

Report of the Accountability Review Boards

Bombings of the US Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania on August 7, 1998

EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

The near simultaneous vehicular bombings of the US Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, on August 7, 1998, were terrorist incidents costing the lives of over 220 persons and wounding more than 4,000 others. Twelve American USG employees and family members, and 32 Kenyan and 8 Tanzanian USG employees, were among those killed. Both chanceries withstood collapse from the bombings, but were rendered unusable, and several adjacent buildings were severely damaged or destroyed. In examining the circumstances of these two bombings, the Accountability Review Boards for Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam determined that:

1. The terrorists intended to destroy the chanceries; to kill or injure US Government employees and others in the chanceries; and to damage US prestige, morale, and diplomacy. Thus, according to P.L.99-399, the incidents were security related.
2. The security systems and procedures for physical security at the embassies in Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam as a general matter met and, in some cases, exceeded the systems and procedures prescribed by the Department of State for posts designated at the medium or low threat levels. However, these standard requirements had not sufficiently anticipated the threat of large vehicular bomb attacks and were inadequate to protect against such attacks.

The Department of State, in fact, does not apply its security standards fully. For far too many* of its overseas facilities it implements them only "to the maximum extent feasible," applying "risk management." For example, neither the chancery in Nairobi nor in Dar Es Salaam met the Department's standard for a 100 ft. (30m) setback/standoff zone. Both were "existing office buildings" occupied before this standard was adopted; so a general exception was made. The widespread use of such exceptions worldwide with respect to setback and other non-feasible security standards reflects the reality of not having adequate

funds to replace all sub-standard buildings within a short period of time. Thus in the interim before Inman buildings could be constructed, exceptions were granted. In light of the August 7 bombings, these general exceptions to the setback requirement in particular mask a dangerous level of exposure to similar attacks elsewhere.

[* **Note:** Passages here and elsewhere in this document marked with an asterisk (*) indicate more details can be found in the classified version of the report.]

3. The security systems and procedures relating to actions taken at Embassies Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam were, for the most part, properly implemented. In Nairobi, the suicide bomber failed in his attempt to penetrate the embassy's outer perimeter, thanks to the refusal of local guards to open the gates. In Dar Es Salaam, the suicide bomber likewise failed to penetrate the perimeter, apparently stopped by guards and blocked by an embassy water truck.

However, neither post's Emergency Action Plan anticipated a car bomb scenario. Nor were there explicit Department requirements for dealing with such contingencies in EAP worldwide guidelines, despite clear Inman Report recommendations. While car bombs are often immediately preceded by some types of as was the case in Nairobi, personnel inside embassies are not trained to react properly, nor do perimeter guards have appropriate equipment.

4. There was no credible intelligence that provided immediate or tactical warning of the August 7 bombings.

- A number of earlier intelligence reports cited alleged threats against several U.S. diplomatic and other targets, including the embassies in Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam. All of these reports were disseminated to the intelligence community and to appropriate posts abroad, but were largely discounted because of doubts about the sources. Other reporting--while taken seriously--was imprecise, changing and non-specific as to dates, diminishing its usefulness. Additionally, actions taken by intelligence and law enforcement authorities to confront suspect terrorist groups including the Al-Haramayn non-governmental organization and the Usama Bin Laden (UBL) organization in Nairobi, were believed to have dissipated the alleged threats. Indeed, for eight months prior to the August 7 bombings, no further intelligence was produced to warn the embassies in Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam.*
- The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) investigation of the bombings is still underway but, thus far, has uncovered no information indicating that the earlier intelligence reporting could have predicted the time or

place of the attacks. Information from FBI and intelligence sources could yet be developed, however, to implicate some of the individuals or groups cited in the earlier intelligence reporting, or more likely, to further amplify understanding of the UBL organization's role in the bombings.

5. The Boards found that both the intelligence and policy communities relied excessively on tactical intelligence to determine the level of potential terrorist threats to posts worldwide. The Inman Report noted and previous experience indicates that terrorist attacks are often not preceded by warning intelligence. The establishment of the Counter Terrorism Center with an inter-agency team of officers has produced tactical intelligence that has enabled the US to thwart a number of terrorist threats.* But we cannot count on having such intelligence to warn us of such attacks.

6. The Boards did not find reasonable cause to believe that any employee of the United States Government or member of the uniformed services was culpable of dereliction of his or her duties in connection with the August 7 bombings. The Boards did find, however, an institutional failure of the Department of State and embassies under its direction to recognize threats posed by transnational terrorism and vehicle bombs worldwide. Policy-makers and operational officers were remiss in not preparing more comprehensive procedures to guard against massive truck bombs. This combined with lack of resources for building more secure facilities created the ingredients for a deadly disaster. Responsibility for obtaining adequate resources for security programs is widely dispersed throughout the US government as is decision making for determining security policies and procedures. No one person or office is accountable for decisions on security policies, procedures and resources. Ambassadors who are specifically charged with responsibility for the security of US diplomatic personnel assigned to their posts lack adequate authority and resources to carry out this responsibility.

7. The Boards were especially disturbed by the collective failure of the US government over the past decade to provide adequate resources to reduce the vulnerability of US diplomatic missions to terrorist attacks in most countries around the world. Responsibility for this failure can be attributed to several Administrations and their agencies, including the Department of State, the National Security Council, and the Office of Management and Budget, as well as the US Congress.

8. The US response to the August bombings was resourceful and often heroic. However, in the absence of significant training and contingency planning to

deal with mass casualties and major destruction from terrorist bombs, the response was occasionally chaotic and marred by a host of planning and logistical failures, especially in the area of military transportation. The Foreign Emergency Support Teams (FESTs) arrived in Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam about 40 hours after the bombings, having experienced delays of 13 hours. There was disjointed liaison between the State Department, as the lead agency, and the Defense Department, FBI and other agencies. The personnel selection of the FESTs was ad hoc and not ideal. Medical and other emergency equipment was not always ready and available for shipment.

9. In the wake of these two terrorist acts, the Department of State and other US government organizations focused quickly on the lessons learned. They immediately reviewed the vulnerabilities of our embassies and missions abroad and took steps to strengthen perimeter security at all posts, to re-prioritize the construction and upgrades necessary to bring our overseas US facilities up to what are referred to as "Inman standards," and Congress appropriated over \$1 billion in supplemental funds.

10. This is only the first step in what is required to provide for the security of Americans in embassies overseas. We must undertake a comprehensive and long-term strategy for protecting American officials overseas, including sustained funding for enhanced security measures, for long-term costs for increased security personnel, and for a capital building program based on an assessment of requirements to meet the new range of global terrorist threats. This must include substantial budgetary appropriations of approximately \$1.4 billion per year maintained over an approximate ten-year period, in addition to savings from the closure of overseas installations where increased capital and security costs outweigh the magnitude of overall US interests. Additional funds for security must be obtained without diverting funds from our major foreign affairs programs.

Key Recommendations

The 1986 Omnibus Diplomatic and Anti-Terrorism Act established the legal basis for the Accountability Review Board and specifically requires that acts of terrorism against US diplomatic installations abroad, wherein the loss of life or significant property damage occurs, be investigated with a view, among other factors, toward determining whether security systems and procedures were adequate and were implemented. After addressing these issues in this report, the Boards will propose and elaborate on a number of recommendations aimed at improving security systems and procedures. We provide a listing of the recommendations below.* The bulk of them are necessitated by the use of large

vehicular bombs, a threat that has not been fully appreciated in recent years. The first 15 recommendations deal with adjustments in systems and procedures to enhance security of the work place. The final six recommendations address how to improve crisis management systems and procedures. All are directed toward achieving the objective of saving lives. They are urgent and need to be acted upon immediately. No single measure will accomplish the objective but, taken together, they should substantially improve the security for US personnel serving abroad.

Three additional recommendations deal with intelligence and information availability, matters the Boards are also enjoined to address under the law.* (Details and rationale for all of the recommendations are contained in the classified version of the report.)

I. Improving Security Systems and Procedures

A. Work Place Security Enhancements

1. Emergency Action Plans for all posts should be revised to provide a "special alarm signal" for large exterior bombs and duck-and-cover practice drills in order to reduce casualties from vehicular bombs. Special equipment should be provided to perimeter guards.*
2. Given the worldwide threat of transnational terrorism which uses a wide range of lethal weapons, including vehicle bombs, every post should be treated as a potential target and the Department of State's Physical Security Standards and policies should be revised to reflect this new reality.
3. For those US diplomatic buildings abroad not meeting Inman standards, essential physical security upgrades should be made immediately and should include a number of specific measures involving perimeters and counter-surveillance.*
4. The Secretary of State should personally review the security situation of embassy chanceries and other official premises, closing those which are highly vulnerable and threatened but for which adequate security enhancements cannot be provided, and seek new secure premises for permanent use, or temporary occupancy, pending construction of new buildings.
5. Demarches to all governments with whom we have relations should be made regularly to remind them of their obligation to provide security support for our

embassies. For those governments whose police forces need additional training to enable them to provide more adequate protection, the Department should provide training under the Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) program. The Department should also explore ways to provide any necessary equipment to host governments to upgrade their ability to provide adequate protection. Failure by a host government to honor its obligations should trigger an immediate review of whether a post should be closed.

6. The Department of State should radically reformulate and revise the "Composite Threat List" and, as a part of this effort, should create a category exclusively for terrorism with criteria that places more weight on transnational terrorism. Rating the vulnerability of facilities must include factors relating to the physical security environment, as well as certain host governmental and cultural realities.* These criteria need to be reviewed frequently and all elements of the intelligence community should play an active role in formulating the list. The list's name should be changed to reflect its dual purpose of prioritizing resource allocation and establishing security readiness postures.

7. The Department of State should increase the number of posts with full time Regional Security Officers, seeking coverage of as many chanceries as possible. The Department should also work with the Marine Corps to augment the number of Marine Security Guard Detachments to provide coverage to a larger number of US diplomatic missions.

8. The Department of State should provide all Regional Security Officers comprehensive training on terrorism, terrorist methods of operation, explosive devices, explosive effects, and other terrorist weapons to include weapons of mass destruction such as truck bombs, nuclear devices and chemical/biological weapons.*

9. The Department of State should define the role and functions of each of the US embassies abroad for the coming decade with a view toward exploiting technology more fully, improving their efficiency, ensuring their security, and reducing their overall cost. The Department should look specifically at reducing the number of diplomatic missions by establishing regional embassies located in less threatened and vulnerable countries with Ambassadors accredited to several governments.

10. The physical security standards specified in the State Department's Security Standards and Policy Handbook should be reviewed on a priority basis and

revised as necessary in light of the August 7 and other large bombings against US installations.

11. When building new chanceries abroad, all US government agencies, with rare exceptions, should be located in the same compound.

12. The Department of State should work within the Administration and with Congress to obtain sufficient funding for capital building programs and for security operations and personnel over the coming decade (estimated at \$1.4 billion per year for the next 10 years), while ensuring that this funding should not come at the expense of other critical foreign affairs programs and operations. A failure to do so will jeopardize the security of US personnel abroad and inhibit America's ability to protect and promote its interests around the world.

13. First and foremost, the Secretary of State should take a personal and active role in carrying out the responsibility of ensuring the security of US diplomatic personnel abroad. It is essential to convey to the entire Department that security is one of the highest priorities. In the process, the Secretary should reexamine the present organizational structure with the objective of clarifying responsibilities, encouraging better coordination, and assuring that a single high-ranking officer is accountable for all protective security matters and has the authority necessary to coordinate on the Secretary's behalf such activities within the Department of State and with all foreign affairs USG agencies.

14. The Department of State should expand its effort to build public support for increased resources for foreign affairs, and to add emphasis on the need to protect US representatives abroad from terrorism, without sacrificing other important foreign policy programs.

15. The Department of State, in coordination with the intelligence community, should advise all posts concerning potential threats of terrorist attacks from the use of chemical, biological or nuclear materials, should establish means of defending against and minimizing the effect of such attacks through security measures and the revision of EAP procedures and exercises, and should provide appropriate equipment, medical supplies, and first responder training.

B. Better Crisis Management Systems and Procedures

1. Crisis management training for mass casualty and mass destruction incidents

should be provided to Department of State personnel in Washington to improve Task Force operations to assure a cadre of crisis managers.

2. A revitalized program for on-site crisis management training at posts abroad should be funded, developed, expanded, and maintained.

3. The FEST should create and exercise a team and equipment package configured to assist in post blast crises involving major casualties and physical damage (while maintaining the package now deployed for differing counter terrorism missions). Such a new configuration should include personnel to assist in medical relief, public affairs, engineering and building safety.

4. A modern, reliable, air-refuelable FEST aircraft with enhanced seating and cargo capacity to respond to a variety of counter terrorism and emergency missions should be acquired urgently for the Department of State. Clearly defined arrangements for a backup aircraft are also needed.

5. The Department of State should work closely with the Department of Defense to improve procedures in mobilizing aircraft and adequate crews to provide more rapid, effective assistance in times of emergency, especially in medical evacuations resulting from mass casualty situations. The Department of State should explore as well, chartering commercial aircraft to transport personnel and equipment to emergency sites, if necessary to supplement Department of Defense aircraft.

6. The Department of State should ensure that all posts have emergency communications equipment, basic excavation tools, medical supplies, emergency documents, next of kin records, and other safety equipment stored at secure off-site locations in anticipation of mass destruction of embassy facilities and heavy US casualties.

II. Intelligence and Information

1. In order to enhance the flow of intelligence that relates to terrorism and security, all such intelligence should normally be disseminated to concerned levels of the policy and analytic community; compartmentalization of such information should be limited to extraordinary situations where there is a clear national security need for limited dissemination.

2. The Department of State should assign a qualified official to the DCI's Counter Terrorism Center; and

3. The FBI and the Department of State should consult on ways to improve information sharing on international terrorism to ensure that all relevant information that might have some bearing on threats against or security for US missions or personnel abroad is made available.*

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NAIROBI: DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

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Discussion

On August 7, 1998, at approximately 10:30 a.m. local time, terrorists driving in a truck detonated a large bomb in the rear parking area, near the ramp to the basement garage, of the American Embassy in Nairobi. A total of 213 people were killed, of whom 44 were American Embassy employees (12 Americans and 32 Foreign Service National employees). Ten Americans and eleven FSNs were seriously injured. An estimated 200 Kenyan civilians were killed and 4,000 were injured by the blast in the vicinity of the embassy.

Damage to the embassy was massive, especially internally. Although there was little structural damage to the five story reinforced concrete building, the explosion reduced much of the interior to rubble--destroying windows, window frames, internal office partitions and other fixtures on the rear side of the building. The secondary fragmentation from flying glass, internal concrete block walls, furniture, and fixtures caused most of the embassy casualties. The majority of the Kenyan casualties resulted from the collapse of the adjacent Ufundi Building, flying glass from the nearby Co-op Bank Building and other

buildings located within a two to three block radius. Other casualties were pedestrians or motorists in the crowded streets next to the embassy.

The local-hire contract guards at the rear of the Embassy saw the truck pull into the uncontrolled exit lane of the rear parking lot just as they closed the fence gate and the drop bar after a mail van had exited the embassy's garage. (The drop bar paralleled a series of steel bollards which encircled the embassy outside the steel grill fence that surrounds the chancery.) The truck proceeded to the embassy's rear access control area but was blocked by an automobile coming out of the Co-op Bank's underground garage. The blocking auto was forced to back up allowing the truck to come up to the embassy drop bar.

When one of the two terrorist occupants of the truck demanded that the guards open the gates, they refused. One of the terrorists then began shooting at the chancery and the other tossed a flash grenade at one of the guards. The guards, who were unarmed, ran for cover and tried to raise the Marine Security Guard at the command post (Post #1) on a hand held radio and by a phone in the nearby guard booth. They were unsuccessful; the embassy's single radio frequency was occupied with other traffic; the telephone was busy. In the several seconds time lapse* between the gunshots/grenade explosion and the detonation of the truck bomb, many embassy employees went to the windows to observe what was happening. Those who did were either killed or seriously injured.

Neither the post's Emergency Action Plan, which followed State Department guidelines, nor any relevant drills had prepared employees for actions to take in the event of a vehicular bomb or firearms being discharged in the immediate vicinity of the embassy. Had the employees been trained to lie on the floor and seek cover when they heard the grenade blast, some lives could have been saved.

The embassy had only one radio frequency and no alert alarms for use by perimeter guards. The Board estimates that there was a certain time lapse* between the time the guards saw the truck enter the rear parking lot and the detonation of the bomb. The inability of the perimeter guards to alert those inside the chancery of what they anticipated might be an impending truck bomb explosion could have been remedied in a couple of ways. Had the Kenyan Government granted the embassy's long-standing request to have more than one radio frequency, the perimeter guards would have had a dedicated frequency to communicate with the MSG at Post #1 who, in turn, could have triggered the embassy's internal alarm system, giving personnel time to take cover. Second, either a radio electronic emergency alarm in the possession of

the perimeter guards or an alarm button in the rear guard booth to activate the embassy's internal alarm system could have permitted the guards there to trigger the system directly, warning employees of the impending blast. In either scenario, a special alarm signal for "duck and cover" which does not exist on Nairobi's and any other US embassy's "Selectone" alarm system would have to be programmed since it has never been prescribed by the Department of State.*

The Embassy building was constructed under the supervision of the Foreign Buildings Operations in the early 1980's before the Inman standards were produced. It was located at the intersection of two of the busiest streets in Nairobi, near two mass transit centers. It lacked sufficient setback from the streets and from adjacent buildings. To help extend its limited setback, the Embassy was surrounded by a 2.6 meter high steel picket vertical bar fence. An outer perimeter was established beyond the fence with a line of steel bollards, ranging 5 meters to 18 meters in distance from the outer walls of the chancery. The window frames were not anchored into the core structure, but the windows were covered by 4mm Mylar protective film.

Before August 7, Nairobi was designated as a "medium" threat post in the political violence and terrorism category, and the embassy was in compliance with that threat level's physical security standards and procedures as prescribed by the Department -- except for the lack of a 100ft. setback/standoff zone. However, the bombing revealed that the Department's system for determining terrorism threat levels, which in turn determine physical security standards and procedures, was seriously flawed. Additional criteria are now being applied to achieve a more realistic threat profile. The Boards will comment further on these criteria, and make recommendations on increased standards and the funding to achieve them.*

There were no intelligence reports immediately before the bombing to have warned the embassy of the August 7 blast. However, a number of earlier intelligence reports cited alleged threats against several US diplomatic and other targets including the US Embassy in Nairobi. While all of these reports were disseminated to the intelligence community and to appropriate posts abroad, they were largely discounted because of doubts about the sources. Other reporting was imprecise, changing and non-specific as to dates, diminishing its usefulness. Additionally, actions taken by intelligence and law enforcement authorities to confront suspect terrorist groups in Nairobi, including the Al-Haramayn non-governmental organization and the Usama Bin Laden (UBL) organization, were believed to have dissipated the threats.*

The embassy responded to these reported threats by increasing the number of roving guards around the perimeter of the chancery, closer monitoring of the visa line, and additional vehicular and perimeter searches. The Regional Security Officer (RSO) advised personnel on security precautions and the importance of reporting incidents of surveillance. She and the Marine Security Guards (MSGs) conducted numerous emergency react drills (with only MSG participation), and the RSO asked the Kenyan Government to enhance security around the embassy, especially to engage in counter-surveillance activities, and met with the Kenyan police to discuss their bomb react scenarios. The embassy also requested and received a team from Washington to further familiarize the MSGs and the local guards about explosive devices, and the Emergency Action Committee met frequently to review security procedures and upgrades.

The Ambassador cabled Washington on December 24, 1997, reviewing the threats and the response to them by the embassy and the Kenyan government. She pointed to certain reports about terrorist threats aimed at the mission, as well as threats of crime and political violence, and emphasized the embassy's extreme vulnerability due to lack of standoff. She asked for Washington's support for a new chancery.

The Department responded to the Ambassador's cable in January, 1998, saying that after a review of the threat, the post's current security rating for political violence and terrorism of "medium" was appropriate, and that no new office building was contemplated by FBO. The Department offered to send a security assessment team to assist the Embassy in identifying areas where security could be upgraded, and they found ways to reduce the number of embassy personnel, through re-assignments to Pretoria.

The security assessment team arrived in March (after the Department refused an offer by the military's US Central Command, CENTCOM, to conduct a joint security assessment of the post) and made a review of the embassy's needs. No report was ever filed by the team. Subsequent cables from the embassy and an interview with one of the team's engineers showed that the Department was prepared to support all the post's requests for upgrades, even beyond the normal standards required for a medium threat post. The embassy senior management, the RSO, and the visiting team did not particularly focus on upgrades in the rear of the embassy or possible vehicle bomb attacks, but instead concentrated on ways to reduce the danger from crime and political violence. They approved a fence for the parking lot in front of the Embassy, as well as roll down doors for the chancery's front entrance and the rear basement garage door. (The latter door, broken for several months, had been replaced by a temporary two panel swing door which remained open during the day.) These improvements were in

process and had not been completed by the time of the August 7 bombing. As it turned out, they would have made no difference in mitigating the blast, given its size. Nor would they have deterred the terrorists from getting as close to the chancery as they did.

In March 1998, the Department of State issued a world-wide alert drawing attention to an Usama bin Laden threat against American military and civilians. However, this alert was not accompanied by any special warning or analysis that embassies in East Africa might be targeted by Bin Laden's group.

Ambassador Bushnell, in letters to the Secretary in April 1998, and to Under Secretary Cohen a month later, restated her concern regarding the vulnerability of the embassy, repeating the need to have a new chancery that would meet Inman standards. Ms. Cohen responded in June stating that, because of Nairobi's designation as a medium security threat post for political violence and terrorism and the general soundness of the building, its replacement ranked relatively low among the chancery replacement priorities. She drew attention to FBO's plan to extend the chancery's useful life and improve its security to include \$4.1 million for the replacement of the windows.

Sporadic efforts by the embassy to gain control over the back parking lot--and thus to expand the setback--met with limited success. Though efforts were made several years earlier to obtain embassy control of all parking spaces in that area from the Co-op Bank, this proved unsuccessful. The embassy in late 1997 increased the number of roving guards in the rear area to ensure that unauthorized persons would not park in those slots leased to the embassy. In May 1998 the Bank wrote a letter to the embassy inviting it to share the cost of installing a fence along side the parking lot and a lift bar barrier at the exit to Haile Selassie Avenue (through which the terrorist vehicle entered on August 7). The letter was never formally answered. Interviews by the Board of embassy personnel revealed that the embassy did not consider this its responsibility, since the fence and the barrier were not on embassy property and were being installed in any case. Also, the embassy had experienced difficulty obtaining permission from the Kenyan government for building a fence around the front parking lot. There was a concern that the Bank had not received permission from the government for the construction in the back, and if US funds had been used, the government might condemn the move, bring a lawsuit, and generate adverse publicity against the embassy.

The Co-op Bank's fence had been completed by August 1998, but the lift bar intended for the exit was lying on the ground ready for installation at the time of the bombing. While it is uncertain whether the embassy's participation in the

Co-op Bank's project might have expedited the installation of the lift bar barrier, its presence could have provided an additional hurdle the terrorists would have had to overcome to enter the embassy's rear parking lot area. However, even if the barrier had discouraged the terrorists from entering the rear lot, they still could have proceeded up Haile Selassie Avenue for approximately 50 feet to detonate the bomb at a point even closer to the chancery than the back gate barrier, thereby causing as much if not more damage to the embassy.

That the embassy did not seek more actively to gain control of the back lot reflected the prevailing view in the embassy and in Washington at that time that the crime threat was far more serious than the terrorist threat. This conclusion was based in part on the judgment of intelligence officials in Washington and in Nairobi that the potential terrorist threats had dissipated by the latter part of 1997 and that no new threat had been uncovered specifically aimed at the embassy. Terrorism was seen as a serious but non-specific potential threat, whereas crime, including muggings and murder in the immediate vicinity of the embassy, was a daily reality that posed a continual threat to every member of the embassy family.

The embassy's local guard program,* under contract with the United International Investigative Service (UIIS) since 1997, is one of the largest in the world. Many of the guards serving around the chancery's perimeter had worked for UIIS's predecessors. Training levels called for in the UIIS contract fell well short of the specifications, both in quality and frequency. Of particular note was the absence of training and procedures on vehicular bombs. While the guards were trained on search and identification of parcel bombs (IEDs) concealed on vehicles, they were not given any direction on threat, search, recognition and reaction to suspect vehicle bombs. No procedures or guidelines were established that would cause guards to raise an alarm if a strange truck pulled into the parking lot and/or up to the gate of the embassy.

Another anomaly was that guards at embassy residences possessed radio electronic duress or panic alarms to activate in times of emergency while those at the chancery did not. Nor did the local guards participate in embassy emergency drills or have much interchange with the MSG detachment. In spite of these deficiencies, however, the guards in the rear parking lot on August 7 performed valiantly and their courageous refusal to permit the terrorists access to the embassy's garage prevented an even greater disaster.

After the bombing, all embassy personnel from the Ambassador on down responded quickly and heroically to care for those injured, account for and

properly handle those who died, and coordinate the myriad details of reestablishing operations while dealing with the crisis.

In Washington the Task Force formed in the State Department's operations center established immediate contact with embassy personnel who had transferred operations to the USAID building across Nairobi from the bombed out chancery. The Task Force began to ascertain the extent of the damage and the casualties, and mobilized resources to dispatch to Nairobi. A FEST departed within about six hours of its alert time. Its aircraft broke down in Rota, Spain, causing a 15-hour delay before a backup plane could arrive and be loaded. Though the FEST arrived in Nairobi nearly 40 hours after the blast, its contingent brought welcomed relief to the embassy, helping the Ambassador and her staff with restoring embassy functions, assisting with communications, and helping with the rescue and other emergency relief efforts.

On August 9, another US Air Force plane with additional support personnel from Washington broke down in Sicily and was delayed by about 8 hours before the group could proceed to Kenya. And, when the US Air Force's Nightingale medevac aircraft arrived in Nairobi from Germany on August 8, its load capacity prevented it from bringing needed medical supplies already palletized and positioned in Germany. The Board heard differing views from embassy medical personnel and from the US Air Force concerning reasons why the medevac aircraft did not return immediately to Germany with some of the most seriously wounded Americans. There was a misunderstanding about crew rest requirements and the need for pre-flight stabilization of patients by Air Force medical personnel before departure. Kenyan medical professionals at the Nairobi Hospital where the wounded Americans were receiving care claimed that US Air Force medical personnel were insensitive. The first military medical evacuation did not take place until 40 hours after the bombing. A second medical evacuation 70 hours after the bombing went much more smoothly.

A unit of US Marines (FAST Marines) was dispatched to Nairobi from Bahrain to help provide security for the embassy. Their aircraft experienced delays as well. And the FBI sent some 200 agents to the scene to find and detain the perpetrators of the bombing. These groups performed well in important aspects of the crisis.

With the large influx of people from Washington and elsewhere into Nairobi, there were the inevitable coordinating problems with some personnel having to be reminded at times that the Ambassador was ultimately in charge. Logistical facilities were overloaded. The FEST, which normally deals with evolving

terrorist crises like hostage taking, realized that its regular personnel package was not quite appropriate for the situation faced in Nairobi. In Washington, shift changes in personnel on the Task Force brought confusion and unnecessary repetition of requests to the field. Because of the massive damage to embassy operations and the high number of embassy casualties, operations were at times chaotic. Given the extensive damage to embassy operations and the large number of casualties, the Task Force had to call on offices seldom used in normal evacuations and other emergencies.

Some of the logistical and coordination problems with the US Air Force, for example, could have been alleviated if clear instructions had been provided and better liaison established in advance through designated points of contact. The Department of State's Bureau of African Affairs has completed an after action report from which valuable lessons learned should be instructive for the future. Better crisis management training and contingency planning seem imperative if the Department of State is to handle mass casualties and destruction emergencies in a more expeditious and professional manner. The Department should also explore the cost effectiveness of chartering commercial aircraft in times of emergency to provide more reliable airlift.

Media attention following the bombing was intense and, since Nairobi is a regional hub for the international media, the journalists' appetite was immediate and immense. The Embassy's public affairs (USIS) officers were, by their own admission, overwhelmed. They concentrated on answering the queries of the international press and let the local press languish. By the second day after the explosion, the local media turned ugly, focusing their anger on the Embassy in particular and the US in general. The local press reported that the Americans were concerned only with their own people, ignoring the plight and suffering of the many Kenyans who were killed or injured. Had additional public affairs personnel been dispatched to Nairobi immediately following the bombing, this media problem might have been better anticipated and ameliorated. Also, the Department insisted on clearing in advance whether the Ambassador could appear at press conferences and what she could say during those conferences. These limits on the Ambassador's discretion to speak publicly unnecessarily limited her ability to counter the firestorm of criticism in the local media.

Findings

As required by statute, the Board makes these findings:

1. The bomb that exploded in the rear parking lot of the US Embassy in Nairobi on August 7, 1998 was detonated by terrorists who intended to cause loss of

lives and destruction of property. Thus, according to P.L. 99-399 the incident was security related.

2. No recent tactical intelligence information existed to alert the embassy to the August 7 bombing. Intelligence received in 1997 about plans for vehicle bomb attacks or assassinations was carefully vetted, but by early 1998 these alleged threats had been discredited or found moot. In retrospect, the Department and the intelligence community relied too heavily on warning intelligence to measure the threat of terrorism and failed to take other factors into account in determining and confirming in 1998 that the threat of terrorism was only medium. Also, the embassy was heavily preoccupied with the critical crime level.

3. In the fall of 1997, the embassy's management, upon receiving intelligence information regarding a potential terrorist bomb, took additional steps to upgrade security at the post. The Ambassador alerted Washington to the embassy's extreme vulnerability and called for and received assistance in 1998 from the Department of State for a few physical security upgrades beyond those required for a "medium" threat post for political violence and terrorism. In her messages to Washington, the Ambassador also requested that the chancery be relocated. Officials throughout the Department of State rejected this, citing lack of funds and the designation of Nairobi, as a medium threat post, as an unlikely terrorist target.

4. Security systems and procedures at the embassy were implemented well within, and even beyond, the medium threat level established by the Department of State, although the building had virtually no setback, having been built before the standard was established and therefore was exempted.

5. Local security guards performed as they had been instructed and refused the terrorists access to the embassy perimeter.

6. But a number of security shortcomings existed. The most critical was that no attention was paid to vehicle bomb attacks in the Department's EAP guidance or the embassy's security procedures and systems. The security guards were not trained for such a contingency. They did not have alarm mechanisms to give warning of such an attack. There was no internal embassy alarm signal to warn of a car bomb attack. And embassy personnel were not informed about what to do in case of a car bomb warning.

7. The embassy did not have a radio frequency dedicated to security communications, which would have enhanced security, because the Kenyan government had consistently rejected this request.

8. More rigorous efforts by the embassy could possibly have been made to secure more control over the rear parking lot. But legal impediments and public relations concerns served as constraints. It is uncertain whether additional control would have deterred the terrorists or lessened the damage from the blast, given the lack of setback at other points around the chancery.

9. In the aftermath of the bombing, the FEST, the medical teams, US Air Force crews and aircraft, and others from Washington provided invaluable support to the embassy. But logistical problems caused delays in the arrival of people and resources. And the massive influx of personnel from numerous US agencies into Kenya brought problems of coordination and logistical overload in Nairobi. Heavy media criticism in Nairobi could have been alleviated by more public affairs officers on the scene and by giving the Ambassador more flexibility in dealing with the press. The Department's Task Force performed valiantly under extremely difficult circumstances, but there were problems of discontinuity of leadership and organization. The Department's ability to handle emergencies involving mass casualties and heavy damage to embassy operations needs to be improved through crisis management training and better contingency planning.

10. The Board finds no employee of the US government or member of the uniformed services, as defined by Section 303(a)(1)(B) of the Act, breached his or her duty.

11. The Board finds a possible breach of responsibility in the contractor's administration of the contract for the training of the embassy guards. But even if this training had been carried out, it would not have affected what happened in the bombings.

12. In the review of systems and procedures required by the law, the Board finds that systemic and institutional failures in Washington were responsible for: a) a flawed process for assessing threat levels worldwide which underestimated the threat of terrorism in Nairobi, notwithstanding the Ambassador's repeated pleas, b) a chronic major lack of funds for building new, safer embassies, to replace buildings like the Nairobi chancery, which, even had there been no terrorist threat, was in a dangerous location and extremely vulnerable to crime and mob violence, and c) failing to prepare for vehicle bombs by providing guidance in Emergency Action Plans to deal with

such attacks, and the warning alarm signals and systems to alert personnel to imminent bomb attacks.

13. The Board wishes to commend the embassy personnel for their professionalism and courage in their performance both during and after the disaster.
