

Box 17.1 (Continued)

instead works to maintain its representation abroad, even in dangerous locales. To protect the safety of its diplomats and their families, the United States often will designate a particularly dangerous environment an “unaccompanied post,” where diplomats must live and work without their families. This is true for the wartime embassies in Baghdad, Iraq, and Kabul, Afghanistan. Under normal circumstances, however, the families of US diplomats do accompany their family member to the post, even if the security situation has been tenuous in the past.

In the face of a sudden change in the security environment, the United States must carefully calibrate its response to protect US interests, personnel, and property. For example, in 2010 the United States for several days temporarily closed, rather than evacuated, its embassy in Yemen in response to specific threats by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) to attack American interests in Yemen.ⁱⁱ Closures such as these do not come without a financial cost, which must be weighed against the threat, but US officials at the time said the specificity of the threat warranted this “administrative closure” to protect US Embassy personnel. Other countries, whose embassies in Yemen were not specifically threatened, such as France and Spain, also closed their embassies to public access but kept their administrative offices open.

There are some circumstances in which evacuation—ranging from voluntary through dependents only, nonessential personnel, and full mandatory evacuation—are deemed necessary to protect US persons. Following a 2010 attack in Mexico in which US personnel and dependents were killed, the United States offered staff the option of voluntary temporary evacuation of dependents but kept its Chancery and consulates open.ⁱⁱⁱ

Decisions about security are made by the ambassador, in consultation with embassy staff and the Department of State, particularly if a security issue threatens bilateral relations between the two countries. If the ambassador is absent, the deputy chief of mission is designated to act as *chargé d'affaires*. An embassy's physical security is maintained by the Regional Security Officer (RSO) and the Marine Security Guard Detachment (MSG) assigned to the embassy. The MSG is responsible for interior