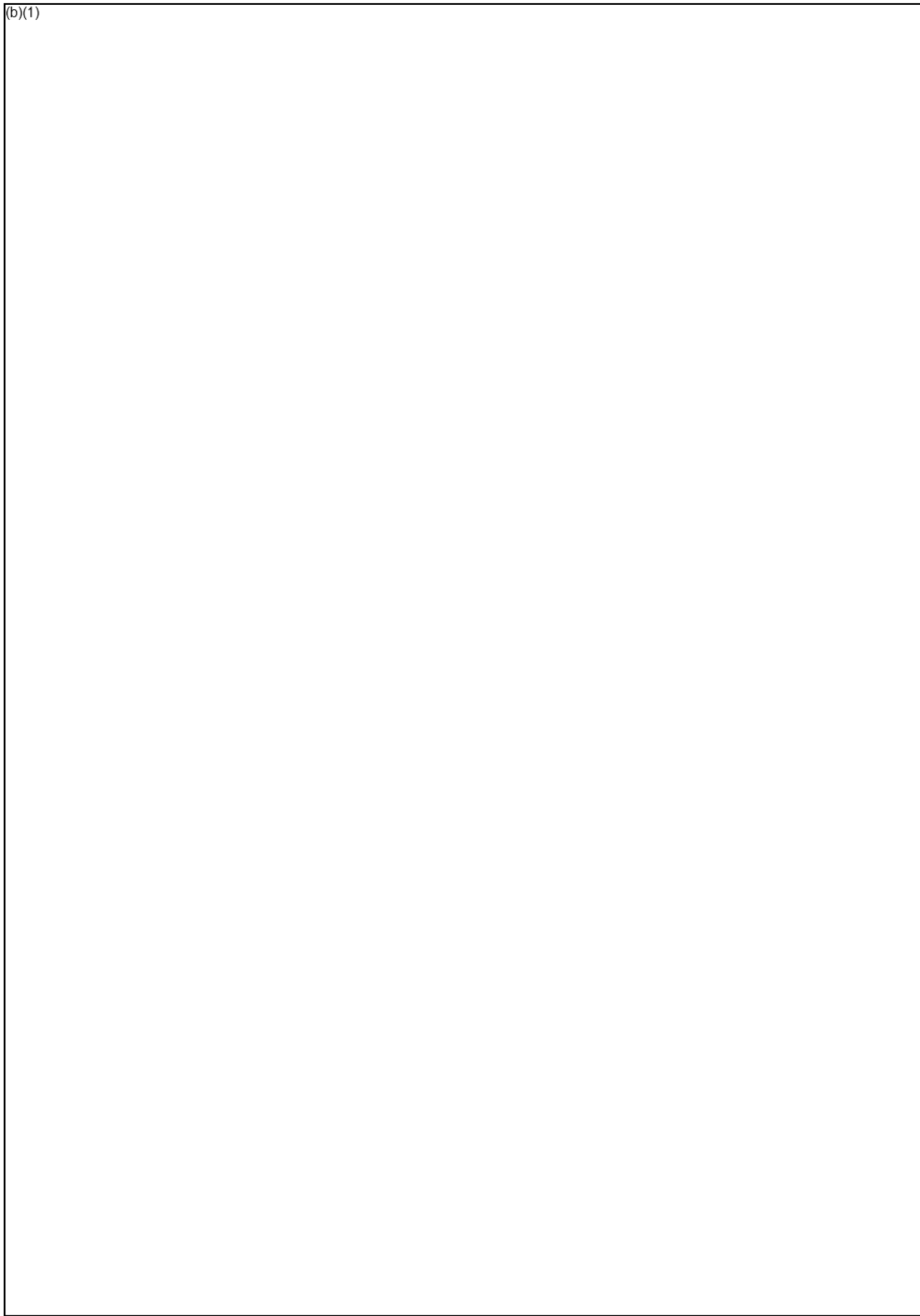
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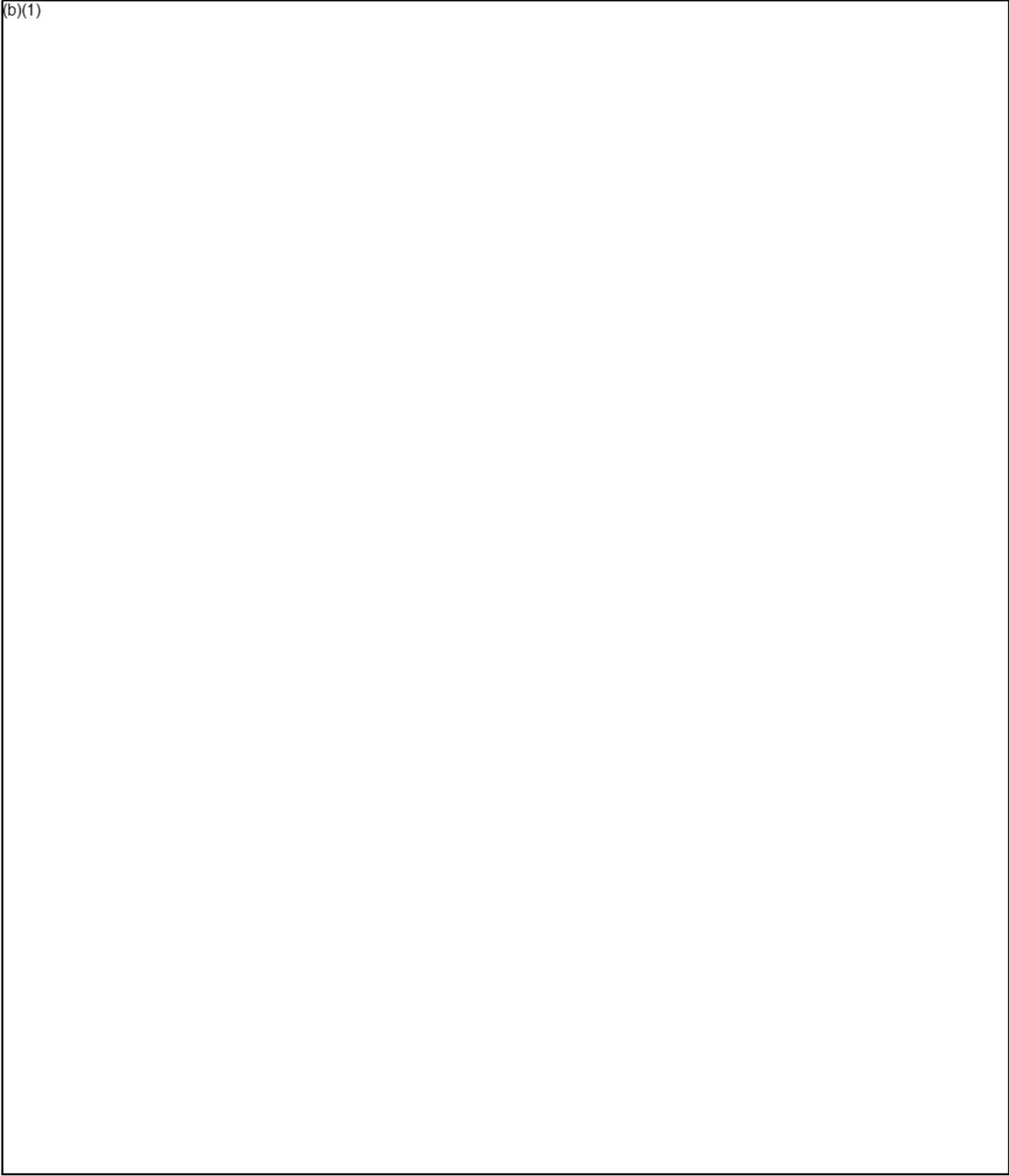
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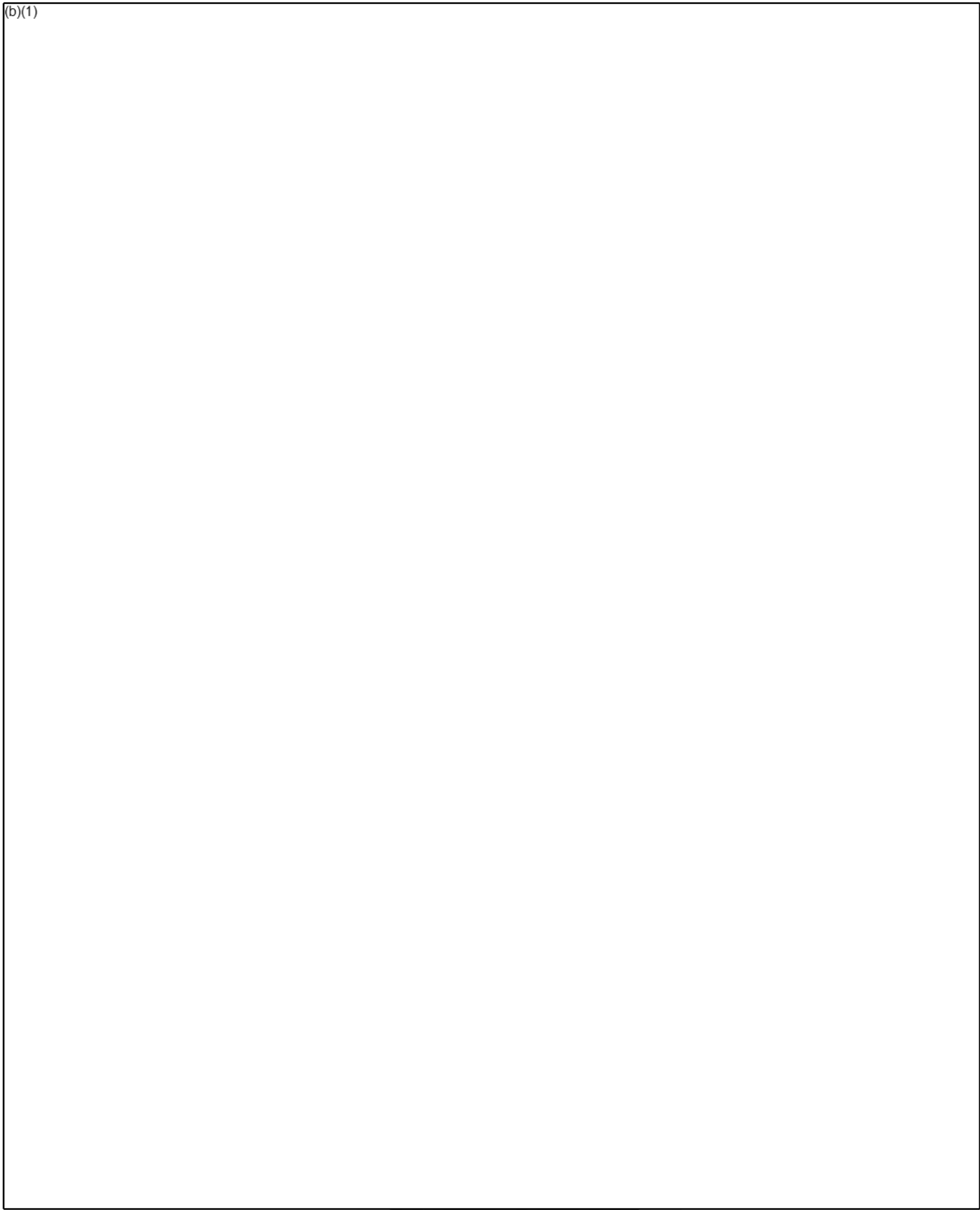
⁷⁷ (U) The Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs is the regional bureau that Embassy Kabul reports to in Washington, DC.

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(U) Embassy Kabul Leadership Was Executing the Administration's Stated Position that Diplomatic Operations Would Continue Following the Withdrawal of U.S. Military Forces and Had Concerns That Overt Evacuation Planning Would Cause Panic

(U) According to multiple officials OIG interviewed during this review, another reason why the Ambassador did not prompt the additional drawdown of personnel or initiate NEO procedures when the EAP risk indicators were crossed and security conditions worsened was, at least in part, due to embassy leadership's execution of the Administration's stated position that diplomatic operations would continue following the withdrawal of U.S. military forces. In the April 14, 2021, announcement of his administration's intentions to withdraw all military troops from the country, President Biden stated, "While we will not stay involved in Afghanistan militarily, our diplomatic and humanitarian work will continue."⁸⁶ On April 15, 2021, while in Afghanistan meeting with the Afghan president, Secretary Blinken reiterated the Biden Administration's commitment to "strong diplomatic engagement" and stated that "even when our troops come home, our partnership with Afghanistan will continue" and "the United States will remain Afghanistan's steadfast partner."⁸⁷ Moreover, in remarks to the media on July 8, 2021, President Biden stated, "I intend to maintain our diplomatic presence in Afghanistan."⁸⁸

(U) To support this position, Embassy Kabul took steps to prepare for the continuation of general operations and diplomatic relations following the military withdrawal. OIG reviewed an after-action report that the embassy's Management Section officials wrote following the suspension of operations, in which they explained that because of the administration's plan to continue diplomatic relations, the embassy dedicated considerable effort to planning for

⁸⁶ (U) The White House, "Remarks by President Biden on the Way Forward in Afghanistan," April 14, 2021.

⁸⁷ (U) Department, "Secretary Antony J. Blinken at a Press Availability," April 15, 2021.

⁸⁸ (U) The White House, "Remarks by President Biden on the Drawdown of U.S. Forces in Afghanistan," July 8, 2021.

projects involving enhanced security (e.g., more secure housing, consolidation of staff onto the embassy compound, etc.) and developing capacity, including alternatives to DoD supply chains and support platforms, absorption of assets, and support for the augmentation of embassy defensive capacity. OIG also found that, for a brief time, the embassy allowed some personnel who were ordered to depart in April to return. Specifically, prior to the ordered departure in April 2021, the embassy reported that it had a total of 3,938 personnel (including 301 American direct hires) at the embassy. By June 23, 2021, that number had increased to 4,091 personnel (including 433 U.S. direct hires).⁸⁹

(U) In addition, OIG found that the embassy continued to allow the routine “onward assignments”⁹⁰ process to proceed, which, according to personnel OIG interviewed, may have reinforced the notion that embassy operations were continuing as usual and that there was no reason for concern. OIG reviewed the annual “rotation” of Embassy Kabul personnel, which generally occurs during the summer months, and found that key security and consular personnel departed post in days and weeks prior to the evacuation. Specifically, despite the reported worsening security conditions, the Senior Regional Security Officer and two deputies (who had been at post for the prior year) departed in early August 2021, leaving the responsibility for security to individuals who had just arrived in July and August 2021. In addition, the Consular Chief, who had also been posted at the embassy for a year, departed on August 5, 2021, and other Consular Affairs officers—those who were responsible for issuing passports and other documentation to citizens and nationals and facilitating legitimate travel to the United States—also rotated out of Kabul after their tour of duty ended and were replaced with newly arrived officers.

(U) OIG also found that embassy leadership expressed apprehension about taking overt actions in preparation for an evacuation, concerned that such actions would undermine diplomatic support for the government of Afghanistan and cause panic within that government, the broader Afghan population, and Embassy Kabul. The potential for this to happen is noted in 12 FAH-1 Annex K.⁹¹ In their after-action report, management officers wrote that “Embassy Leadership did not wish to create panic and . . . ensured that Management Notices and informational emails did not address the truly dire situation.”

(U) Because of this effort to avoid signaling a lack of support for the Afghan government, communication with embassy personnel about the timing and scope of a potential evacuation

⁸⁹ (U) On July 22, 2021, Embassy Kabul ordered more personnel to leave Afghanistan because of the security situation. In his message to embassy personnel, the Deputy Chief of Mission stated that the reduction was temporary and that he was committed to having a “strong U.S. Embassy [in Kabul].”

⁹⁰ (U) According to 3 FAH-1 H-2421, “Subchapter Definitions,” an “assignment” is a tour of duty to a Foreign Service position that exceeds 6 months. Additionally, 3 FAH-1 Exhibit H-3764(1), “Abbreviations,” states that a permanent change of station is known as an “onward assignment.” However, more commonly, an “onward assignment” is a Foreign Service Officer’s next tour of duty or post.

⁹¹ (U) Specifically, 12 FAH-1 Annex K 2.2-1(b)(4), “Actions for EAC/Chief of Mission (COM),” states that when assessing the need to drawdown, the EAC and Chief of Mission should consider that “the reduction of staff or departure of family members, especially as a crisis worsens, can be interpreted as “lack of confidence” in the host government’s stability.”

was unclear. For example, an official told OIG that in one instance, the Ambassador reprimanded embassy personnel when they expressed concerns about their safety given the deteriorating security environment during a meeting. Embassy personnel also told OIG that the lack of clarity caused confusion and made some personnel less prepared for an evacuation. In interviews, OIG asked EAC members when the decision was made to evacuate, and they reported multiple inconsistent dates and times. Non-EAC members gave even more varied responses as to how the evacuation message was communicated. For example, some embassy personnel learned about the evacuation from their superiors, while some learned about it from embassy loudspeakers. Emails OIG reviewed that were sent by the Community Liaison Office during the week of the evacuation promoted social events at the embassy. Management Section officers reported in their own after-action report that "[m]any staff . . . did not seem to take seriously the overall risks presented and the need to prepare for them." The officers explained that leadership "tightly control[ed] messaging and limit[ed] information to the larger embassy community" out of fear of the leakage of information to the media. To improve communications during future crises, OIG is offering the following recommendation.

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Management Response: (U) The Department requested that Recommendation 8 be combined with Recommendation 7.

OIG Reply: (U) As previously discussed, OIG considered combining Recommendations 8 and 7 as requested by the Under Secretary, but chose to keep each recommendation separate to facilitate tracking implementation of distinct internal control elements meant to improve Department communications. OIG revised this recommendation to clarify its intent, namely to ensure employees at applicable posts are sufficiently and appropriately informed in a deteriorating security situation so they can be prepared for changes to post's evacuation status. On the basis of the Under Secretary of State for Management's concurrence with the intent of the revised recommendation and planned actions, as discussed in the response to Recommendation 7, OIG considers the recommendation resolved, pending further action. This recommendation will be closed when OIG receives documentation that demonstrates the Under Secretary of State for Management has developed and implemented protocols to sufficiently and appropriately inform employees at post regarding deteriorating security situations so they can be prepared for potential changes to post's evacuation status.

(U) Evacuation From Hamid Karzai International Airport After Leaving Embassy Kabul Was Chaotic

(U) Following the evacuation from Embassy Kabul on August 15, 2021, Department staff were transported to Hamid Karzai International Airport (HKIA) and assigned to flights by U.S. military personnel. After departing Afghanistan, most Department staff travelled to Doha, Qatar, where

they assisted Afghan evacuees, before travelling onward.⁹² However, a small group of embassy personnel were chosen to remain in Afghanistan with embassy leadership to continue evacuating U.S. citizens and others, an effort that continued until August 31, 2021. The group that remained in country included political officers, consular officers,⁹³ and security personnel. These remaining personnel faced many challenges through the end of August, including unclear leadership, changes to the location of the command center,⁹⁴ and communication issues that contributed to the overall chaos.

(U) Following the embassy evacuation, a second Ambassador was sent from Washington, DC, to assist with the HKIA evacuation operations. According to 12 FAH-1 H-121, "Chief of Mission (COM) Authority and Responsibility," "[t]he COM, in the capacity of ambassador, charge, or principal officer is—by statute and Presidential direction—responsible for the direction, coordination, and supervision of all U.S. Government executive branch employees in the country."⁹⁵ According to embassy and DoD personnel, responsibilities were divided between the two Ambassadors and command centers. The U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan took the lead in communicating with Washington, DC, while the second Ambassador worked with military personnel on ground operations at HKIA. Although Department staff told OIG that the presence of the second Ambassador was an asset, Department staff also said having two Ambassadors caused confusion about leadership among DoD officials leading the NEO. According to DoD personnel, "With [multiple Ambassadors] both on deck it was not initially clear who was the lead providing us the support we required to execute the NEO" and "there wasn't an authority on who was specifically in charge." This last-minute change caused confusion and was not accounted for in the embassy's EAP. In a crisis situation, adherence to a pre-determined plan and clear leadership ensure post's response to an emergency is comprehensive. To avoid confusion about leadership in crisis situations, OIG is offering the following recommendation.

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⁹² (U) From Qatar, most Americans were taken back to the United States while third-country nationals traveled back to their home countries.

⁹³ (U) Consular officers at the embassy were responsible for issuing passports and other documentation to citizens and nationals and facilitating legitimate travel to the United States.

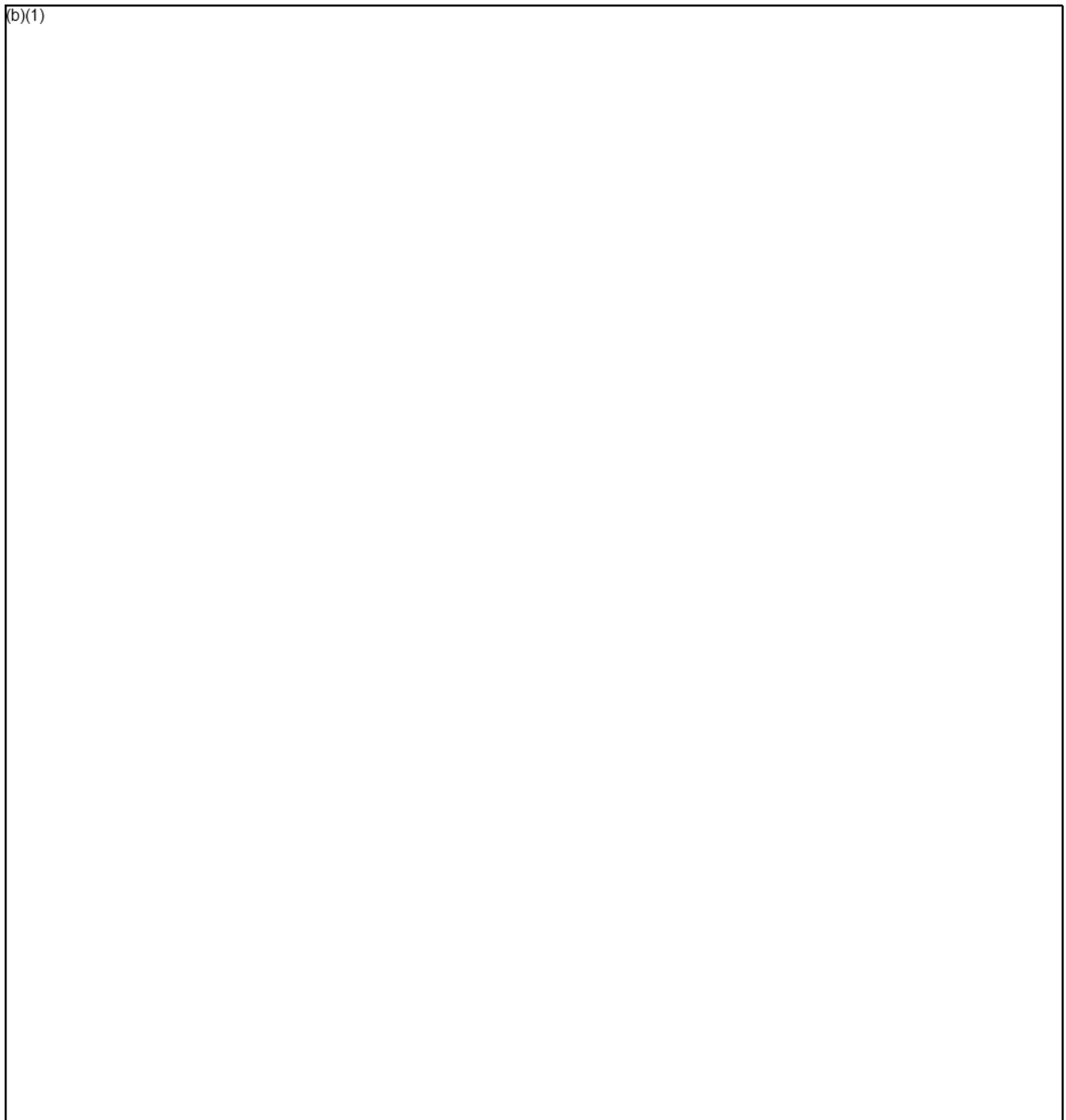
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⁹⁵ (U) 12 FAH-1 H-121, "Chief of Mission (COM) Authority and Responsibility."

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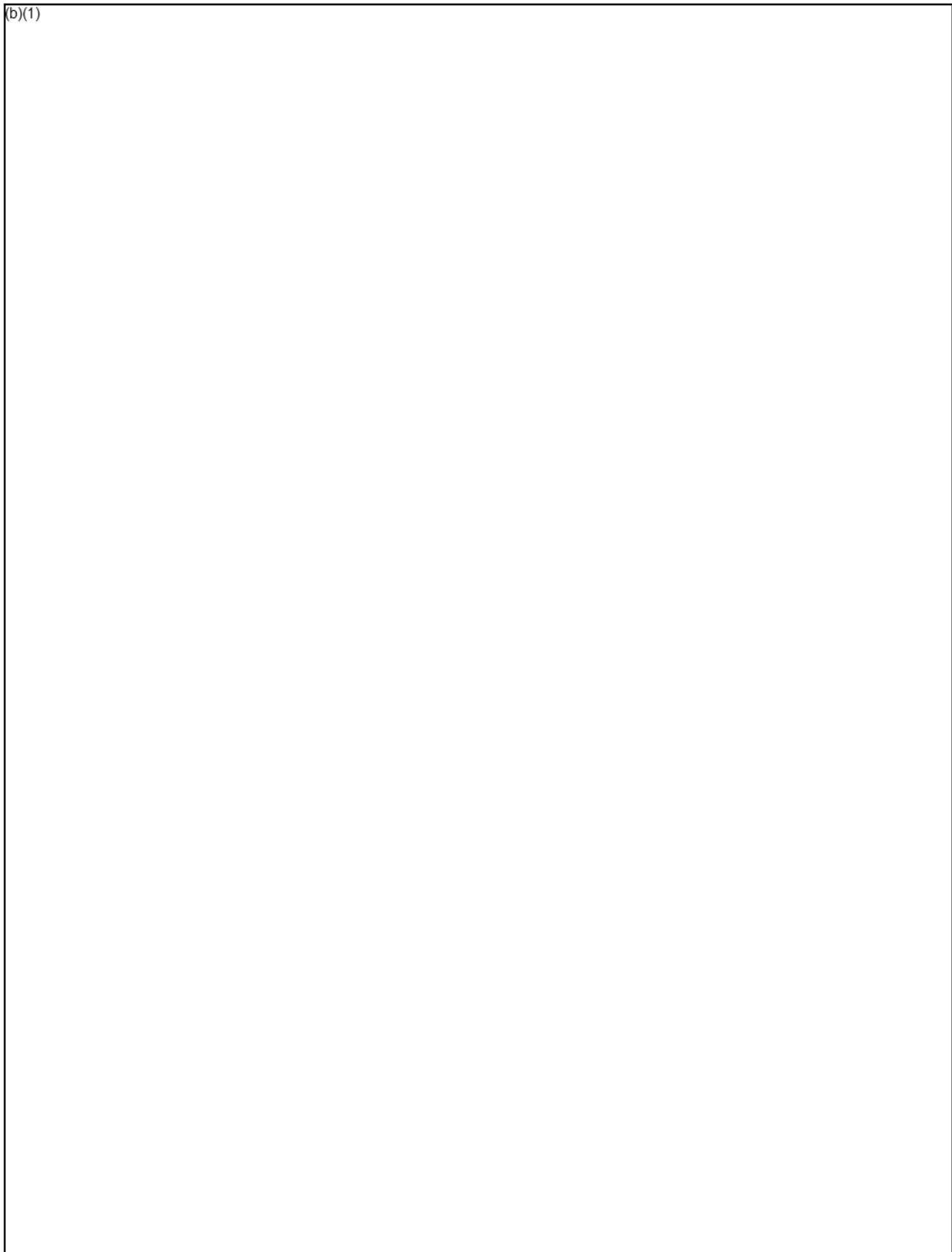


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⁹⁷ (U) Ibid.

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(U) RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: (U) OIG recommends that the Under Secretary of State for Management, in coordination with the Bureau of Consular Affairs, assess options for increasing U.S. citizen participation in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program for the purpose of facilitating their evacuation.

Recommendation 2: (U) OIG recommends that the Under Secretary of State for Management identify and implement internal controls to be used by embassy sections and agencies at posts worldwide to effectively account for and include in the F-77 Report of Potential Evacuees the number of employees working at the post.

Recommendation 3: (U) OIG recommends that the Under Secretary of State for Management convene senior policymakers to examine the merits of establishing criteria to assist host country nationals with evacuation in advance of a crisis and determine a mechanism to implement criteria. All applicable sections of the Foreign Affairs Handbook must be updated to reflect the revised criteria, including as a separate category on the F-77 Report of Potential Evacuees.

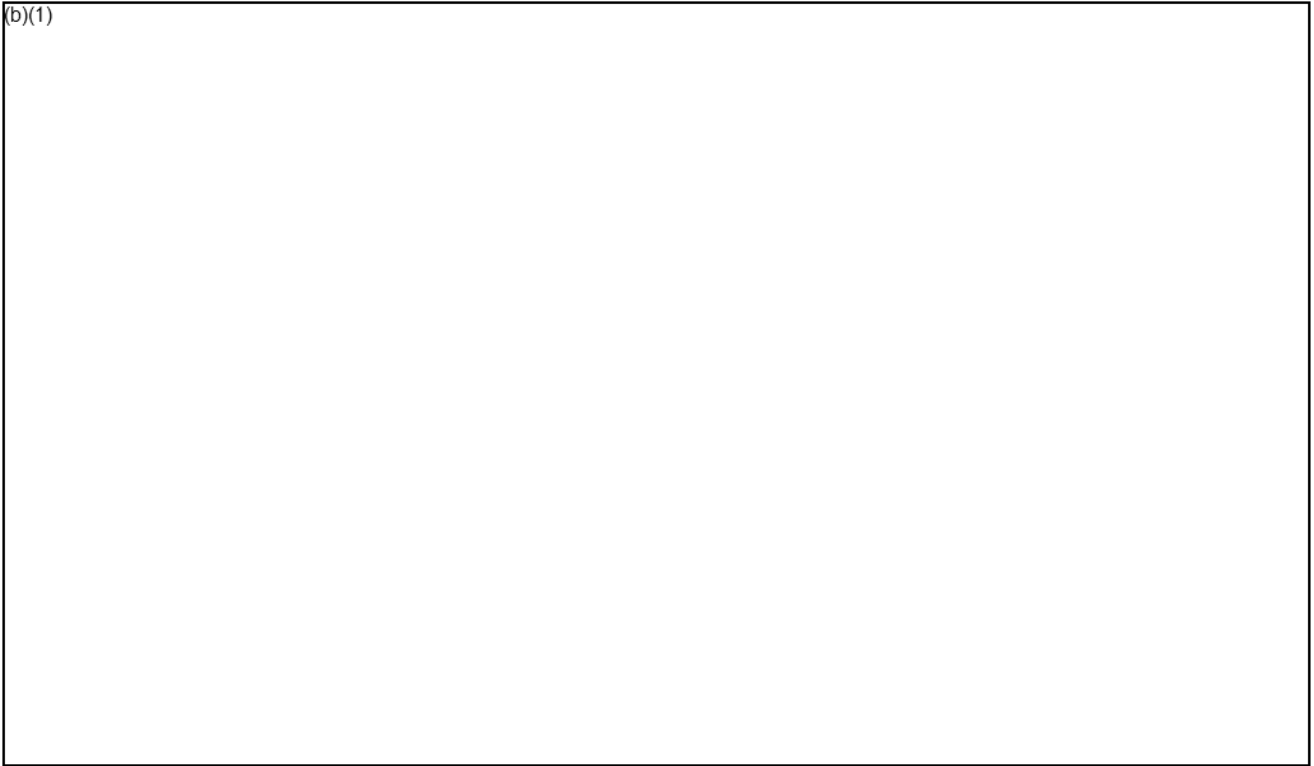
Recommendation 4: (U) OIG recommends that the Under Secretary of State for Management require posts to implement the results of senior policymakers' examination of the merits of establishing criteria to assist host country nationals with evacuation in advance of a crisis (Recommendation 3), determine whether they have host-country nationals that meet the criteria, and update their post-specific emergency planning documentation (such as the Emergency Action Plan and F-77 Report of Potential Evacuees or alternative mechanisms) accordingly.

Recommendation 5: (U) OIG recommends that the Under Secretary of State for Management convene senior policymakers to determine which locally employed host country nationals may be eligible for evacuation or relocation assistance, as appropriate, and how posts might account for such individuals.

Recommendation 6: (U) OIG recommends that the Under Secretary of State for Management require posts that employ host country nationals deemed eligible for evacuation (Recommendation 5) to (1) develop an evacuation plan for host country nationals and their eligible family members and (2) incorporate this plan into Annex K of the Emergency Action Plan.

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

(U) The Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted this review to determine whether U.S. Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan, followed established Department of State (Department) guidance in preparation for and execution of the evacuation of U.S. government personnel, private U.S. citizens, Afghans at risk, and other individuals from Afghanistan in August 2021.

(U) This report relates to the overseas contingency Operation Freedom's Sentinel and Operation Enduring Sentinel¹ and was completed in accordance with OIG's oversight responsibilities as described in Section 8L of the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended. OIG conducted fieldwork for this review from January 2022 to April 2023 in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area and in Doha, Qatar. The scope of this review was evacuation planning at Embassy Kabul beginning in 2020 through the noncombatant evacuation operation (NEO) conducted in August 2021. OIG did not examine other aspects of the evacuation such as the disposition of firearms, sensitive materials, and medical supplies in this review. OIG faced challenges in completing this work because of the COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges included limitations on international travel and in-person meetings, difficulty accessing information, and related difficulties within the Department that affected its ability to respond to OIG requests for information in a timely manner. OIG conducted this review in accordance with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation*. These standards require that OIG plan and perform the review to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for the findings and conclusions based on the evaluation objective. Despite the limitations it faced, OIG believes the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for the information presented in this report.

(U) During this review, OIG conducted interviews with numerous Department, Department of Defense (DoD), and intelligence community officials. Those officials included former Embassy Kabul personnel; officials from the Coordination for Afghan Relocation Efforts Unit, the Afghanistan Affairs Unit, and the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs; and representatives from the Department of the Army, Department of the Air Force, Department of the Navy, and Office of the Director of National Intelligence. OIG reviewed Embassy Kabul's Emergency Action Plan (EAP) and Department guidance with respect to emergency planning and evacuation preparation including the Foreign Affairs Manual and the Foreign Affairs Handbook. OIG also reviewed relevant U.S. law and memoranda of understanding between the Department, DoD, and foreign governments. OIG reviewed after-action reports prepared by the Department and DoD. Lastly, OIG coordinated on work related to Afghanistan with Offices of Inspectors General from DoD, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of the Treasury, and the United States Agency for International Development, as well as the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction.

¹ (U) Operation Enduring Sentinel is a DoD mission that was initiated after the termination of Operation Freedom's Sentinel on October 1, 2021.

(U) Data Reliability

(U) OIG did not use computer-processed data to support its findings or conclusions. When numbers and figures were used, OIG obtained supporting documentation. However, as described in Finding B of the Results section of this review, there was one exception: after multiple inquiries, the Department could not provide documentation supporting its statement that the U.S. government and its partners evacuated approximately 124,000 individuals in the weeks before it suspended operations at Embassy Kabul. This figure was quoted from a press conference given by Secretary of State Antony Blinken after the suspension of operations in August 2021.

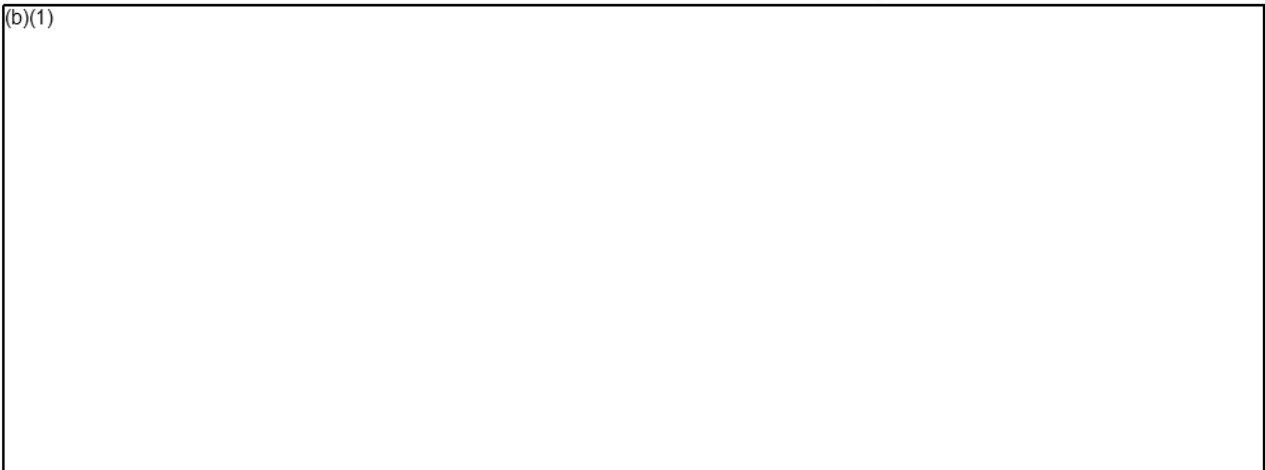
(U) Prior Reports

(U) Embassy Evacuations: State Department Should Take Steps to Improve Emergency Preparedness (GAO-17-714, July 2017)

(U) The Government Accountability Office reported that, although the Department had established processes to prepare overseas posts for crises, there were gaps in its crisis and evacuation preparedness. Specifically, during FYs 2013–2016, nearly a quarter of posts were late in completing required Emergency Action Plan updates. Moreover, fewer than four percent of posts reported completing required drills during the same period. The Government Accountability Office concluded that the gaps in the Department's crisis and evacuation preparedness increased the risk that posts were not sufficiently prepared to handle crisis and emergency situations.

(U) Evaluation of Emergency Action Plans for U.S. Mission Afghanistan (AUD-MERO-13-20, March 2013)

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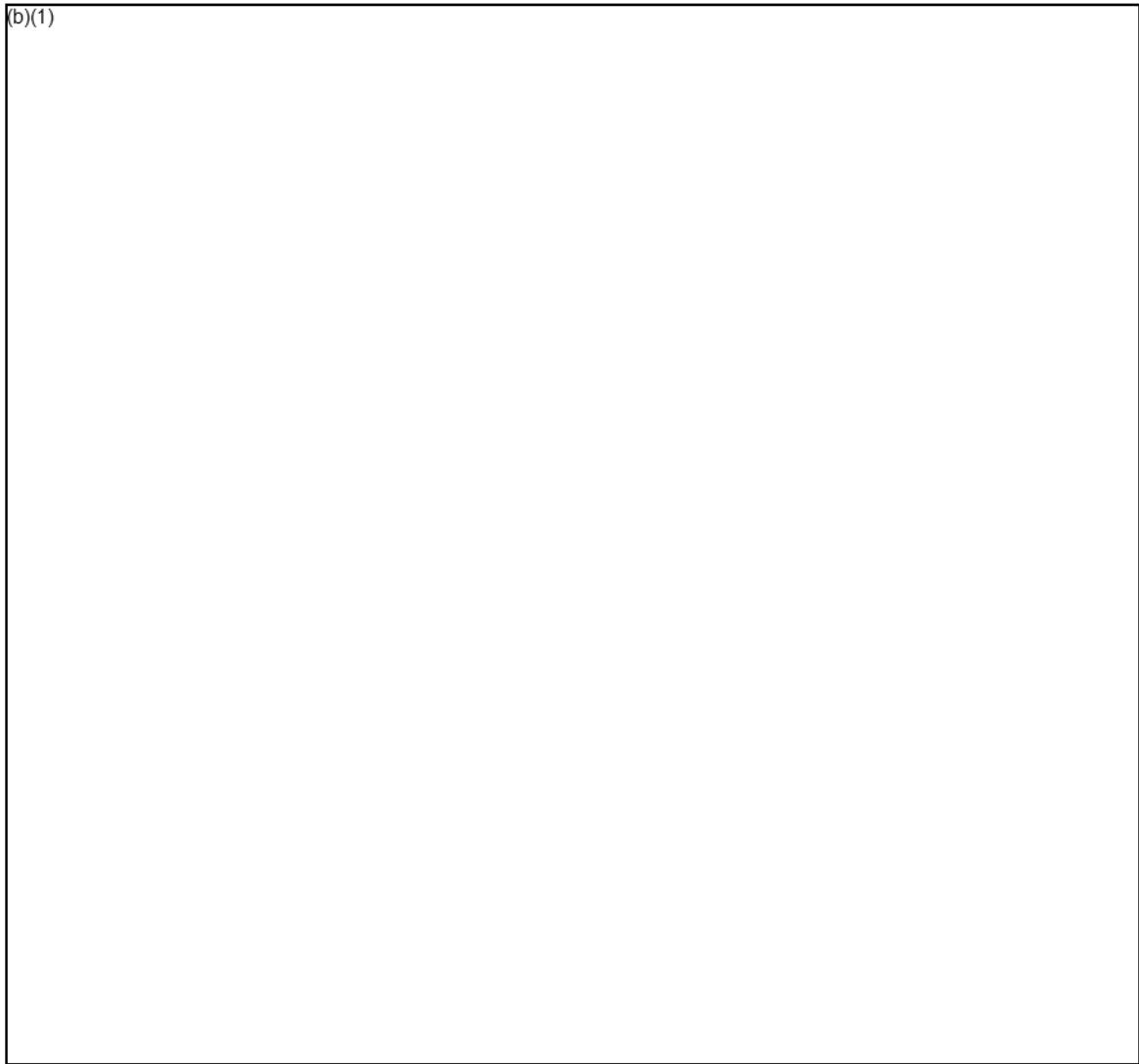
(U) APPENDIX B: U.S. EMBASSY KABUL DECISION POINTS FRAMEWORK,
JULY 2021

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U.S. Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan
Decision Points and Consolidated Actions to Consider

OPERATING ASSUMPTIONS: Operating Assumptions provide a baseline of the unique conditions in which Post operates.

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3. (U) Insurgents use a variety of surveillance and attack methods in Kabul. These surveillance and attack methods could include:

- a. Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIED)
- b. Body Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (BBIED)
- c. Magnetic IEDs (MIEDs)
- d. Small Arms Attacks
- e. Indirect Fire (IDF)
- f. Command Detonated Explosive Devices
- g. Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)/drones
- h. Targeted assassinations

Host Nation Capabilities:

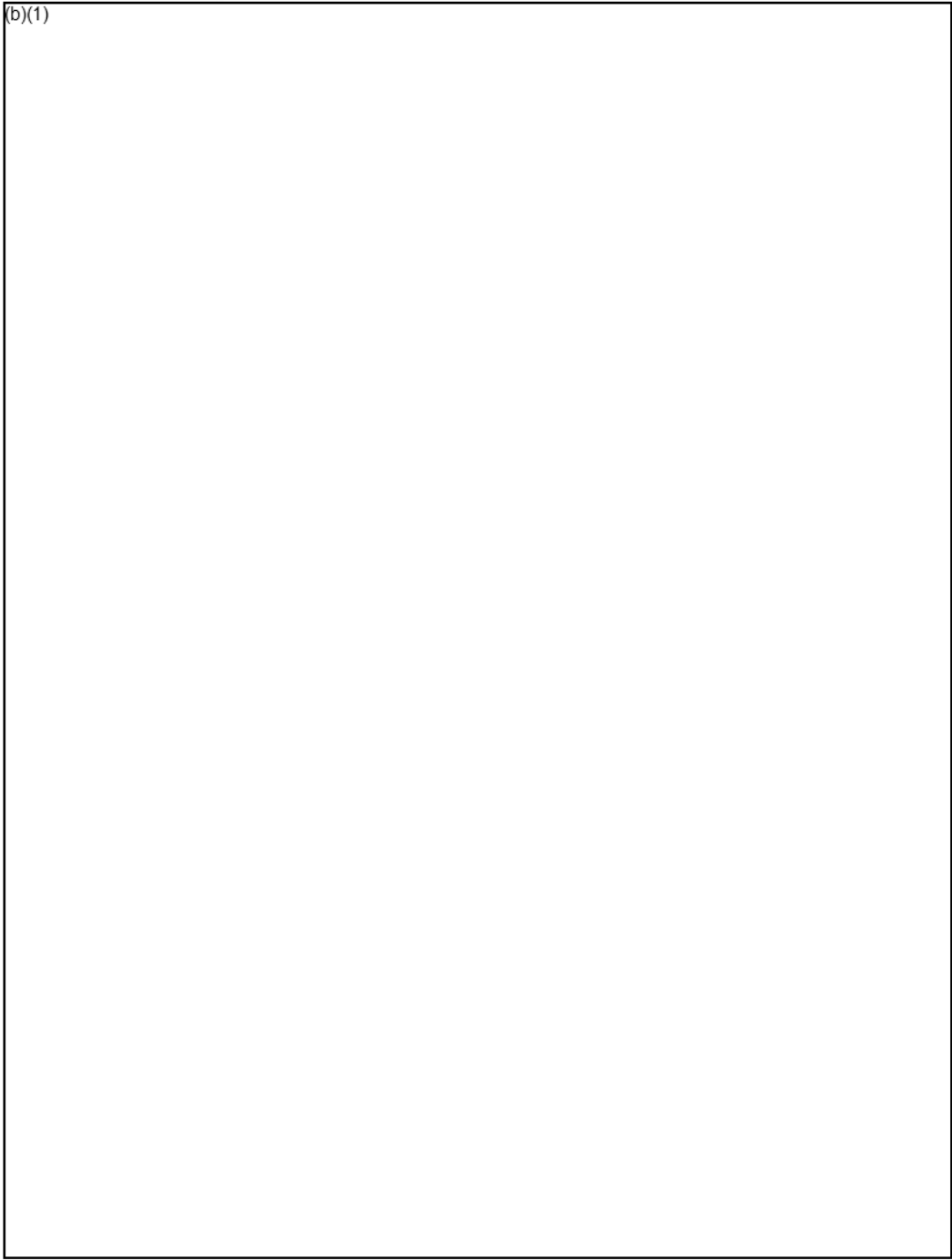
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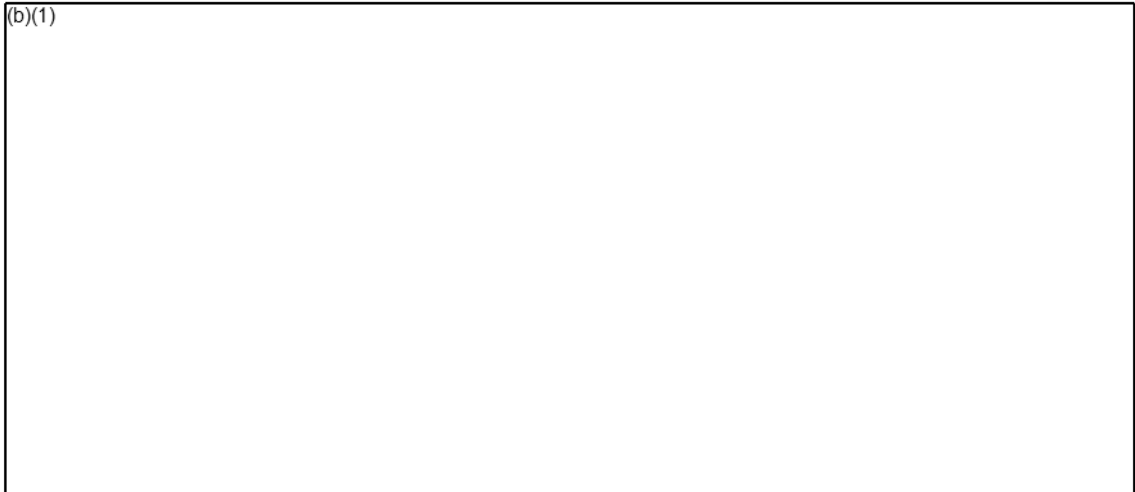
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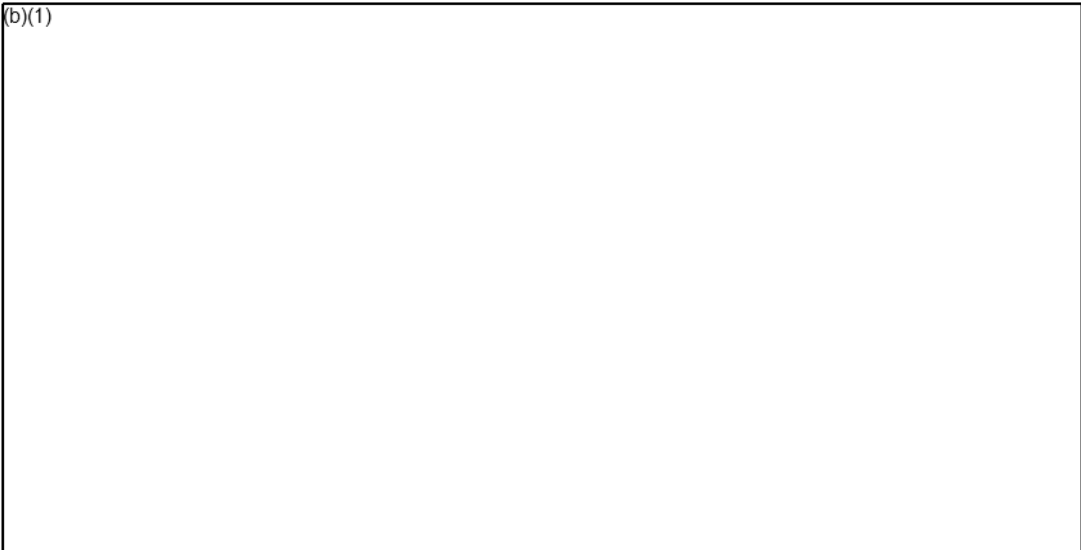
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RISK INDICATORS: Risk Indicators reflect events, threats, or changes in circumstance—internal or external to the host country—whose potential impact indicates a discussion is required by the EAC to evaluate the possibility of increased risk to the health, safety, and security of the Mission, private U.S. citizens, and other USG interests, and if/how Post should take action to respond to those changes.

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Host Nation Support:

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Environment Hazards:

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Logistics:

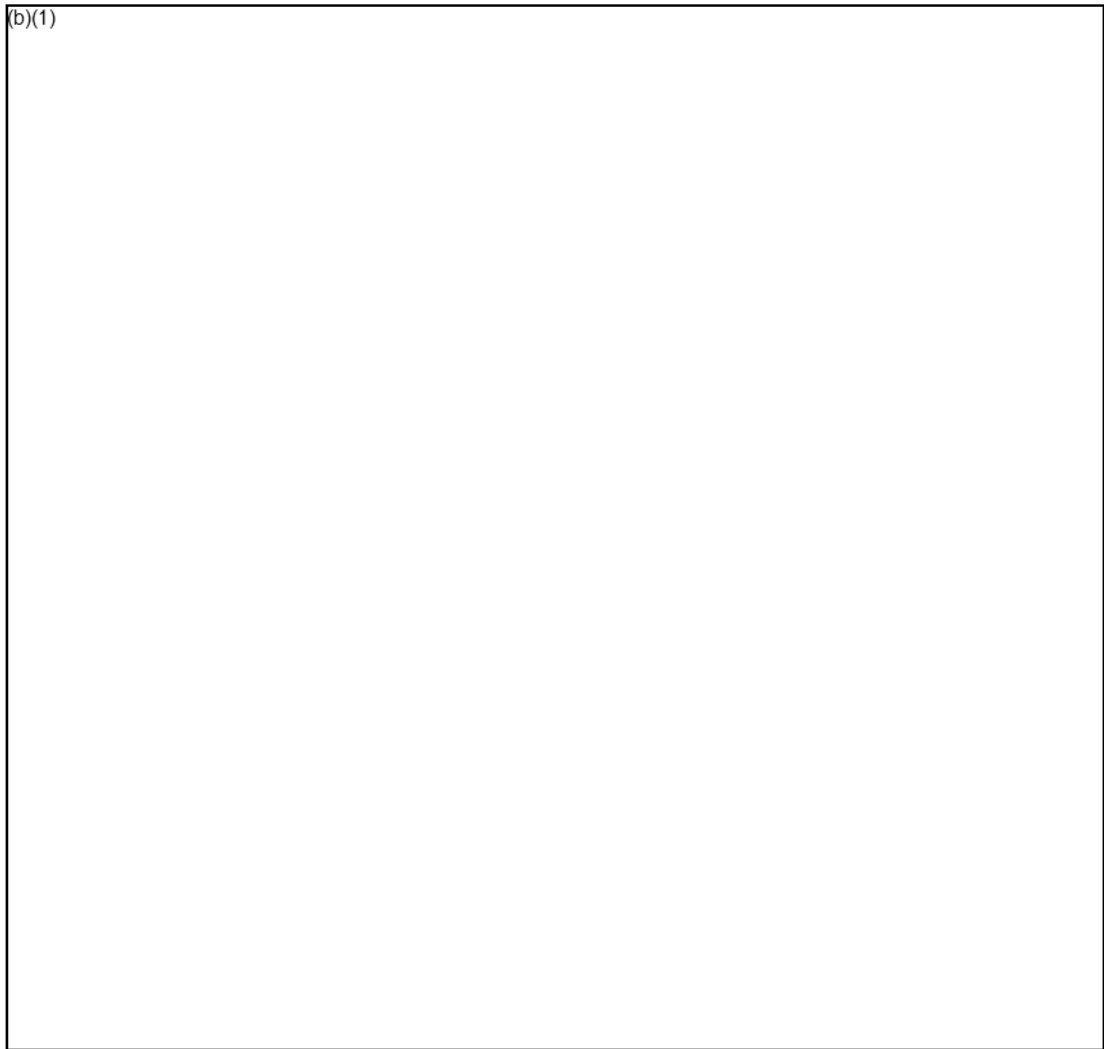
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Medical:

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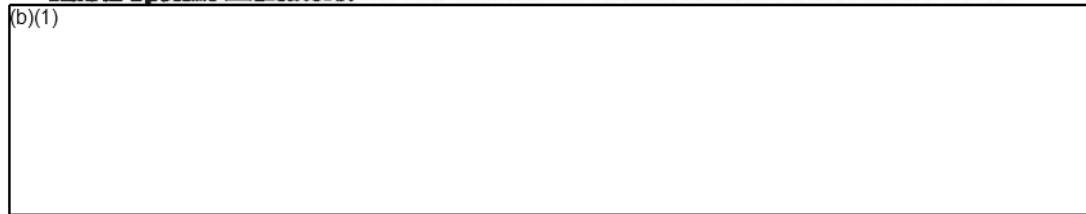
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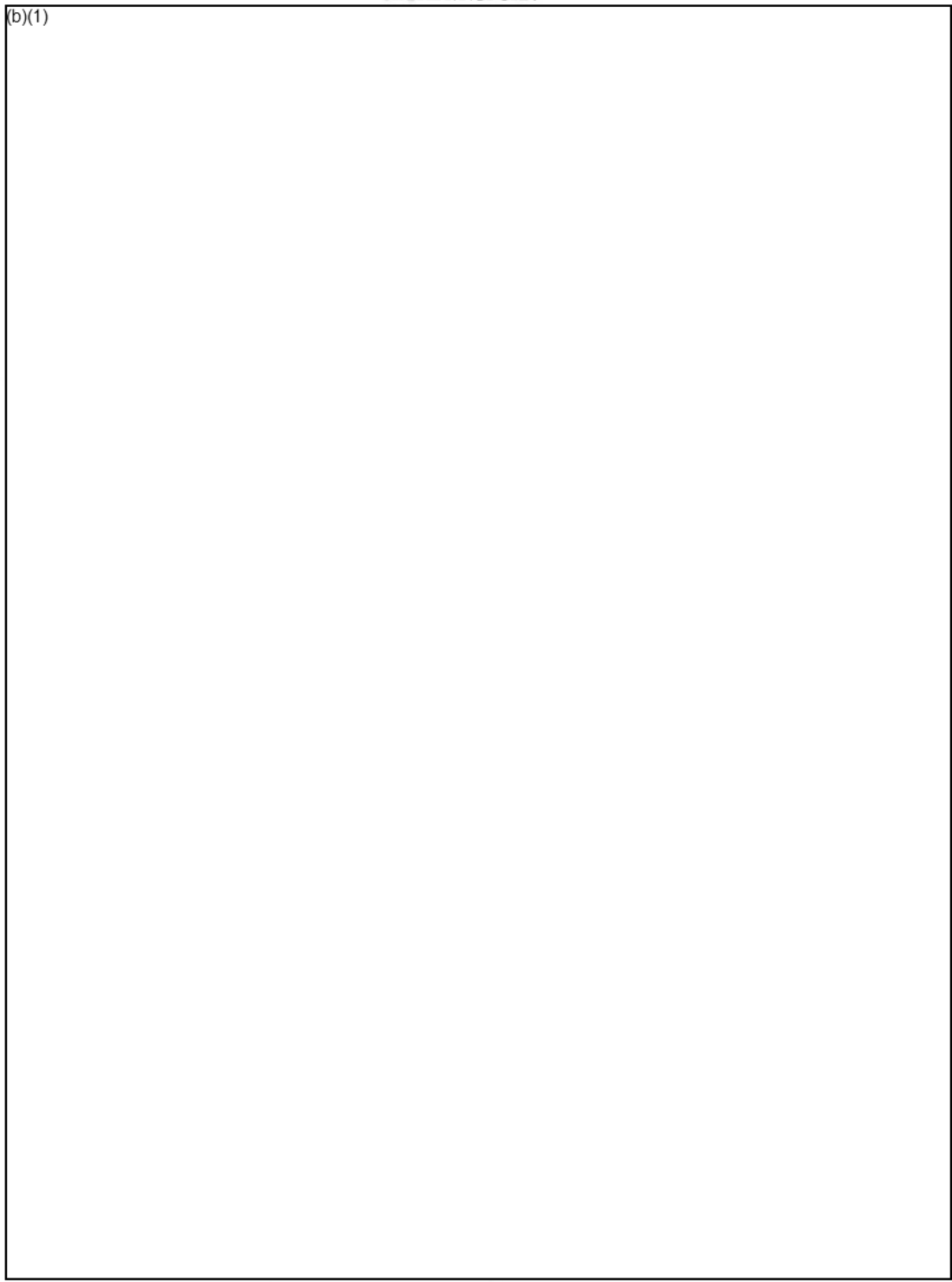
Kabul Specific Indicators:

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Immediate:

1. (U) Account for all Chief of Mission (COM) personnel and run accountability checks. (MGT, RSO).

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3. (U) Convene the EAC to assess situation, review EAP, and identify potential mitigating actions. Identify key leadership at post and clarify individual responsibilities. (EXEC, EAC)

- ☐ Define the scenario, event, or circumstances that prompted the EAC to convene.
 - ☐ How might the event impact the health, safety, and security of the Mission and/or private U.S. citizens?
 - ☐ Does the event indicate a change in risk to the Mission and/or private U.S. citizens?
 - ☐ Is it an isolated incident or does it indicate a trend?
 - ☐ What measures will Post take to mitigate any risk?
 - ☐ What measures will Post take to address any change (increased or decreased) in risk?
 - ☐ Does the event change Post's assumptions about its operating environment? How?
 - ☐ What will post look for to indicate a further increase or reduction in risk?
- (EXEC, EAC)

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Messaging:

1. (U) Work with Washington on public talking points, press guidance, and updated consular messaging. Provide information as appropriate to the embassy community through embassy Emergency/Security Messaging and to the private U.S. citizen community by issuing Alerts and /or updates to the Travel Advisory.

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Ensure messaging system is up to-date. Be alert to potential "No Double Standard" issues. (EXEC, RSO, CONS)

3. (U) Convene a Town Hall meeting to inform embassy staff of planning and courses of action, and to address concerns. Repeat as necessary. (EXEC, MGT)

4. (U) Create an email distribution list of all key personnel at post and in Washington to facilitate sharing of information. Consider asking State Ops to assist in creating the distribution list. (MGT, EXEC)

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External Coordination:

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4. (U) Confirm contact lists for host nation, NATO, USFOR-A, other foreign missions, hospitals, morgues, and other emergency services are current. (CONS, MED, MGT)

Internal Coordination:

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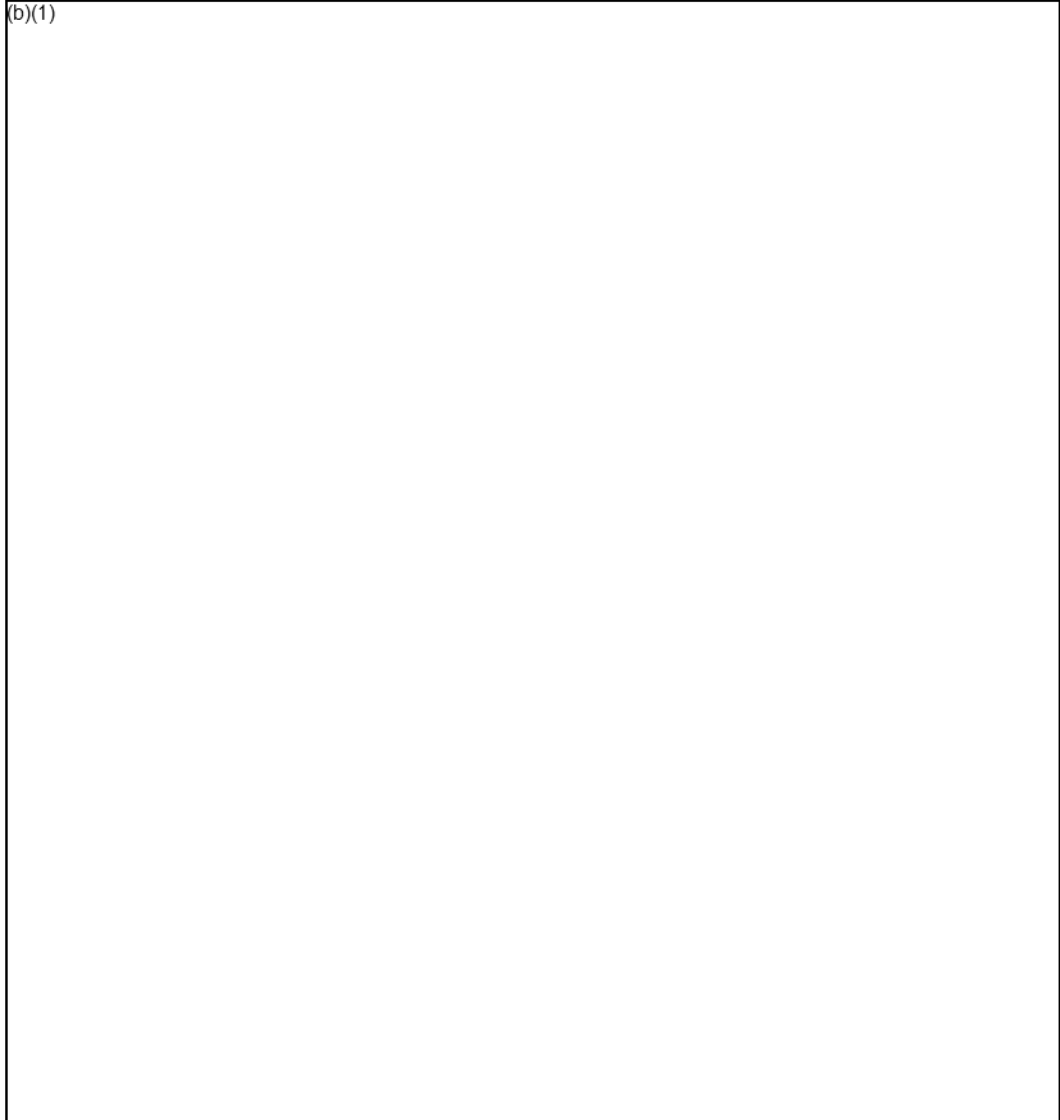
6. (U) Ensure sufficient staffing to answer incoming emergency phone calls from U.S. citizen community and use the Consular Task Force software to track inquiries. Consider working with CA to redirect incoming calls and inquiries or stand up their call center. Ensure consular flyaway kits are charged and updated. Ensure that staff is prepared to use the flyaway kits. (CONS)
7. (U) Evaluate need for off-site consular operations, such as at airport, to process evacuees. (CONS, RSO)
8. (U) Establish regular EAC schedule or form Task Force at post; advise Operations Center of hours/contact numbers and send regular situation reports by cable and email. (EXEC, POL, MGT, RSO, other EAC)
9. (U) Establish a distribution plan for emergency supply of food, water, and fuel. (MGT)
10. (U) Conduct specific health risk assessment (to include mental health). (MED, MGT)
11. (U) Identify personnel with specialized medical needs. Identify personnel with additional medical skills or training, such as EMTs or nurses. (MED, MGT)

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12. (U) Update personnel lists on WebPass, EMS, and other tracking systems.
(MGT, RSO)

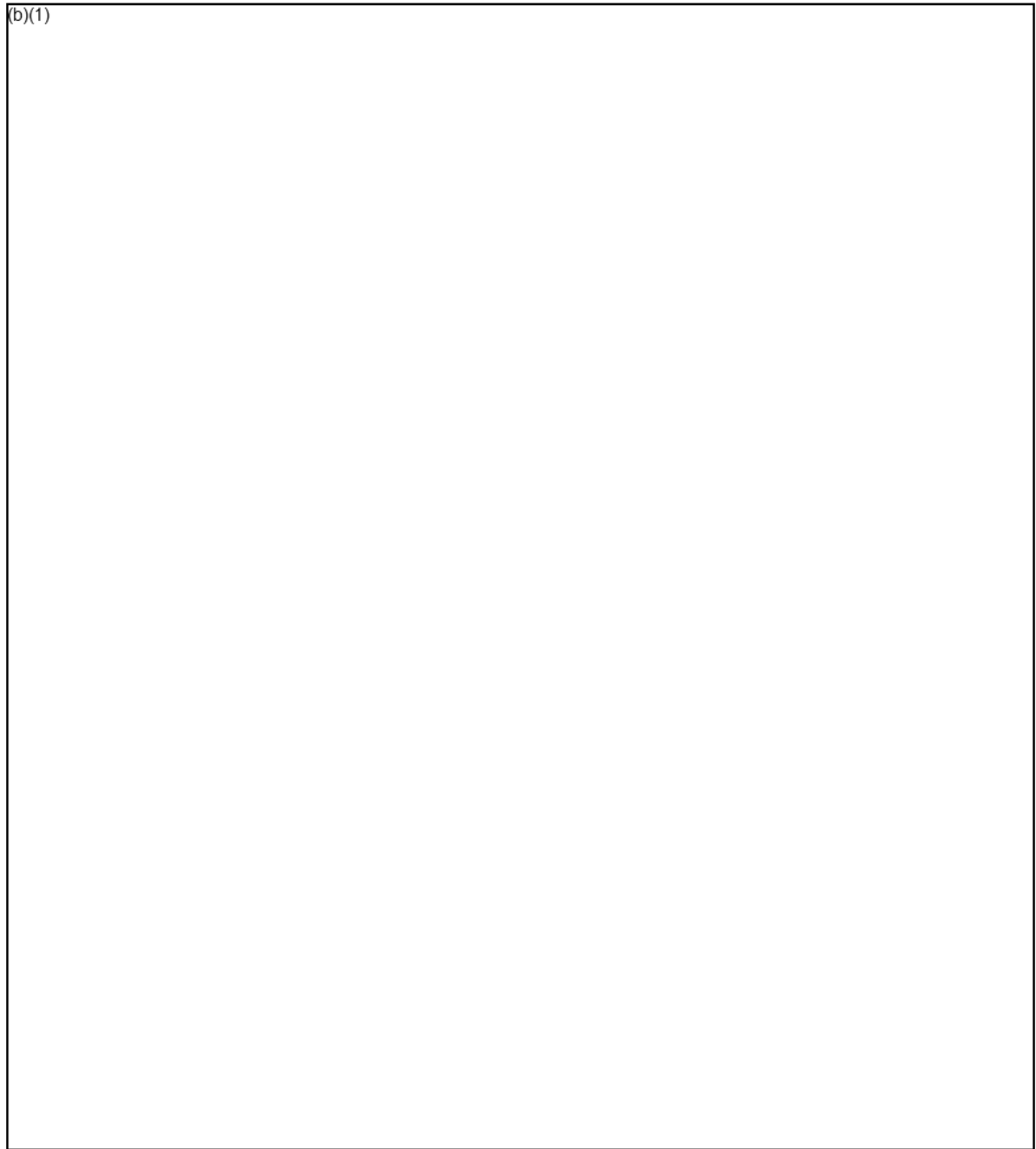
13. (U) Request that the Department impose Minimize status. (MGT)

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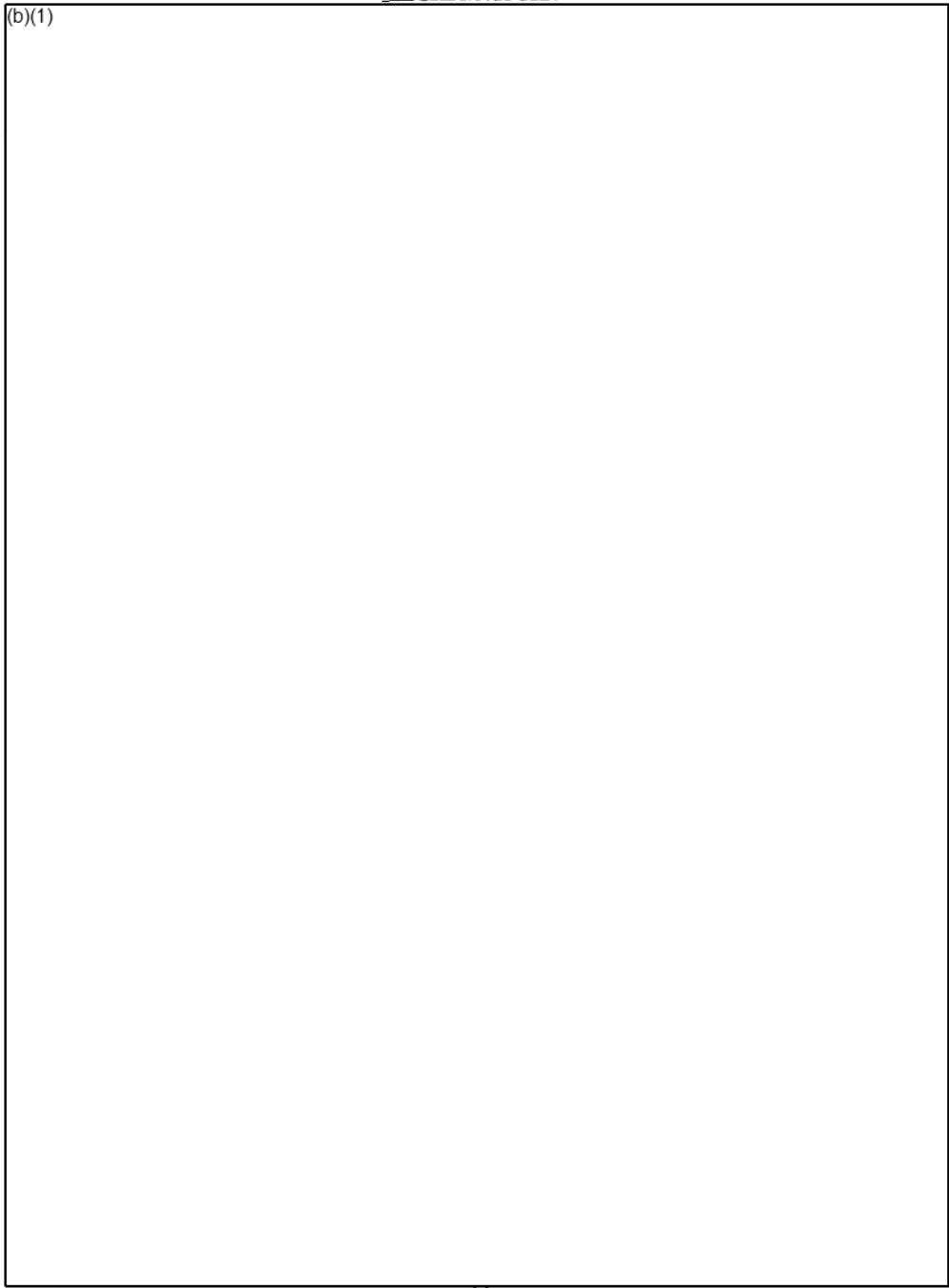
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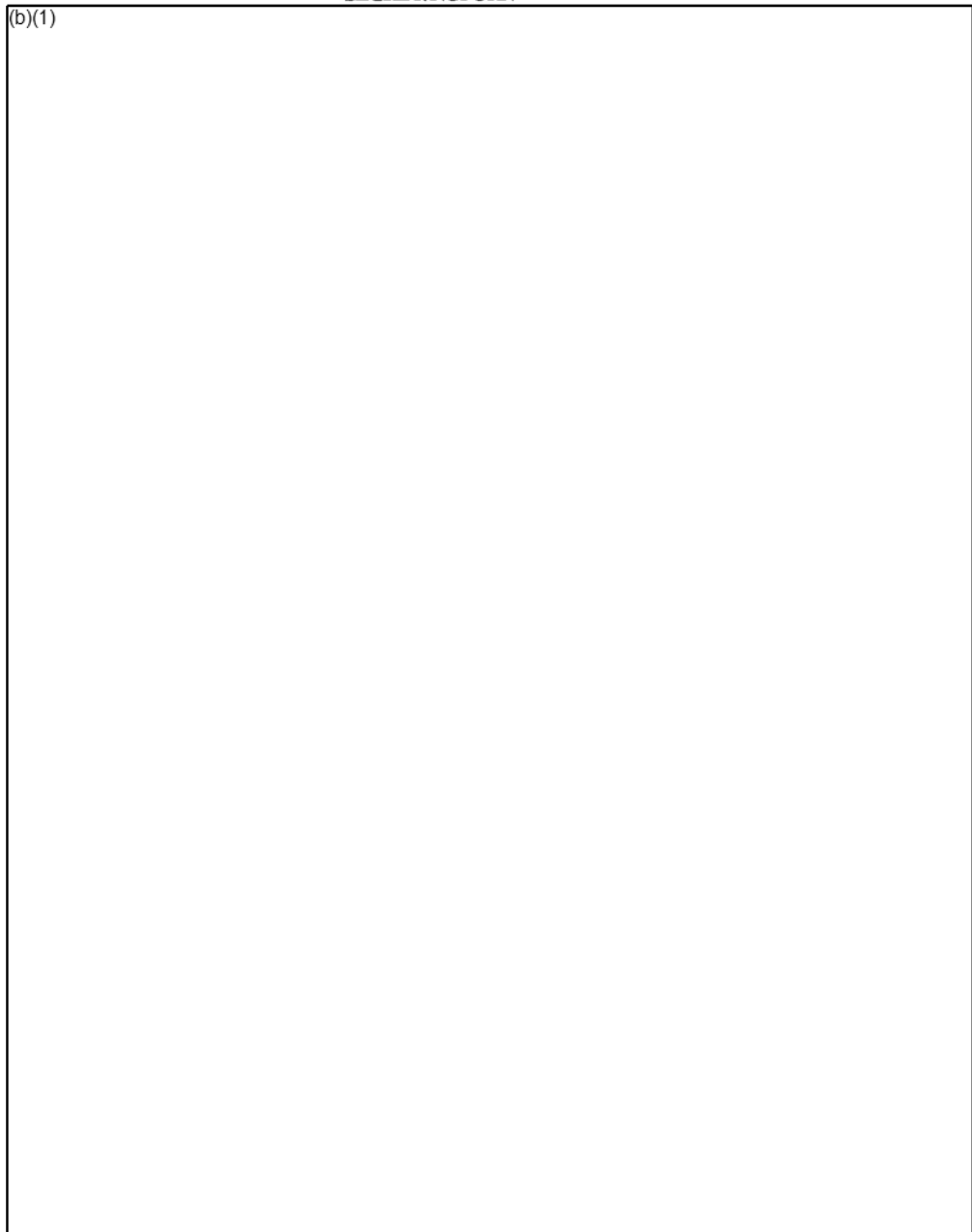
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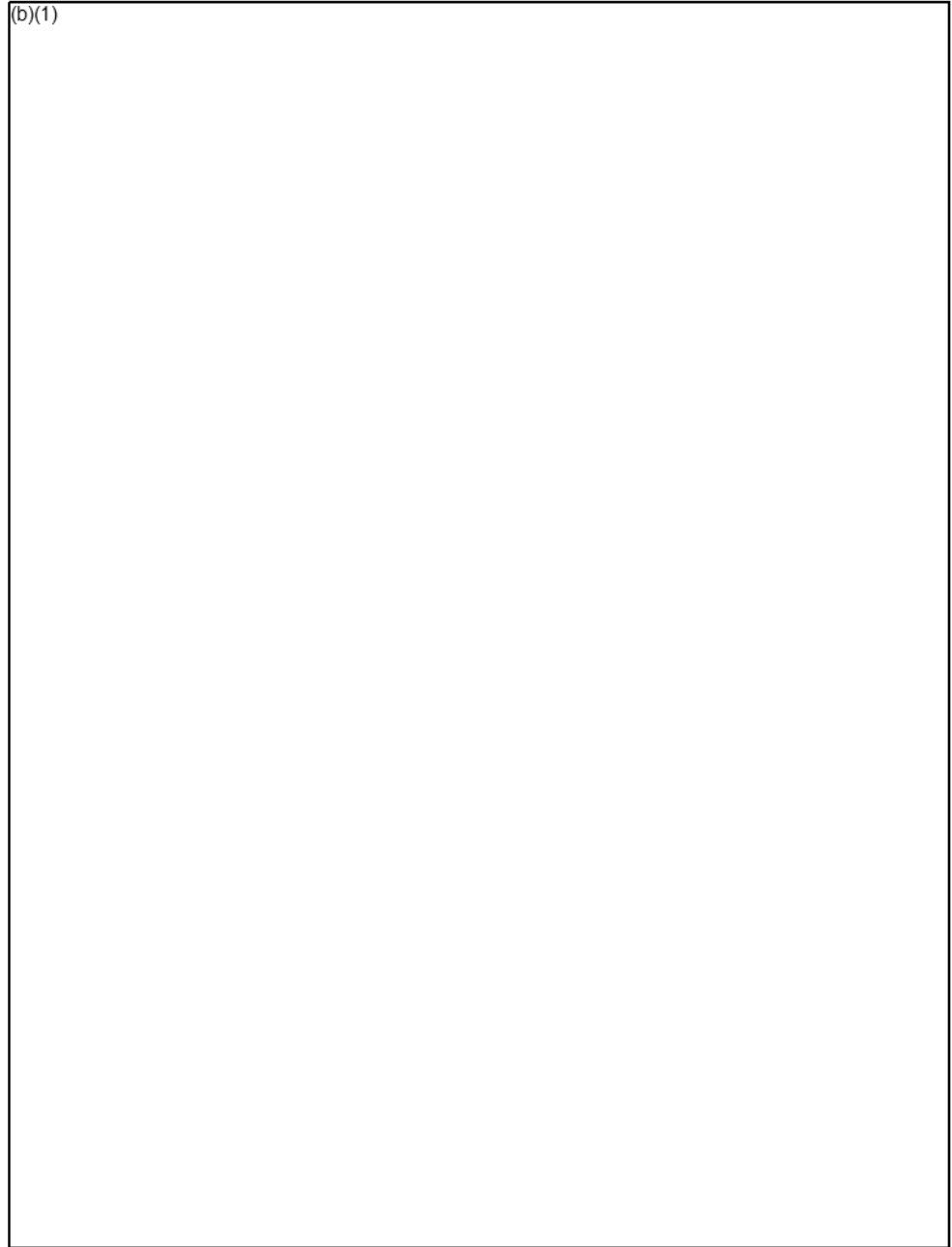
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Drawdown Preparation:

1. (U) Review/update F-77 Report and emergency staffing list. (CONS, MGT)

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3. (U) Consider reducing the number of official personnel through granting of R&R or home leave. Consider restricting travel and TDY visits. (EXEC and EAC)

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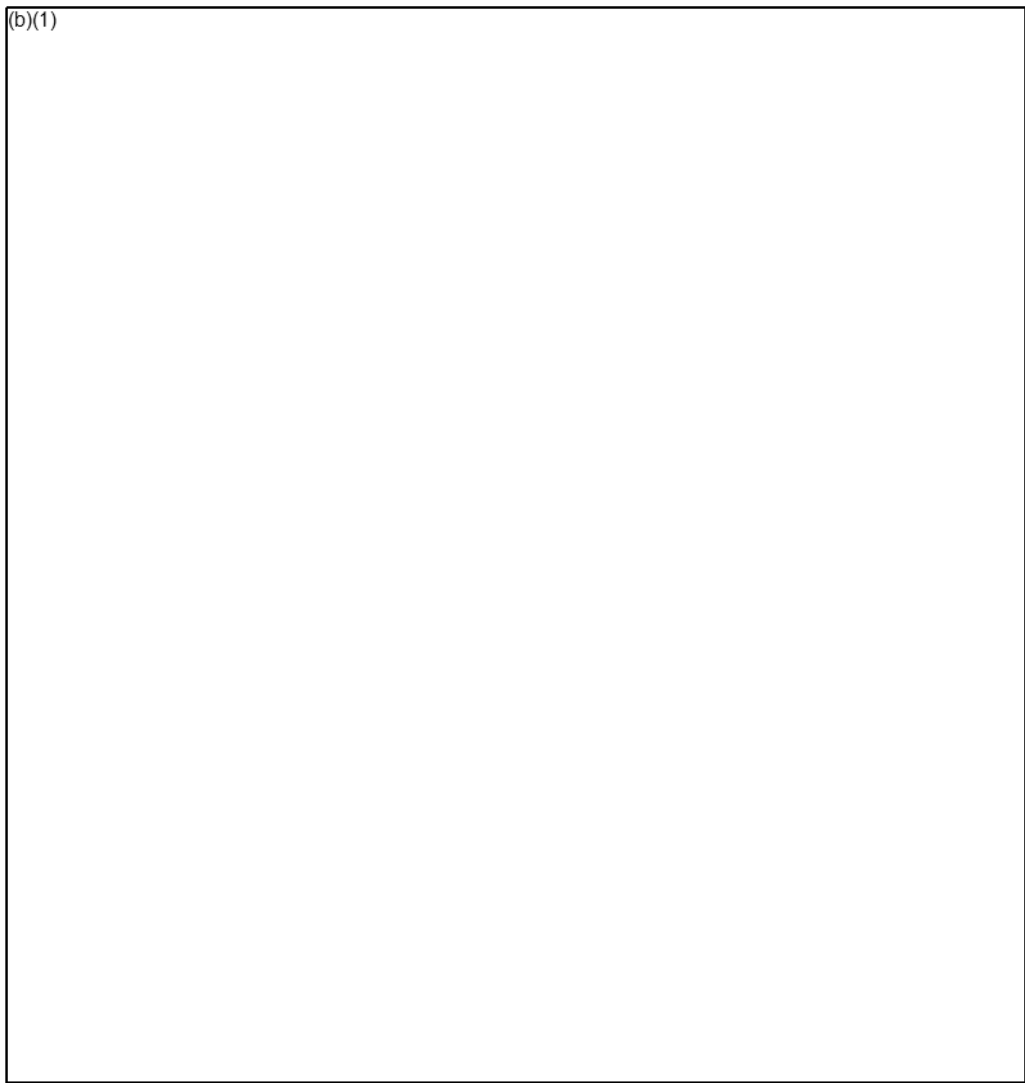
5. (U) Review evacuation and transportation options for both COM personnel and private U.S. citizens; verify commercial air schedules. Gather options/costs for charter air. (RSO, MGT, CONS)

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7. (U) Consult with other foreign missions on drawdown plans and plans for the evacuation of private citizens. (EXEC, CONS)

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(U) APPENDIX C: UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR MANAGEMENT RESPONSE



United States Department of State

Washington, DC 20520

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March 31, 2023

MEMORANDUM

TO: OIG – Diana Shaw

FROM: M— A/S Teplitz, (M)

SUBJECT: (SBU) Department Response to OIG Draft Report on its
 *Review of Emergency Planning Guiding the Evacuation of U.S.
 Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan*

(U) Thank you for the opportunity to respond to OIG's draft report on its *Review of Emergency Planning Guiding the Evacuation of U.S. Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan*. The Department appreciates the work OIG has put into developing this report.

(SBU) The Department is grateful for OIG's willingness to meet with us on March 20 to discuss the draft report. Because of the productive discussion, the Department has a better understanding of the intent of the OIG recommendations.

(SBU) The Department requests that all recommendations in this draft report be assigned to the Office of the Under Secretary for Management (M). Addressing the intent of each recommendation will require consultations with senior U.S. officials and involve work across multiple federal agencies and State Department bureaus.

Recommendation 1: (U) OIG recommends that the Under Secretary for Management in coordination with the Bureau of Consular Affairs assess options for increasing U.S. citizen participation in the Safe Traveler Enrollment Program for the purpose of facilitating their evacuation.

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Management Response (3/30/2023): (U) The Under Secretary for Management (M) concurs with this recommendation, noting the program is called the *Smart* Traveler Enrollment Program vice *Safe* Traveler Enrollment Program, and will work with the Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA) to assess options for increasing U.S. citizen participation in the program.

Recommendation 2: (U) OIG recommends that the Under Secretary for Management identify and implement internal controls to ensure embassy sections and agencies at posts worldwide accurately account for and include in the F-77 Report of Potential Evacuees the number of employees working at the post.

Management Response (3/30/2023): (U) During the March 20, 2023, discussion with OIG, the Department clarified that the purpose of the F-77 Report of Potential Evacuees ("F-77 Report") is to provide an estimate, not an actual tally, of the number of potential evacuees at a given post. The F-77 Report is one of many contingency planning tools. The Under Secretary for Management (M) concurs with this recommendation subject to it being revised to read: "...posts worldwide *effectively* account for and include..." M will work with stakeholder bureaus to identify and implement internal controls to obtain better data and personnel accountability of employees to ensure contingency planning documents, such as the F-77 Report, are more effective.

Recommendation 3: (U) OIG recommends that the Bureau of Diplomatic Security Revise the Foreign Affairs Handbook, 12 FAH-1, "Emergency Planning Handbook," to provide clear criteria for host country nationals considered as "at risk" or "vulnerable" and eligible for evacuation assistance. The F-77 Report of Potential Evacuees, and other prioritization criteria, such as 12 FAH-1 Annex K Addendum 3.3 "Priorities for Evacuation," should be updated to include accounting for this category separately from other host country nationals eligible for evacuation assistance.

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Recommendation 4: (U) OIG recommends that the Bureau of Diplomatic Security revise the Foreign Affairs Handbook, 12 FAH-1, "Emergency Planning Handbook," to require posts to review the updated criteria for host country nationals considered "at risk" or "vulnerable" and eligible for evacuation assistance (Recommendation 3), determine whether they have host country nationals that meet the criteria, and update their post specific emergency planning documentation (such as the Emergency Action Plan and F-77 Report of Potential Evacuees) accordingly.

Management Response (3/30/2023): (U) During the March 20, 2023, discussion with the Department, OIG noted there will be significant change to recommendation 3, with the possibility that recommendation 4 may be removed from the report. Based on that information and the Management Response to recommendation 3, above, M non-concurs with this recommendation at this point.

Recommendation 5: (U) OIG recommends that the Bureau of Diplomatic Security clarify guidance in the Foreign Affairs Handbook, 12 FAH-1, "Emergency Planning Handbook," that requires all posts to identify any locally employed staff – regardless of citizenship – eligible for U.S. government evacuation assistance. The guidance should include considerations of long-term service or severe personal risk due to U.S.

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employment, special immigrant visa programs, or other factors that may necessitate evacuations of locally employed staff (and their family members).

Management Response (3/30/2023): (U) During the March 20, 2023, discussion, OIG and the Department agreed that the intent of this recommendation is to develop a mechanism that might be used to determine which locally employed staff might be eligible for evacuation or relocation assistance, as appropriate, and how posts might account for such individuals.

(U) M concurs with the mutually agreed intent of this recommendation and, based on the March 20, 2023, discussion, requests OIG revise the original recommendation to read: "OIG recommends that the Under Secretary for Management convene senior policymakers to determine which locally employed host country nationals may be eligible for evacuation or relocation assistance, as appropriate, and how posts might account for such individuals."

(U) M will convene senior policymakers to consider the merits of OIG's proposal to determine which locally employed staff might be eligible for evacuation assistance and how posts might account for such individuals. However, until those discussions occur, the Department is not in a position to assess whether this would result in any changes to the FAH or Department policy.

Recommendation 6: (U) OIG recommends that the Bureau of Diplomatic Security revise the Foreign Affairs Handbook, 12 FAH-1, "Emergency Planning Handbook," to require posts that have locally employed staff eligible for evacuation (Recommendation 5) to develop an evacuation plan for locally employed staff (and their eligible family members), and incorporate this plan in Annex K of the Emergency Action Plan.

Management Response (3/30/2023): (U) During the discussion between OIG and the Department on March 20, 2023, OIG noted there will be

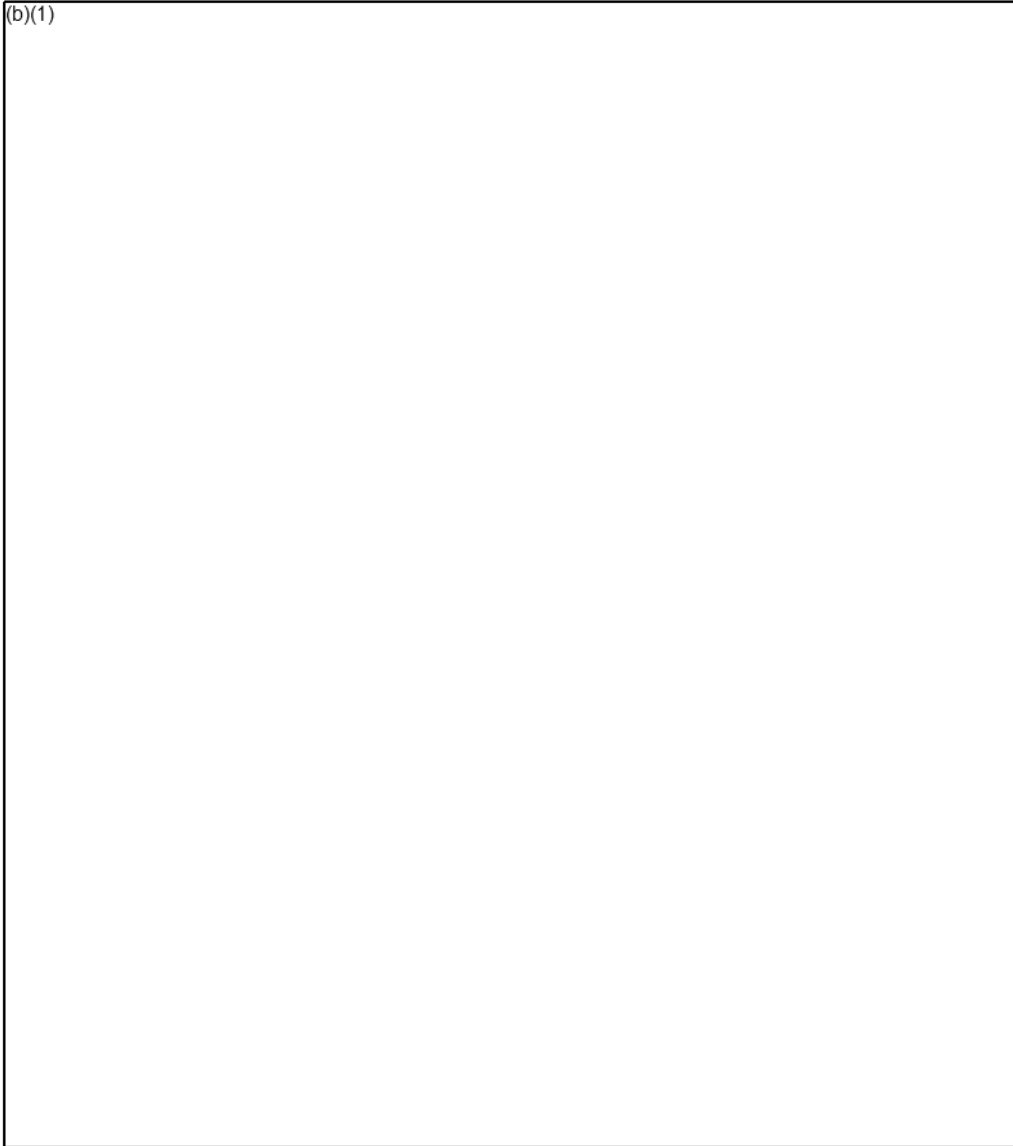
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significant changes to recommendation 5, with the possibility that recommendation 6 may be removed from the report. Based on that information, M non-concurs with this recommendation at this point.

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Management response (3/30/2023): (U) The Department requests that this recommendation be combined with Recommendation 7 as outlined in the Management Response to Recommendation 7, above.

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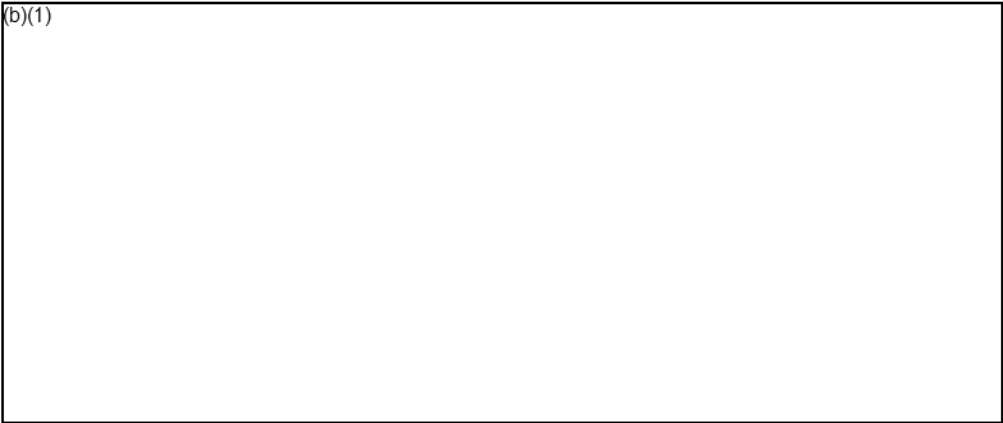
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(U) ABBREVIATIONS

CA	Bureau of Consular Affairs
COM	Chief of Mission
CORE	Committee on Overseas Risk Evaluation
DoD	Department of Defense
DS	Bureau of Diplomatic Security
EAC	Emergency Action Committee
EAP	Emergency Action Plan
FAH	Foreign Affairs Handbook
FAM	Foreign Affairs Manual
HKIA	Hamid Karzai International Airport
NEO	noncombatant evacuation operation
LE	locally employed
OIG	Office of Inspector General
SIV	Special Immigrant Visa
U.S.C.	U.S. Code

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