

Box 17.1 PROTECTING US DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS

The February 2008 attack on the US Embassy building in Belgrade was not the first time that the United States has faced threats to its interests in Serbia. In March 1999, just before NATO commenced bombing, the United States severed diplomatic relations and completely closed its embassy in Serbia. The United States did not formally reopen the embassy until May 2001.ⁱ

In nonemergency situations, the downgrading of bilateral relations is often preceded by the political step of withdrawing the ambassador or highest-ranking diplomat, often at least initially “for consultations,” to a country’s home capital. But the severing of diplomatic relations and closing of an embassy are rare and usually are reserved for extraordinary circumstances such as war or serious civil instability. The United States