

Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit

7 February 2018

Auditor-General's report No. 5 (2017-18)

Questions on Notice

- 4) DFAT informed the Committee at the public hearing that security risk analysis is a high priority for the department and is currently being undertaken for each post. Aside from the development of a database to capture measures currently in place, what improvements have been made to the security risk assessment framework?**

The Security Branches are currently reviewing the security risk assessments for all of DFAT's 106 posts. These assessments are being completed using a standardised 'security snapshot' template and provide information on the threats and risks for each post. Risks identified in these snapshots will be reported to DFAT's Departmental Security Committee.

These 'snapshots' build on previous threat and risk analysis work carried out by the Security Branches and utilise information from in-country inspections, post reporting, intelligence analysis and private security companies.

The DFAT Security Framework (DSF), to be launched on 20 March 2018, will further enhance the Department's security risk assessment framework. The DSF integrates security risk management principles into the department's decision-making on security in Australia and at posts. It contains a set of risk management tools to assist staff in making risk-based decisions.

Under the DSF, Post Security Officers (PSOs) will be required to complete an Annual Security Report outlining post's security environment, its highest rated risks and measures taken to mitigate those risks. They will also undertake a 'health check' to assess security measures at post. This health check allows for regular monitoring of the security posture at post and the early identification of vulnerabilities. Posts will also be required to incorporate security risks into existing risk registers.

- 5) In the public hearing, Mr Williams referred to work underway to develop database capability to provide assurance around measures in place, by way of a 'security snapshot' of each post. Can the department please provide further detail on this, as well as how it intends to keep track of the security measures in place at overseas posts on an ongoing basis?**

The Security Branches are currently reviewing the security risk assessments for all of DFAT's 106 posts. These assessments are being completed using a standardised 'security snapshot' template and provide information on the

threats and risks for each post. Risks identified in these snapshots will be reported to DFAT's Departmental Security Committee.

These 'snapshots' build on previous threat and risk analysis work carried out by the Security Branches and utilise information from in-country inspections, post reporting, intelligence analysis and private security companies. They will be tracked through a range of governance processes covering internal arrangements within the Security Branches, as well as the Departmental Security Committee.

6) The Post Security Officer role is integral to ensuring security functions are operating effectively at post. How does DFAT ensure that staff have the appropriate skills to perform this role? That is, aside from the Security Leaders course, the supplementary workshops on the new Security Framework (referenced in DFAT's opening statement), and some information in the Security Manual, what ongoing support is provided? In particular, can the department outline its handover procedures for managing the transition between outgoing and incoming Post Security Officers?

The Post Security Officer (PSO) role is a key part of the Deputy Head of Mission (DHOM) role, reflecting the importance of leadership and management skills in discharging the PSO role effectively. PSOs are expected to undertake a wide range of security training before departing on post. This can include:

- Security Leaders' Course
- Overseas Security Awareness Course
- Security Awareness for Vulnerable Environments (SAVE)
- SAVE Plus and Personal Safety and Confrontation Management Course for postings to high-threat locations
- Defensive driving
- 4WD training.

PSOs also receive tailored briefing from the Threat and Operational Security Section, DFAT Locksmiths, Security Clearances and Investigations Section as well as from the Assistant Secretary, Operational Security Branch and the Chief Security Officer, depending on the level of the PSO. PSOs also receive briefings from other government agencies.

The DFAT Security Framework (DSF), which will replace the DFAT Security Manual, provides advice across physical, operational, personnel, information security and assurance. It also includes several new resources such as a PSO Handbook outlining key obligations and responsibilities.

In developing a 'community of practice' for PSOs, DFAT has undertaken six PSO workshops over the last 12 months to provide further training and networking opportunities. A new Sharepoint site, accessible by all PSOs, allows them to access 'real-time' threat and risk reports maintained by the Security Branches in Canberra.

Communications material, such as videos on the DSF risk management tools as well as awareness-raising campaign material, have been made available to posts to share with staff at post.

In accordance with DFAT's handover requirements, including guidelines and template for effective handovers, PSOs are required to prepare detailed handover notes for the incoming PSO using the DFAT Handover Notes template.

7) The ANAO concluded that while DFAT had commenced activities to enhance the policies and procedures to train Canberra-based security staff, 'further improvements could be made to training and guidance of specialist security staff undertaking security inspections at posts' (p.35). Would DFAT please elaborate on work it is undertaking to address this?

The Security Branches regularly review its training programs to identify opportunities to enhance the skills of its security experts. This includes the network of Regional Security Advisors who are DFAT's 'front-line' for security advice, especially at our high threat posts.

Staff within DFAT's Threat and Operational Security Section (OSS) who provide advice to posts and conduct inspection visits undertake a Certificate 4 level or Graduate Diploma in Security Risk Management. In recent years, OSS officers have also undertaken training at a range of security training institutions, including the Defence Force School of Intelligence, the National Security College and ASIO.

New OSS staff are taken on 'mentoring visits' in-country with experienced officers and the annual RSA conference provides opportunities for our security network to share information and advice.

We will develop a risk management seminar series available to all Security Branches staff in 2019.

8) Can DFAT advise of its progress in relation to Recommendation 4 to 'enhance the coordination of the deployment of security measures', including by expanding on the 'revised documentation process' noted in the department's written response to this recommendation and the 'improved governance process' noted in its opening statement at the public hearing.

As noted at the JCPAA hearing, DFAT has introduced a new documentation process that aims to achieve greater consistency in determining the security measures deployed to overseas posts (further detail in the responses to Questions 4 and 5). A review of the effectiveness of this process is underway and is expected to be completed by mid-2018.