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Management Assistance Report: Armored Vehicle Training

MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE REPORT

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Summary of Review

OIG found that from January 2010 to September 2015, operators of armored vehicles at U.S. missions overseas were involved in 773 mishaps, almost 60 percent of which were deemed preventable.¹ Twelve of the mishaps resulted in 13 fatalities. Other consequences included hospitalizations and a total of \$4,550,483 in property damages, of which 85 percent—\$3,883,816—was to the U.S. Government vehicles themselves. Mishap reports recommended driver training in 10 of the 12 mishaps involving fatalities. The Department provides specialized operator training that includes handling armored vehicle dynamics, but it is mandatory only for drivers of chiefs of mission/principal officers, none of whom were involved in the 12 fatal mishaps. OIG recommended that the Department establish a mandatory training requirement on armored vehicle safe-driving techniques for all overseas professional chauffeurs and incidental drivers who operate such vehicles.

BACKGROUND

Armored Vehicle Program

The Department's armored vehicle program overseas is intended to protect mission personnel from harm caused by attacks related to terrorism, war, and civil disturbance.² The Bureau of Diplomatic Security, Office of Physical Security Programs, Defensive Equipment and Armored Vehicle (DEAV) division, which manages the Department's armored vehicle program, reported in a September 3, 2015, presentation that more than 4,700 armored vehicles were in service worldwide, with another 783 awaiting shipment, repairs, or assignment. The armored vehicle program's annual budget is \$31.6 million.

Operating an Armored Vehicle Requires Special Attention

The Bureau of Diplomatic Security's Armored Vehicle Program Guidebook recognizes that safe operation of an armored vehicle requires addressing safety concerns stemming from their increased weight. Armored vehicles cannot stop as quickly as unarmored vehicles, so braking distances must be increased to a minimum of four car lengths, even at low speeds. Drivers must allow for greater reaction time for turning and maneuvering and avoid hard or unnecessary turns. Tires must be of the correct load range and properly inflated.

Drivers should not operate armored vehicles at excessive speeds. DEAV recommends that drivers not exceed 70 miles per hour, under any circumstances, when driving armored vehicles, even on an improved highway. The DEAV Armored Vehicle Driver Course (SB102) includes instruction designed to train attendees to adapt to the different dynamics associated with armored vehicles and thereby operate them more safely.

¹ Preventable Mishap: A mishap involving an official-use vehicle where the vehicle operator, regardless of fault, failed to exercise every reasonable precaution to prevent the mishap. (Department of State Motor Vehicle Safety Management Program for Overseas Posts, page 3).

² 12 Foreign Affairs Manual 381.1.

Armored Vehicle Operator Training

Armored vehicle operator training requirements differ on the basis of the status of the passenger. DEAV provides a mandatory 4-day course on armored vehicle operations for chief of mission and principal officer drivers, who also must take refresher training every 5 years. The course addresses the safety concerns that stem from increased vehicle weight, described above, and is targeted toward transporting high-profile passengers in security-challenged situations. Other mission drivers who regularly operate armored vehicles are not required to meet the same standard.

Other Vehicle Operator Training

Since 2005, the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations Office of Safety, Health, and Environmental Management (SHEM) has used an international training contractor to conduct comprehensive, week-long safe driver programs at various locations overseas using the Smith System. Those who complete the course are certified as Smith System instructors and return to their posts to train other vehicle operators. Two hundred fourteen posts have a certified Smith System trainer. Sixty-three posts, mostly small constituent consulates, do not have their own trainers and therefore rely upon other resources, such as their parent embassy, for driver training. SHEM tracks training progress through quarterly updates. Instructors receive refresher training every 2 to 3 years or more often, if warranted.

The program focuses on essential safe-driving practices. By holding instructor training at overseas locations and using a train-the-trainer approach, in which most drivers receive instruction at their regular duty station, costs and staffing disruptions are kept to a minimum. The SHEM Smith System program, as currently configured, does not include any training specific to armored vehicles. Adding a specific armored vehicle module to the Smith System training could be a cost-effective way to strengthen armored vehicle training for general duty drivers overseas.

FINDING

Sixty Percent of Armored Vehicle Mishaps Deemed Preventable

OIG examined data and 12 mishap reports involving fatalities provided by the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations for the period January 2010 to September 2015. The statistics show that for this period, 773 motor vehicle mishaps involved armored vehicles at missions overseas. The same statistics show that 469 (about 60%) were deemed preventable (see definition of Preventable Mishap at footnote 1). The Department recognizes that driver behavior contributes to vehicle fatalities and that "solutions must center on...providing an effective initial and refresher training program."³ The 12 mishap reports examined by OIG all involved fatalities. Of the 12, 10 recommended driver training. Twelve of the armored vehicle mishaps resulted in 13 fatalities, and 23 mishaps resulted in the hospitalization of a total of 26 persons. None of the operators was a chief of mission or principal

³ Department ALDAC cable: 08 STATE 101787.

officer driver so they were not required to attend the DEAV course on armored vehicle operation before the mishap. SHEM reported that the 773 armored vehicle mishaps caused \$4,550,483 in total property damages, of which 85 percent—or \$3,883,816—was to the U.S. Government armored vehicles themselves.

Recommendation 1: The Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing, and Innovation, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, should establish a mandatory training requirement on armored vehicle safe-driving techniques for all overseas professional chauffeurs and incidental drivers who operate such vehicles. (Action: M/PRI, in coordination with OBO and DS)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: The Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing, and Innovation, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, should establish a mandatory training requirement on armored vehicle safe-driving techniques for all overseas professional chauffeurs and incidental drivers who operate such vehicles. (Action: M/PRI, in coordination with OBO and DS)

APPENDIX: PURPOSE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

This management assistance review was conducted in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation, as issued in 2012 by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, and the Inspector's Handbook, as issued by OIG for the Department and the Broadcasting Board of Governors.

Purpose and Scope

The Office of Inspections provides the Secretary of State, the Chairman of BBG, and Congress with systematic and independent evaluations of the operations of the Department and BBG. Inspections cover three broad areas, consistent with Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980:

- Policy Implementation: whether policy goals are being effectively achieved and U.S. interests are effectively represented.
- Resource Management: whether resources are used with maximum efficiency and effectiveness and whether financial transactions and accounts are properly conducted, maintained, and reported.
- Management Controls: whether operations meet the requirements of applicable laws and regulations; whether internal management controls are enforced; whether instances of fraud, waste, or abuse exist; and whether adequate steps for detection, correction, and prevention have been taken.

Methodology

The management inspection review team's primary assessment criteria are regulations contained in the Foreign Affairs Manual and Foreign Affairs Handbook, Department instructions, applicable law and generally accepted management principles.

The management inspection review focused on the possible correlation of the training of operators of armored vehicles with the fatalities, hospitalizations, and property damage associated with mishaps involving those vehicles. Over the course of the inspection, the team examined the purpose of the armored vehicle program, the differing dynamics between armored and non-armored vehicles, and the differing training requirements for operators of armored vehicles.

ABBREVIATIONS

DEAV	Defensive Equipment and Armored Vehicle
SHEM	Safety, Health, and Environmental Management

OIG MANAGEMENT INSPECTION REVIEW TEAM MEMBERS

Ralph Kwong, Team Leader
Alex Higginbotham



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Office of Inspector General • U.S. Department of State • P.O. Box 9778 • Arlington, VA 22219