



Integrated Country Strategy

Bolivia

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1. Chief of Mission Priorities

Despite a diplomatic relationship of almost 170 years between Bolivia and the United States, relations between our countries have been strained since President Evo Morales was elected in 2006 and began a policy of public hostility towards the United States, the U.S. Embassy, and “neo-liberal” economic policies in general. Under President Morales and his MAS (Movement Toward Socialism) governing party, the Bolivian government dismantled vital elements of the bilateral relationship, including expelling the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, and the U.S. Ambassador. The State Department subsequently withdrew all counter-narcotics assistance, although Bolivia remains the world’s third largest grower of coca and a major transshipment point for, and source of, cocaine. We have not exchanged ambassadors since 2008.

The presidential elections scheduled for late 2019 will be an inflection point in Bolivian history no matter who wins. President Morales was elected to a second full term in office in 2014. Despite a two-term limit in the 2009 constitution and a 2016 public referendum that endorsed them, he has declared his candidacy for 2019 with the help of a Constitutional Court ruling that effectively invalidated those term limits.

The United States supports a democratic and economically sustainable Bolivia with strong, independent institutions that respect the rule of law and improve the lives of the Bolivian people. We seek to partner with Bolivia to address transnational issues and to encourage a Bolivia that collaborates with its neighbors and the international community. We are increasingly concerned by the lack of independence of Bolivia’s branches of government and the closing of democratic space. Executive branch influence over the judiciary, the selective enforcement of the law to suppress political opposition and government critics, and hostility towards independent media have characterized the past few years.

No matter what happens in the elections of 2019, our diplomatic mission will focus on reaching out to the people of Bolivia to support their efforts to strengthen Bolivia’s press freedom, social inclusion, prosperity, democracy, and defense and protection of human rights, as well as on cooperating with local and sub-national governments on other areas of mutual interest, when possible. While President Morales and his government pride themselves on being vocal critics of the United States and have fed the country a diet of anti-American propaganda for over a decade, 2017 Latinobarometro data indicates that nearly half of all Bolivians have a favorable view of the United States. We will take every opportunity to show Bolivians that cooperation with the U.S. government brings benefits to Bolivia, and we will rely upon educational, professional, and commercial exchanges to enable the Bolivian people to experience our country and values first-hand, thus undercutting the anti-American rhetoric.

Under President Morales’ administration, Bolivia has made important strides in increasing the GDP per capita, from \$1,200 in 2006, to \$3,100 in 2016. However, this progress in lifting people out of poverty is fragile. A 2018 study by the International Monetary Fund found that Bolivia has the world’s largest informal sector as a percentage of its overall economy. Approximately sixty-two percent of

Bolivians work in this shadow economy, which ranges from illegally imported textiles, to unlicensed eateries, to illicit narcotics production and gold mining. Expanding sustainable, licit, economic opportunity and prosperity within the country will entail diversification of the Bolivian economy, increased trade and investment, and tackling transnational crime. U.S. businesses are often shut out of opportunities to work with state-run enterprises. We will seek opportunities to encourage changes to these policies.

Safeguarding the safety and security of U.S. citizens at home and abroad is a top priority in Bolivia. Natural disasters are numerous in Bolivia, with neither a tourism sector nor emergency response sector equipped to handle the regular droughts, forest fires, flooding and occasional earthquake. This endangers both resident and visiting U.S. citizens, and the difficulty in coordinating with our Bolivian government counterparts can inhibit our ability to effectively assist them during crises. We believe that emergency preparedness and response is an area of mutual interest and one in which there is substantial opportunity for cooperation at nearly every level of government. We will focus our efforts on regions of the country that are most visited by the approximately 45,000 American citizens who travel to Bolivia annually, and where the bulk of our estimated 20,000 expatriate U.S. citizens reside. To secure our borders, we will focus on strategic information sharing initiatives with the Bolivian government to improve the screening of individuals and cargo traveling to and from the United States.

While Bolivia has low levels of personal crime, with a homicide rate well below the regional average, there is a growing concern about increased criminality. Issues of citizen-security are most acute in Santa Cruz and the eastern half of the country. Although it does not suffer high levels of narco-violence, Bolivia is a major producer of coca leaf and a known source and transit country for cocaine and other illicit drugs that are mostly destined for Brazil and Europe, but also find their way to the United States. While penalties for those committing drug offenses are harsh when applied, efforts to combat production and transit remain of dubious effectiveness. We will prioritize working with international partners such as the United Nations, Bolivia's South American neighbors, and the European destination-countries to diminish not only narcotics trafficking but the often-parallel phenomena of trafficking in arms and people, money laundering, and the environmental devastation that accompanies these criminal activities.

Over the next four years we hope to rekindle our historically multifaceted bilateral relationship at a level that will advance mutual interests and rebuild trust between our governments. A slow, deliberate pace will be the best.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: Expand economic opportunity and prosperity for the United States and Bolivia.

Mission Objective 1.1: Promote market-oriented economic and governance reforms and other measures that encourage a sustainable, open, diversified Bolivian economy with strong environmental protection that looks to the United States as a primary trading partner.

Mission Objective 1.2: Secure commercial opportunities for U.S. businesses in Bolivia and increase commercial, entrepreneurial, and academic relationships between the United States and Bolivia.

Mission Goal 2: Strengthen U.S. security and protect U.S. citizens in Bolivia.

Mission Objective 2.1: Enhance Bolivia's disaster preparedness, response and management capabilities to protect the lives of U.S. and Bolivian citizens.

Mission Objective 2.2: Attain increased Bolivian cooperation with U.S. and other security partners in the hemisphere on: efforts to combat criminal organizations, transnational crime, and visa fraud with a focus on trafficking in persons, arms, and narcotics; customs enforcement; and visa security.

Mission Goal 3: Encourage democracy and justice in a Bolivia that sees the United States as a vital partner.

Mission Objective 3.1: Strengthen the defense and protection of democratic values, human rights and good governance in Bolivia with a focus on a just, equitable rule of law and the growth and impact of an influential civil society.

Mission Objective 3.2: Counter the official anti-Americanism by projecting American values and culture, increasing Bolivians' first-hand knowledge of the United States, and encouraging a public opinion environment supportive of U.S. values.

Management Objective 1.1: Improve ICASS customer satisfaction, cost effectiveness, and accountability.

Management Objective 1.2: Secure work and residential environments.

Management Objective 1.3: If, after the elections of late 2019, the democratically elected government favors collaboration with the United States, increase resources to support the additional infrastructure and personnel required for the return of a limited number of USG agencies to Mission Bolivia.

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Note: Key Activity dates are start dates.

Mission Goal 1: Expand economic opportunity and prosperity for the United States and Bolivia.

Description and Linkages: Although Bolivia’s economic growth has been consistently strong throughout the last decade, it remains one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere. U.S. exports of goods to Bolivia supported an estimated four thousand U.S. jobs in 2015 (latest Dept. of Commerce data available). In 2016, the United States exported goods totaling \$657 million to Bolivia and imported goods totaling \$974 million from Bolivia. Market-oriented reforms will provide increased opportunities for U.S. companies to export to, and invest in, Bolivia. In view of the official policies of anti-Americanism of the past decade, an increase in commercial, entrepreneurial, and academic relationships could facilitate reforms and trade. Given Bolivia’s historical reliance on extractive industries, a renewed focus on environmental protection would lead to more sustainable prosperity.

Links directly to the State-USAID Joint Strategic Goal Framework: 2.1 “Promote American prosperity by advancing bilateral relationships...to open markets, secure commercial opportunities, and foster investment and innovation...” 2.2 “Promote healthy, educated and productive populations in partner countries to derive inclusive and sustainable development, open new markets...” 2.3 “Advance U.S. economic security by ...combatting corruption and promoting market-oriented economic and governance reforms.”

Mission Objective 1.1: Promote market-oriented economic and governance reforms and other measures that encourage a sustainable, open, diversified Bolivian economy with strong environmental protection that looks to the United States as a primary trading partner.

Justification: As Bolivia’s economy is highly dependent on extractive industries, a key to sustainable economic development is economic diversification. Our embassy aims to work with and empower Bolivian entrepreneurs as well as encourage fair trade between Bolivia and the United States.

Mission Objective 1.2: Secure commercial opportunities for U.S. businesses in Bolivia and increase commercial, entrepreneurial, and academic relationships between the United States and Bolivia.

Justification: In an uncooperative and at times hostile government-to-government relationship, the most successful, engaging and rewarding relationships with the Bolivian people are within the commercial, entrepreneurial and academic sectors. Continued cooperation and outreach to these sectors of society marginalizes anti-American rhetoric while strengthening U.S.-Bolivian bonds.

Mission Goal 2: Strengthen U.S. security and protect U.S. citizens in Bolivia.

Description and Linkages: Bolivia is a tourist destination for Americans and subject to a wide range of natural disasters, including flooding, forest fires, and the occasional earthquake. In addition, Bolivia is a major source and transit country of cocaine and is vulnerable to a range of transnational and domestic crime that is associated with illicit narcotics production and trafficking. We seek to work more closely with Bolivia on measures to protect lives, combat crime, and ensure the security of our visa process. Links directly to State-USAID Strategic Goal #1 – Protect America’s Security at Home and Abroad, in particular 1.3 “Counter instability, transnational crime and violence that threaten U.S. interests...” and 1.4 “Strengthen U.S. border security and protect U.S. citizens abroad.”

Mission Objective 2.1: Enhance Bolivia’s disaster preparation, response and management capabilities to protect the lives of U.S. and Bolivian citizens.

Justification: Disaster preparation and response requires positive and cooperative relationships with the Bolivian government, NGOs, and private sector counterparts. Any official engagement in this realm strengthens our ability to safeguard the interests of U.S. citizens in Bolivia and promotes a positive image of the U.S.

Mission Objective 2.2: Attain increased Bolivian cooperation with U.S. and other security partners in the hemisphere on: efforts to combat criminal organizations, transnational crime, and visa fraud with a focus on trafficking in persons, arms, and narcotics; customs enforcement; and visa security.

Justification: Engaging with the Bolivian government on information sharing initiatives and in supporting strong, democratic institutions will enhance both U.S. and Bolivian national security. The establishment of stronger, more adept and transparent institutions that combat criminal organizations, transnational crime, and visa fraud is not only in the interest of Bolivia, but of the hemisphere as a whole.

Mission Goal 3: Encourage democracy and justice in a Bolivia that sees the United States as a vital partner.

Description and Linkages: The 2019 general election will be an inflection point in Bolivian history, no matter who wins. For the inauguration of 2020, Bolivia either will have just come through a constitutional challenge with a new President, or will be facing nearly twenty years of government under Evo Morales. No matter what happens during the 2019 elections, Mission Bolivia will continue to prioritize engagement directly with the people of Bolivia via public diplomacy and diplomatic engagement by Mission Bolivia staff to demonstrate the benefits of democratic values and principles. This goal links directly to the Department of State's new mission statement "On behalf of the American people, we promote and demonstrate democratic values and advance a free, peaceful, and prosperous world."

Mission Objective 3.1: Strengthen the defense and protection of democratic values, human rights, and good governance in Bolivia with a focus on a just, equitable rule of law and the growth and impact of an influential civil society.

Justification: Democracy faces several challenges in Bolivia as spaces for public debate have narrowed. The lack of transparency among government institutions is of concern, as transparency helps expose corruption, cronyism and impunity, all of which are detrimental to sustained democratic growth. The embassy will continue to support civic participation among Bolivians and work with local governments to promote accountability and transparency among elected officials.

Mission Objective 3.2: Counter the official anti-Americanism by projecting American values and culture, increasing Bolivians' first-hand knowledge of the United States, and encouraging a public opinion environment supportive of U.S. values.

Justification: Anti-American rhetoric from the GOB is common. The Embassy will continue to promote tourism, business ties, exchanges, and study in the United States. Continued use of cultural programs that reach different segments of Bolivian society and showcase American art, film, literature and music will further an appreciation and understanding of American culture among wide segments of the population.

4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1.1: Improve ICASS customer satisfaction, cost effectiveness, and accountability.

Justification: We seek to improve our efficiency and effectiveness by improving our processes and productivity.

Management Objective 1.2: Secure work and residential environments.

Justification: The Marine Security Guard Residence and Santa Cruz Consular Agency have been located for years in leased buildings that are no longer suitable and in the case of the Marine Security Guard Residence, downright dangerous. With expiring leases at both places we must move, giving us the opportunity to find more modern, secure, cost-effective, facilities. Finalizing the purchase of the Chief of Mission Residence (CMR) will save the U.S. government money in the long-term and guarantee a secure, built-to-spec CMR for the chief of mission.

Management Objective 1.3: If, after the elections of late 2019, the democratically-elected government favors collaboration with the United States, increase resources to support the additional infrastructure and personnel required for the return of a limited number of USG agencies to Mission Bolivia.

Justification: Our current level of diplomatic engagement is far lower than the historic norm. Mission Bolivia is currently less than a quarter of the size it was a decade ago. We have not exchanged ambassadors since Bolivia expelled the U.S. Ambassador in 2008. A return to a friendly bilateral relationship will require an increase in personnel and resources to pursue new areas of mutual interest and opportunity.