



July 8, 2014

Congressional Addressees

Afghanistan: Kabul Embassy Construction Costs Have Increased and Schedules Have Been Extended

Since re-opening in 2002, the U.S. embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan, experienced a dramatic increase in staffing, followed by a gradual drawdown. To address space needs, the Department of State (State) awarded two contracts in 2009 and 2010, totaling \$625.4 million, to construct additional housing and office facilities on the embassy compound. State has since partially terminated one contract for the convenience of the U.S. government, and has expanded the construction requirements of the second.

We performed our work under the authority of the Comptroller General to conduct evaluations on GAO's initiative because of broad congressional interest in the oversight and accountability of U.S. funds used in Afghanistan. We reviewed

- what contracts State put in place to construct new U.S. embassy facilities in Kabul starting in 2009;
- the extent to which construction requirements, cost, or schedule have changed, and the reasons for the changes; and
- the extent to which the present expansion matches projected needs.

To conduct this work, we obtained and evaluated construction planning and contract documents, interviewed State and contractor officials, and traveled to Kabul in February 2014 to perform fieldwork. This report formally transmits the briefing we presented to congressional committees in June 2014 (see the enclosure for GAO's briefing presentation).

We conducted this performance audit from July 2013 to July 2014 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

State's Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) is responsible for project planning, design, and construction of U.S. diplomatic facilities abroad.

From 2002 through 2009, State took several actions to expand the U.S. embassy compound in Kabul. Initially, OBO refurbished the existing office building, built in the 1960s. Additionally, OBO

completed the construction of a new chancery office building, staff apartments, and support facilities. As staffing increases continued, the embassy acquired hundreds of shipping containers for temporary offices and housing. The embassy also compressed office space by putting more desks in the new chancery and old existing office building. Today the Kabul embassy compound consists of the original compound on the west side of Great Massoud Road, referred to as the West Compound, and an expansion compound on the east side of Great Massoud Road, referred to as the East Compound (see figure 1 on page 8 of the enclosure).

State Awarded Two Contracts Totaling \$625.4 Million to Meet Growing Facility Requirements

In 2009 and 2010, State awarded two contracts totaling \$625.4 million to meet growing facility requirements at the U.S. embassy in Kabul.

- On September 30, 2009, State awarded a \$209.4 million contract to Contractor 1 for the design and construction of temporary offices and housing as well as permanent structures to include an office annex A, apartment building 1, a cafeteria and recreation center, perimeter security and compound access facilities, a warehouse addition, and a utility building. Upon State's issuance of a notice to proceed with design work, Contractor 1 was to complete the temporary facilities within 6 months and the permanent facilities within 27 months.
- On September 30, 2010, State awarded a \$416 million contract to Contractor 2 for the design and construction of office annex B, apartment buildings 2 and 3, expansion of existing apartment building 4, compound access and perimeter security facilities, and parking facilities. Upon State's issuance of a notice to proceed with design work, Contractor 2 was to complete these facilities within 48 months.

State's plans called for sequencing construction under the two contracts and demolishing older temporary facilities to make space available for current construction projects. State's plans also entailed acquiring an adjacent site from the Afghan Ministry of Public Health to enable construction of parking facilities for approximately 400 vehicles. In September 2011, State partially terminated the permanent facilities requirements in the Contractor 1 contract for the convenience of the U.S. government due to concerns, in part, about performance and schedule delays. Contractor 1 completed the temporary offices and housing units. In September 2011, State transferred contract requirements for the permanent facilities not begun by Contractor 1 to Contractor 2's contract and extended the completion date from January 2016 to July 2016. As of February 2014, when we visited the site, the construction of office annexes A and B and apartment building 1 was in-process. (See figure 4 on page 14 of the enclosure for photos of those buildings). Construction of apartment buildings 2 and 3 is planned to follow the relocation of staff into office annex A and the demolition of temporary USAID offices that previously housed them.

Multiple Factors Have Affected Construction Requirements, Increased Cost, and Extended Schedule

Since the two contracts were awarded in 2009 and 2010, construction requirements have changed, costs have increased, and schedules have been extended.

OBO's original construction requirements have changed. In December 2009, OBO added two stories to planned office annex A. In September 2011, after the U.S. and Afghan governments did not reach agreement to transfer the Afghan Ministry of Public Health site to the U.S. government, OBO removed the parking facilities from Contractor 2's contract. The embassy also requested that OBO reconfigure the existing office building's second floor. In March 2012 and September 2013, new security upgrades to perimeter walls and guard towers were added. Because of the building alterations, OBO is building space for more desks and beds than originally planned. The new office annexes under construction are to contain 1,237 desks, a nearly 60 percent increase over the 778 desks originally planned. OBO is also building space for 661 beds, about 50 more than originally planned.

Contract costs for construction have increased by nearly 24 percent, from \$625.4 million to \$773.9 million as of May 2014. (See table 1 on page 20 of the enclosure.) This \$148.5 million cost increase is the result of multiple contract modifications to change construction requirements, including the transfer of construction requirements from the 1st contract to the 2nd contract.¹

The overall project schedule has also been extended. OBO had originally planned to complete all construction on the compound by the end of summer 2014; the contractual delivery date for all permanent facilities is currently July 2016. (See figure 6 on page 21 of the enclosure.)

Factors affecting the project include:

- Increases in numbers and changes in composition of embassy staffing requirements.
- Risks introduced by State during planning, such as awarding contracts before the Afghan Ministry of Public Health site was fully acquired and tightly sequencing the work of two contractors on one construction site.
- Constructing new facilities on an occupied compound in a conflict environment.
- Contractor performance delays and transfer of construction requirements from one contract to another.
- Delays and changes to shipping routes of building materials due to difficulties with shipments transiting through Pakistan.

Several issues remain unresolved on this project, which may further affect requirements, cost and schedule. For example, shipping building materials to the site by alternate routes instead of Pakistan, where delays have occurred, could increase future costs.

¹Totals do not reflect State's \$40 million congressional reprogramming request in 2014 to cover future additional shipping costs.

Difficult to Determine Whether Current Project Will Meet Future Embassy Needs

It is difficult to determine whether current projects and existing facilities will meet future embassy needs. Long-term construction has been occurring in an unpredictable political and security environment characterized by dramatic changes in U.S. staff levels. Additionally, as the U.S. military draws down its presence in Afghanistan, State will have to decide whether to close its facilities in the field or engage support contractors to replace life-support services currently provided by the military, such as food, water, fuel, and medical services. Such changes may affect embassy staffing and operations. Future composition of U.S. agencies, staffing levels, and embassy facility needs continue to be subject to change.

Once current contracts are completed, the Kabul embassy's permanent facilities—both older and newly-constructed office and apartment buildings—are to contain 1,487 desks and 819 beds. These totals do not include any desks or beds within temporary offices and housing that State expects to demolish. Furthermore, the desk totals assume that compressed office areas in currently crowded office buildings will be alleviated as some staff move out of those areas and into the newly completed office annexes.

Projected embassy staffing for 2015 is approximately 600 U.S. direct hires and 1,100 locally employed staff. State is working to identify its and other agencies' desk positions (both U.S. direct hires and locally employed staff) that will occupy the new office space. State is also examining how to accommodate new support contractors—either on or off compound—that may be used to provide needed services after the U.S. military departs Afghanistan.

State is conducting a master planning study, due in August 2014, to address on-compound facility needs unmet by current construction. That plan may address parking facilities that were removed from the current construction project. State is also considering the continued use of various leased off-compound facilities in the future.

Agency Comments

We are not making any recommendations in this report. We provided a draft of this report to State for comment. State provided technical comments that we incorporated as appropriate.

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We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees, the Secretary of State, and other interested parties. In addition, the report will be available at no charge on GAO's website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staffs have any questions about this report, please contact either Michael J. Courts at (202) 512-8980 or at courtsm@gao.gov or David Wise at (202) 512-5731 or at wised@gao.gov. Contact points for our Office of Congressional Relations and Office of Public Affairs can be found on the last page of this report. In addition to the contacts named above, Michael Armes (Assistant Director, Physical Infrastructure), Leslie Holen (Assistant Director, International Affairs and Trade) John Bauckman, Jacob Beier, Eugene Beye, David Hancock, Jon Fremont, and Marc Schwartz all made key contributions to this report. Technical assistance was provided by Lynn Cothorn, Etana Finkler, Kristine Hassinger, Ernie Jackson, Oziel Trevino, and Gwyneth Woolwine.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael J. Courts". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly legible.

Michael J. Courts
Director, International Affairs and Trade

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David J. Wise". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly legible.

David J. Wise
Director, Physical Infrastructure Issues

Enclosure

List of Addressees

The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman
The Honorable James Inhofe
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

The Honorable Robert Menendez
Chairman
The Honorable Bob Corker
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate

The Honorable Tom Coburn
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
Chairman
The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Howard P. "Buck" McKeon
Chairman
The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
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The Honorable Edward R. Royce
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The Honorable Eliot L. Engel
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Affairs
House of Representatives

The Honorable Elijah Cummings
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
House of Representatives

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chairwoman
The Honorable Nita Lowey

Ranking Member
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives

The Honorable John Tierney
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Security
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
House of Representatives



Afghanistan: Kabul Embassy Construction Costs Have Increased and Schedules Have Been Extended

**Briefing for Congressional Committees
June 2014**

Introduction

- Since re-opening in 2002, the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan has experienced a dramatic increase in staffing, followed by a gradual drawdown.
 - In 2009 and 2010, State awarded two contracts totaling \$625.4 million to construct additional housing and office facilities. State has since partially terminated one contract for the convenience of the U.S. government, and expanded the construction requirements of the second.
 - Due to broad congressional interest in the oversight of funds spent in Afghanistan, we conducted this review under the authority of the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct evaluations on GAO's initiative.
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Objectives

1. What contracts did State put in place to construct new U.S. embassy facilities in Kabul starting in 2009?
2. To what extent have construction requirements, cost, or schedule changed, and why?
3. To what extent does the present expansion match projected needs?

Methodology

- Methodology: Review of construction planning and contract file documentation, interviews with State and contractor officials, and February 2014 fieldwork in Kabul to observe progress made. We conducted this work from July 2013 through June 2014.
- State provided technical comments for this briefing, which we have incorporated as appropriate.

Results in Brief

- In 2009 and 2010, State awarded two contracts totaling \$625.4 million to meet growing facility requirements. The first contract was partially terminated in 2011; the remaining construction requirements were transferred to the other contractor.
- Construction requirements have changed; for example, additional desks and beds are to be provided. Total current cost is \$773.9 million, and overall project schedule has been extended by 2 years.
- Uncertain political and security environment makes it difficult to determine whether current projects and existing facilities will meet future embassy needs.

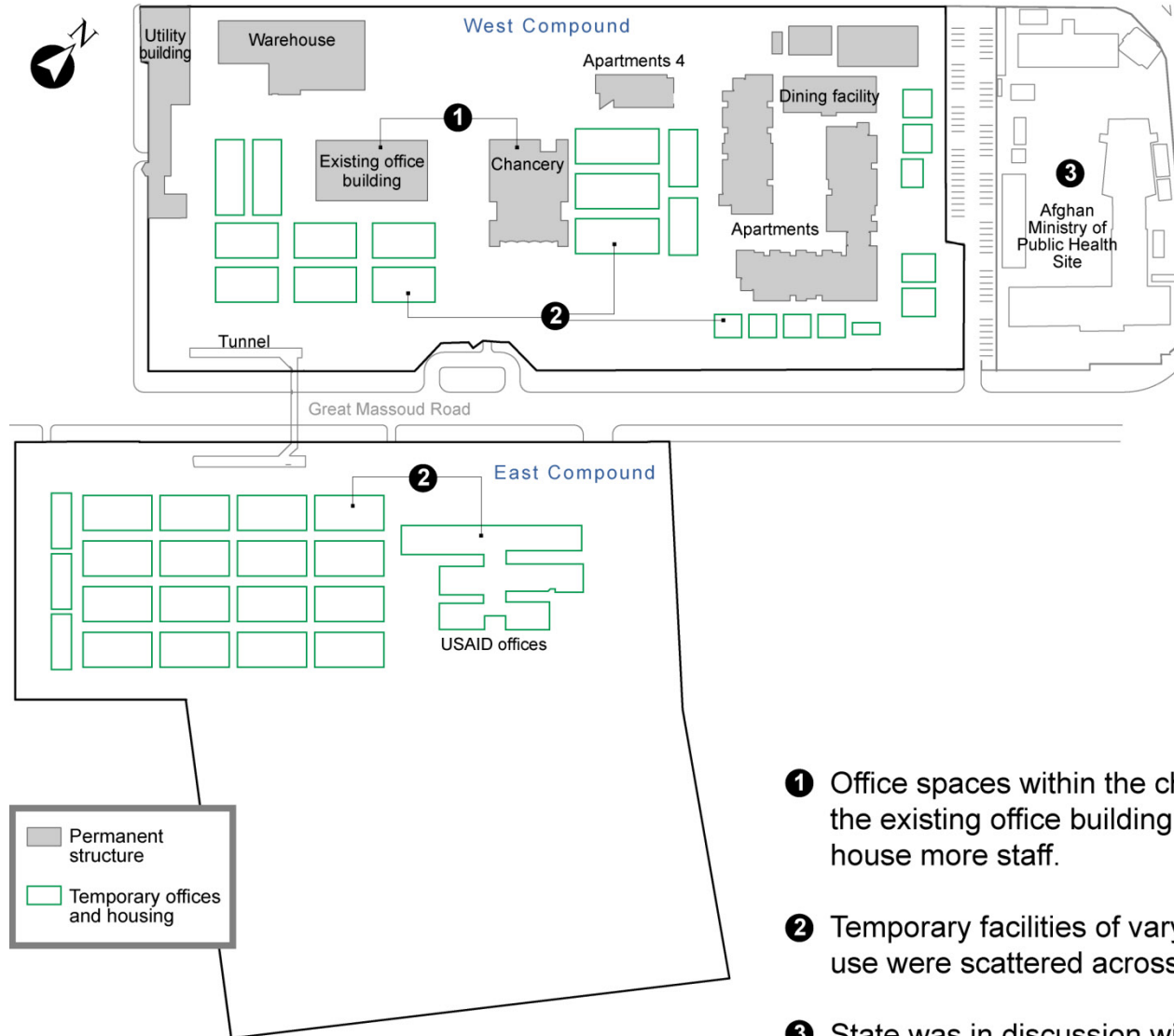
State Constructs Diplomatic Facilities Worldwide

- State's Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) is responsible for project planning, design, and construction of embassy facilities abroad.
- Embassy construction typically occurs on newly acquired property separate from an operating compound.
- State asserts that construction times for new embassy compounds range from 30 to 48 months. State indicates that such times can exceed that norm due to factors such as building on an existing compound.
- Construction requirements usually include all facilities, contracted to a single construction firm or a joint venture partnership consisting of multiple firms.

Embassy Compound Expansion from 2002 through 2009

- From 2002 through 2009, State took the following actions to expand the Kabul embassy compound:
 - OBO refurbished the existing office building, built in the 1960s.
 - State and USAID acquired hundreds of shipping containers for temporary housing and offices.
 - OBO constructed new chancery, cafeteria, warehouse, and staff apartments.
 - Embassy compressed office areas by putting more desks in office facilities to accommodate staffing growth.

Figure 1: Condition Prior to 2009 and 2010 Contracts



Undated photos intended to generally portray buildings.

- 1 Office spaces within the chancery building and the existing office building were reconfigured to house more staff.
- 2 Temporary facilities of varying size, quality, and use were scattered across the compound.
- 3 State was in discussion with the Afghan government to acquire the Afghan Ministry of Public Health site.

Objective 1: Summary

- In 2009 and 2010, State awarded two contracts totaling \$625.4 million to meet growing facility requirements.
- Plans called for sequencing construction under the two contracts and demolishing some temporary facilities.
- The first contract was partially terminated in 2011; the remaining construction requirements were transferred to the other onsite contractor.

State Awarded Two Contracts Totaling \$625.4 Million to Meet Growing Facility Requirements

Fiscal Year 2009:

Contractor 1

Awarded Amount: \$209.4 million

Requirements - design and construction of:

- office annex A
- apartment building 1
- temporary offices and housing
- utility building
- warehouse addition
- compound access facilities
- perimeter security facilities
- cafeteria and recreation center

Schedule:

- 180 days (6 months) - for temporary facilities
- 810 days (27 months) - for permanent facilities

Fiscal Year 2010:

Contractor 2

Awarded amount: \$416 million

Requirements - design and construction of:

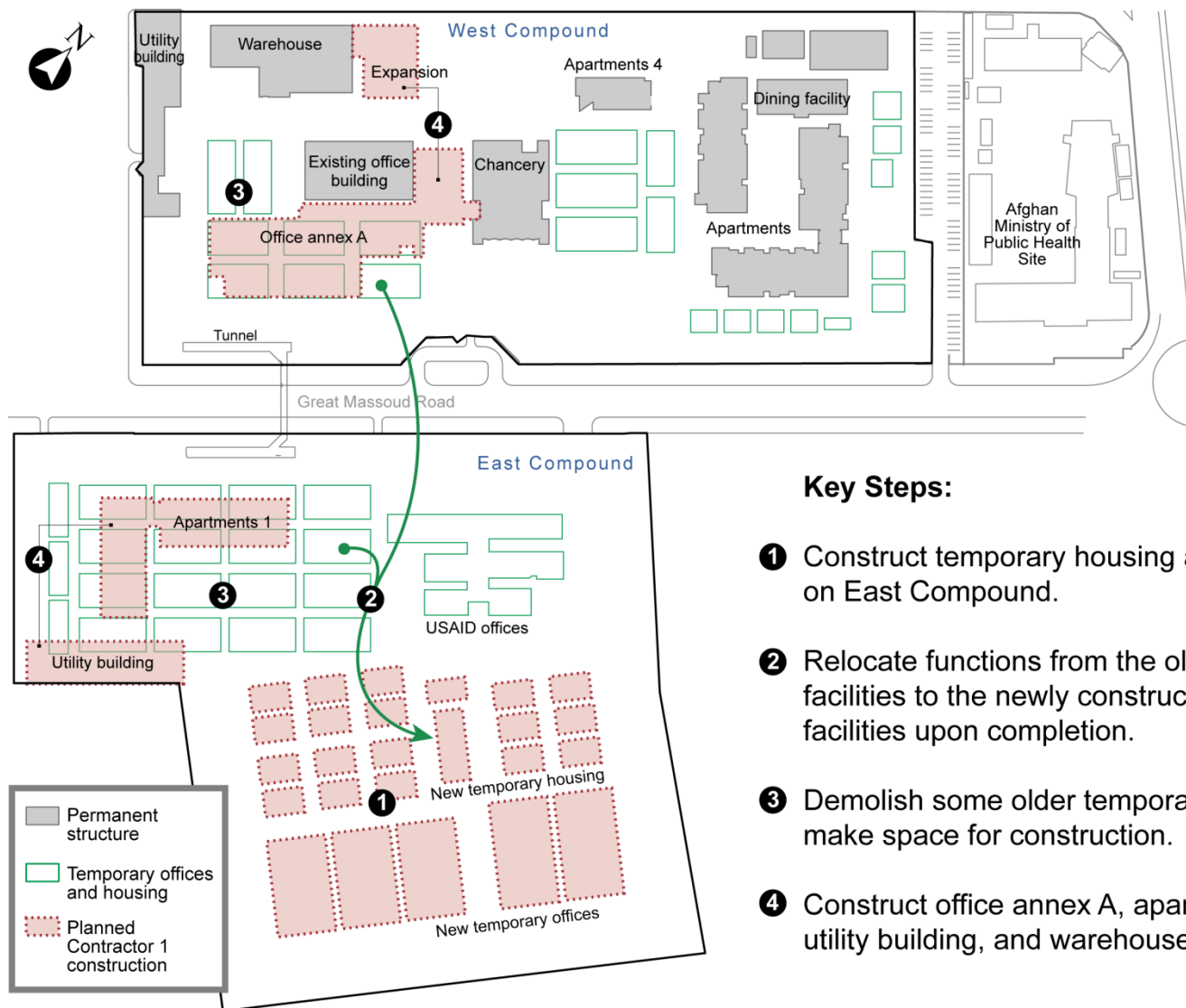
- office annex B
- apartment buildings 2 and 3
- expand apartment building 4
- compound access facilities
- perimeter security facilities
- parking facilities

Schedule:

48 months

Note: Information above is at time of contract award. The contracts were awarded in September 30, 2009, and September 30, 2010, respectively. Schedules do not start until the contractor has received notice-to-proceed for the design work at an appropriate point following contract award.

Figure 2: Contractor 1 Planned Construction



Contractor 1 Contract Partially Terminated; Remaining Construction Requirements Transferred to Contractor 2

- In September 2011, State partially terminated the Contractor 1 contract for convenience due to concerns, in part, about performance and schedule delays. Additionally, when State and the Afghan government did not reach agreement on the transfer of the Afghan Ministry of Public Health site, OBO became concerned there was insufficient space for two contractors to work on-compound.
 - Contractor 1 completed the temporary offices and housing units and did not begin construction of permanent facilities.
- Two weeks after contract termination, requirements for facilities not begun by Contractor 1 were transferred to Contractor 2, extending its contract completion date from January 2016 to July 2016.

Figure 3: Contractor 2 Planned Construction

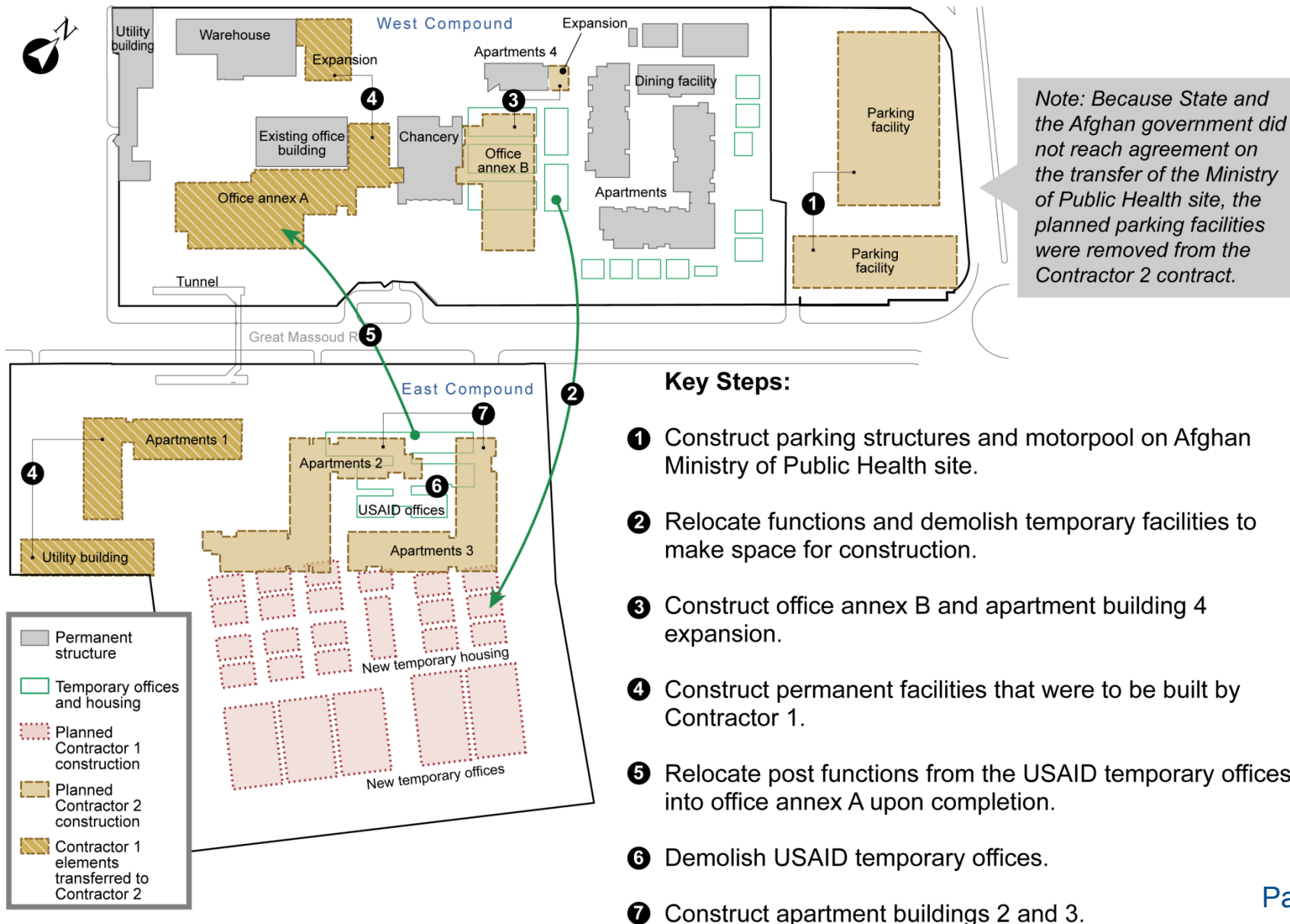
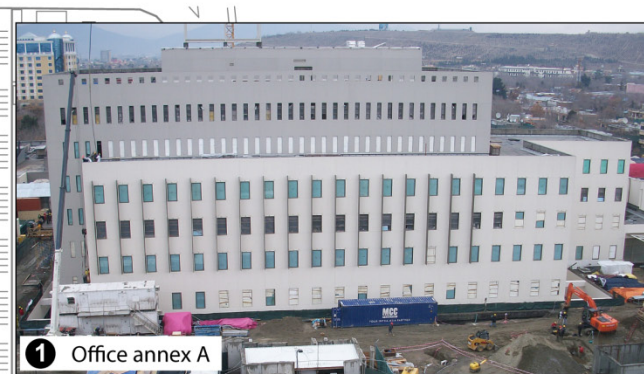
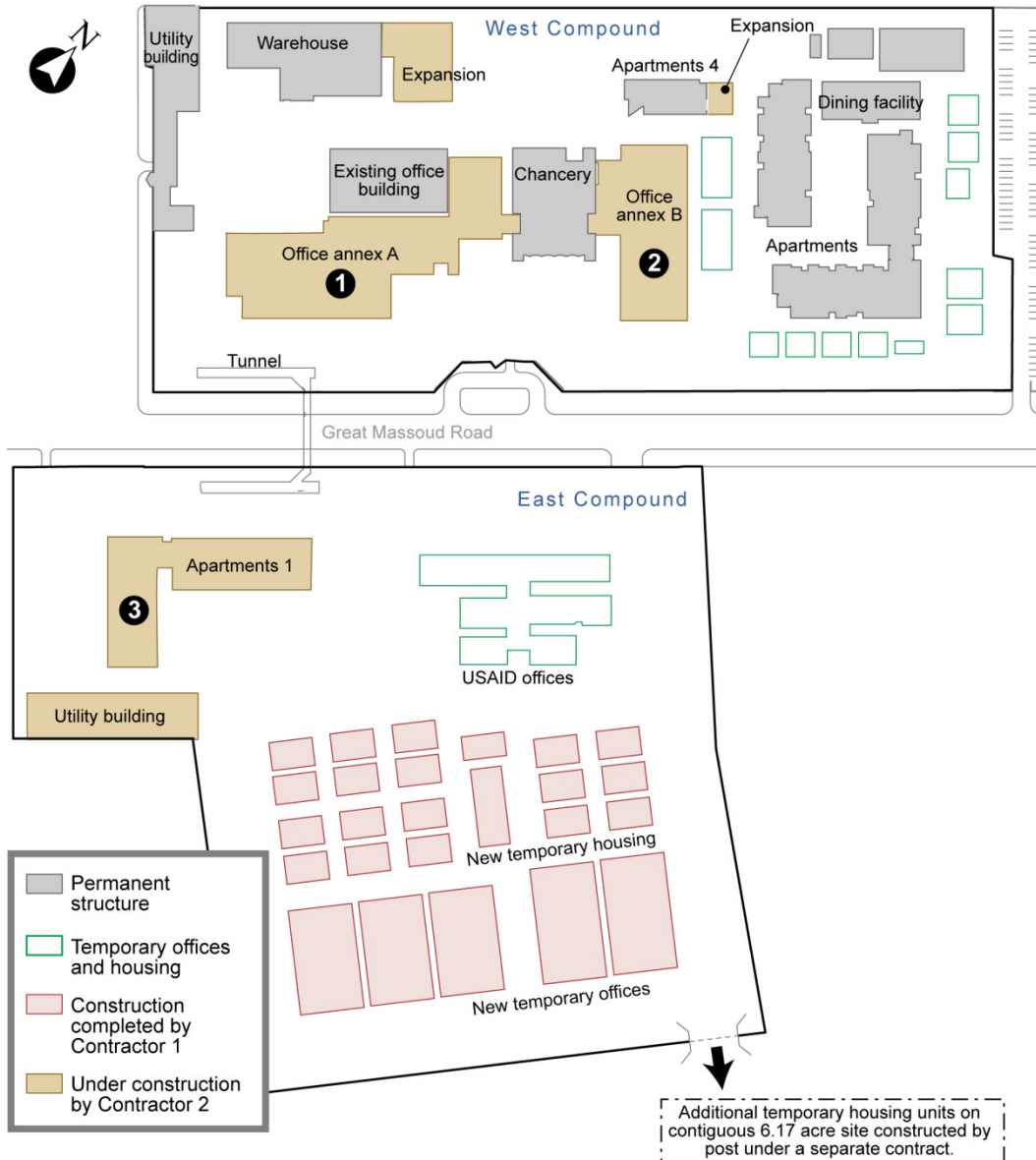
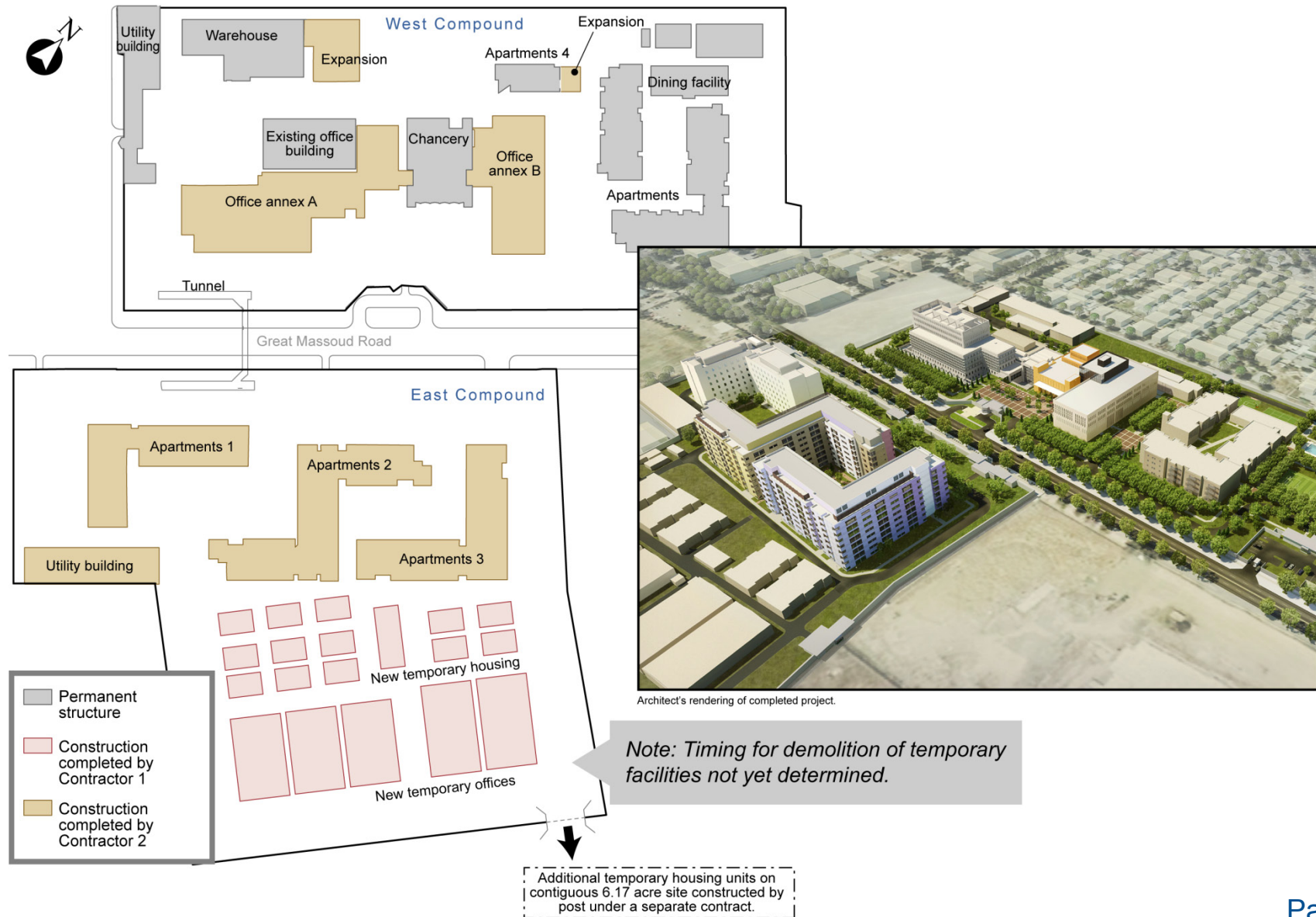


Figure 4: Current Status of Construction



Photos as of GAO's site visit in February 2014.

Figure 5: Site Upon Completion of All Planned Projects



Objective 2: Summary

- Changed construction requirements include larger buildings, loss of parking facilities, and new security upgrades.
- Post-requested staffing increases since 2009 resulted in more desks and beds than originally planned.
- Total current cost is \$773.9 million; \$148.5 million (24 percent) over the contract award amounts.
- OBO had originally planned to complete all projects by summer 2014; schedule for permanent facilities has been extended to summer 2016.
- Multiple factors have affected construction requirements, cost, and schedule.

Contract Requirements Have Changed

- December 2009:
 - Two stories added to office annex A due to post's increased staffing needs.
- September 2011:
 - Parking structures and motor pool facilities for 400 official and staff vehicles removed from construction plan because the Afghan government did not agree to transfer the Afghan Ministry of Public Health site.
 - Reconfiguration of existing office building's second floor due to post's increased staffing needs.
- March 2012:
 - New security upgrades related to additional temporary housing on adjacent site constructed by embassy Kabul under a separate contract.
- September 2013:
 - New security upgrades to perimeter walls, guard towers, and staff apartments due to increased security requirements.

Staffing Increases Affected OBO Planning and Implementation

- U.S. direct hires in Afghanistan expanded from 320 to 1,119 from January 2009 through January 2012.
 - February 2009 - OBO began planning construction requirements based on latest rightsizing report.
 - April 2009 - Embassy Kabul requested additional staff.
 - July 2009 - Embassy Kabul requested further additional staff and asked that OBO accommodate new estimates in construction.
 - March 2010 - After interagency review, OBO received approval on staffing projection revisions from the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs.
- Revisions increased size of planned facilities within both contracts.

Project Contains More Desks and Beds Than Originally Planned

- Based on March 2010 approval, over 450 additional desks added to project due to post-requested staffing increases.
 - OBO's original construction plan:
 - 545 desks in office annex A
 - 233 desks in office annex B
 - 778 = Total planned desks to construct
 - Current construction:
 - 917 desks in office annex A
 - 320 desks in office annex B
 - 1,237 = Total desks under construction
- OBO is also building space for 661 beds, about 50 more than originally planned.

Table 1: Costs Have Increased by \$148.5 Million or Nearly 24 Percent

Dollars in millions

<u>Contracts:</u>	<u>Fiscal Year 2009</u> <i>Contractor 1</i>	<u>Fiscal Year 2010</u> <i>Contractor 2</i>	<u>Total</u> <i>2 contracts</i>
Award:	\$209.4	\$416.0	\$625.4
Modifications:	<i>less (\$121.4)^a</i>	<i>plus \$269.9</i>	<i>increase \$148.5</i>
As of May 2014:	\$ 88.0	\$685.9	\$773.9 ^b

^a Decrease in contract costs is due to the partial termination of this contract for the convenience of the U.S government.

^b Totals do not reflect State's \$40 million congressional reprogramming request in 2014 to cover future additional shipping costs.

Figure 6: Schedules Have Been Extended

	2009	2010				2011				2012				2013				2014				2015				2016	
	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II
OBO's original plan	Temporary facilities to be completed by fall 2010. Office annex A and apartment building 1 to be completed by end of summer 2012.																										
						Office annex B and apartment buildings 2 and 3 to be completed by end of summer 2014.																					
Final schedule Contractor 1		Contractual delivery date for temporary facilities mid-summer 2011; final delivery end of 2011.							Late-- Permanent facilities moved to Contractor 2 contract in September 2011.																		
Current schedule Contractor 2										Contractual delivery date for all elements is July 2016. Office annex A, office annex B, and apartment building 1, are projected to be completed before this time (see below).																	

Source: GAO analysis of State planning and contract file documents. | GAO-14-661R

- Estimated delivery dates for key buildings are:
 - office annex A – **October 2014**, rather than summer 2012.
 - apartment building 1 – **July 2015**, rather than summer 2012.
 - office annex B – **November 2015**, rather than summer 2014.
- Although not yet reflected in the contract, estimated delivery of apartment buildings 2 and 3 is **March 2017**, rather than summer 2014.

Multiple Factors Affected Requirements, Cost, and Schedule Throughout the Project

- State-introduced risks during planning:
 - awarding contracts before Afghan Ministry of Public Health site was fully acquired,
 - aggressive scheduling,
 - tightly sequencing work of two contractors on one site.
 - Construction on an occupied compound in a conflict environment.
 - Increases in numbers and changes in composition of embassy staffing requirements.
 - Design changes and new security requirements.
 - Delayed turnover of site areas to contractors.
 - Contractor performance delays and transfer of construction requirements from one contract to another.
 - Delays and changes to shipping routes of building materials due to difficulties with shipments transiting through Pakistan.
-

Ongoing Project Issues

- Shipping of building materials – likely to increase contract costs.
- Changes in construction requirements related to changing post needs
 - Changing security requirements.
 - Unresolved master planning issues regarding post functions and facilities on and off compound.
- Design issues
 - Floor-to-floor heights within apartment buildings 2 and 3.
 - Temporary housing security upgrades.
- Construction management continuity and contract oversight issues
 - Since 2009, three different project directors and seven different construction managers assigned on-site.
 - Loss of OBO project support staff, including safety and quality assurance.
 - Concurrent oversight of multiple construction projects not included in the 2009 and 2010 contracts.

Objective 3: Summary

- Uncertain political and security environment makes it difficult to determine whether current projects and existing facilities will meet future embassy needs.
- Planned compound after completion is to contain 1,487 desks and 819 beds.
- Approximately 600 U.S. direct hires and 1,100 locally employed staff projected for Kabul in 2015.
- Planning continues for future embassy facility needs.

Difficult to Determine Whether Present Construction Will Meet Future Needs

- Long-term construction has been occurring in an unpredictable political and security environment characterized by dramatic changes in U.S. staff levels.
- Military drawdown levels announced in May 2014.
 - State decisions to close diplomatic facilities in the field or curtail their activities will be linked to security conditions and may affect embassy staffing or operations.
 - State will decide whether and where to engage support contractors to replace life-support services currently provided by the military.
- Composition of U.S. agencies, staffing levels, and embassy facility needs subject to change.

Compound to Contain 1,487 Desks and 819 Beds When Projects Are Complete

- Once complete, the permanent facilities are to contain:
 - 1,487 total desks, in new and older office buildings.
 - 819 beds, in new and older apartment buildings.
- Numbers assume demolition of all temporary offices and housing.
- Numbers assume reconfiguring offices within existing facilities to alleviate overcrowding.
- State's long-term objective is to have staff in permanent, hardened structures.

Planning Continues for Embassy Staffing

- Projected embassy staffing for 2015 is approximately 600 U.S. direct hires and 1,100 locally employed staff.
 - Desk and bed space to be used by U.S. direct hires as well as some locally employed and other staff.
 - State is working to identify agency and section desk positions for permanent office space.
 - State's plans for accommodating support contractors are in process.

Planning Continues for Some Additional Facility Needs

- State is conducting a master planning study, due in August 2014, to address facility needs on-compound unmet by current construction, including:
 - Permanent vehicle maintenance facility and parking.
 - Possible modifications to staff apartments built in 2005.
- State is also considering future use of leased off-compound facilities.

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