



# Integrated Country Strategy

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## Afghanistan

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## 1. Chief of Mission Priorities

U.S. policy in Afghanistan -- and the work of Embassy Kabul -- are grounded in the fundamental objective of preventing any further attacks on the United States by terrorists enjoying safe haven or support in Afghanistan. Our operations and policy priorities center on: consolidating and sustaining the effects of U.S. counterterrorism efforts to date; ending the conflict between the Taliban and wider Afghan society that perpetuates instability and sustains an ecosystem for terrorists; and shifting responsibility to the Afghan government and people to secure their borders and their institutions, and meet the basic needs of Afghan citizens.

Achieving these objectives will continue to require a robust security and life-support infrastructure; intense efforts to assess threats and manage risk in order to keep our personnel as safe as practicable while they actively pursue results; close coordination with U.S. Forces to maintain unity of effort; and sustained development assistance and capacity building to accelerate the transition to Afghan government responsibility for core functions of security and governance.

Many factors have shaped the environment in which we pursue the goal of an Afghanistan that is stable and at peace. Negative factors include the constant threat of Taliban, Haqqani, ISIS-K and other terrorist group violence, adventurism by Afghanistan's neighbors, and drought. Internal weaknesses in Afghanistan's political institutions and economy exacerbate these and other challenges. However, after 17 years of engagement we have new Afghan partners in the security forces, government, private sector and civil society with the skills and vision to lead on reform. Meanwhile, war-weariness and the pressure of our new conditions-based strategy have brought both sides closer than ever before to negotiation in pursuit of a political settlement. The June 2018 cease-fire was a milestone achievement which showed Afghans for the first time in decades what peace could look like.

The Mission prioritizes this peace effort as the most effective and sustainable way to achieve the goal of preventing the recurrence of a terrorist threat emanating from Afghanistan against the United States, while underpinning stability in a strategically important region. To this end, we support Afghan-led efforts to reduce violence, including at a grassroots level, and promote development. We have augmented our staffing, both in Kabul and imminently in the field, and we have created an integrated system with military and intelligence colleagues at working and policy levels to take advantage of openings to peace.

Achieving, then implementing, a settlement requires basic government functionality and political coherence. Unfortunately the forces that have historically separated Afghans continue to threaten the fractious Government of National Unity. Parliamentary and presidential elections (in fall 2018 and spring 2019, respectively) are both a threat and an opportunity given this political fragility. If they are ill-executed and lack credibility, they could undercut institutions and rule of law. If they represent an improvement over the past, then elections hold

some promise of strengthening the legitimacy of the government as it negotiates peace. Helping the Afghans make this overall effort a success requires our engagement on multiple fronts. We have focused on key programs that support electoral transparency. To increase public confidence and government legitimacy beyond elections, we will intensify efforts to help the Afghan government and people increase government transparency, hold corrupt actors to account and strengthen law enforcement capabilities. The “Afghanistan Compact” signed in 2017 has provided a useful framework for ongoing reforms; additional progress will continue to require regular interventions by U.S. and international leaders.

We are mindful of the transnational threats which have proliferated in this region. We will continue to build on the strong cooperation we receive from Afghan counterparts to track people, weapons and funding of concern to the United States. Criminal networks take advantage of Afghanistan’s ungoverned physical spaces and gaps in regulation and enforcement, while terrorists benefit from these elements and continue to spread extremist doctrines. Afghan security forces and government authorities collaborate with us to contain our common enemies.

None of these efforts now underway can be sustained without a growing Afghan economy, and challenges to this goal extend beyond issues relating to security. Capricious application of the law and regulations must end, and a business-friendly environment must emerge. Using capacity-building programs, high-level engagement, and the agenda of the Afghanistan Compact, we are working with partners in the government and business community who want to see investment, development and increased trade take the place of donor dependence. Every year we have seen the percentage of the budget that Afghans generate increase, and we will continue to help them take advantage of opportunities in mining and exports, especially to India.

Finally, all of this rests on our talented staff, who need the right technology, infrastructure, and security, and as much mobility as possible. Our well-chosen personnel are taking steps to mitigate the disadvantage of constant staff turnover by improving knowledge transfers. We also see strength in our diversity: we have U.S. direct hires, local staff, contractors from all over the world, and third country national employees of other embassies. We continually reassess the size and configuration of Mission Kabul, one of the largest embassies in the world, so that we can efficiently and effectively advance the goals of the South Asia Strategy during this challenging but exciting period of Afghanistan’s history.

## **2. Mission Strategic Framework**

### **Mission Goal 1: Achieve peace and stability in Afghanistan.**

**Mission Objective 1.1:** A sustainable political settlement between the Afghan government and Taliban that reduces violence, respects Afghanistan's constitution, and upholds the rights of women and minorities.

### **Mission Goal 2: Government in Afghanistan is more stable, democratic, and accountable.**

**Mission Objective 2.1:** An Afghan government that is more stable, democratic, responsive, and increasingly capable of performing key functions (CDCS DO3).

### **Mission Goal 3: Prevent the recurrence of a terrorist threats emanating from Afghanistan against the United States, while also strengthening law enforcement.**

**Mission Objective 3.1:** A strategic partnership with Afghanistan that protects U.S. national security interests, including denying safe haven to terrorist groups and transnational criminal organizations.

### **Mission Goal 4: Economic prosperity in Afghanistan based on private sector led exports, and job creation with social gains in education, health, and women's empowerment.**

**Mission Objective 4.1:** Private sector-driven, export-led economic growth is accelerated, leading to increased domestic revenues and budget sustainability, inclusive growth, and regional economic integration (CDCS DO1).

**Management Objective 1: Security Program that facilitates U.S. diplomacy and keeps people and facilities safe.**

**Management Objective 2: Implement the Kabul Master Plan.**

**Management Objective 3: Ensure appropriate staffing to achieve mission objectives.**

### 3. Mission Goals and Objectives

#### **Mission Goal 1: Achieve peace and stability in Afghanistan.**

**Description and Linkages:** Goal 1 advances Pillar IV of the 2017 National Security Strategy (NSS), “Advance American Influence” and also bolsters the NSS’s Priority Action for South and Central Asia by seeking to partner with Afghanistan to promote peace and security in the region. This objective also supports a fundamental pillar of President Trump’s South Asia strategy that calls for the possibility of a political settlement between the Afghan government and the Taliban and that aims to create the conditions for a political process to achieve a lasting peace that reduces violence and includes protections for women and minorities.

**Mission Objective 1.1:** A sustainable political settlement between the Afghan government and Taliban that reduces violence, respects Afghanistan’s constitution, and upholds the rights of women and minorities.

**Justification:** The United States seeks an Afghanistan where a political settlement is reached between the Afghan government and the Taliban which aims to create the conditions for a political process to achieve a lasting peace that reduces violence and includes protections for women and minorities. Risks associated with not achieving these Mission Objectives include the persistence of terrorist threats that impact the security of the U.S. homeland and our allies, and cross-border terrorism that raises the prospect of instability in the region.

#### **Mission Goal 2: Government in Afghanistan is more stable, democratic, and accountable.**

**Description and linkages:** Goal 2 promotes stability in Afghanistan and USG national security interests aligned with the President’s South Asia Strategy. If the Afghan government is better able to provide access to a transparent justice system, conduct credible elections, deliver basic services, reduce corruption, and engage with citizens; then it will strengthen its legitimacy and more effectively counter parallel governance and justice systems, thereby promoting conditions for peace. It supports the Afghan government to achieve such capabilities, and to become a stronger partner in the pursuit of bilateral, regional, and U.S. national security priorities.

**Mission Objective 2.1:** An Afghan government that is more stable, democratic, responsive, and increasingly capable of performing key functions (CDCS DO3).

**Justification:** To achieve Mission Goal 2, the Mission works with the Afghan Government to strengthen judicial and corrections system capacity and access to justice services based on Afghan law—including for vulnerable populations such as women, children, minorities, and the indigent, supports the Afghan government’s efforts to conduct elections and bolster the accountability and transparency of Afghan government systems, including at the local-level. . Risks associated with not achieving this goal include poor government effectiveness and credibility that undermines their legitimacy and negatively affects the conditions needed for peace and stability.

**Mission Goal 3: Prevent the recurrence of a terrorist threat emanating from Afghanistan against the United States, while also strengthening law enforcement.**

**Description and Linkages:** Goal 3 advances Pillar IV of the 2017 National Security Strategy (NSS) by giving priority to strengthening states as a means to avoid threats to the American homeland created by instability. The NSS Priority Action on Fragile States, by engaging in Afghanistan, we seek to prevent the reemergence of terrorist safe havens. This Goal also supports NSS South and Central Asia Priority Actions, which seek a stable and self-reliant Afghanistan, promote peace and security regionally, increase the legitimacy of its government, and reduce the appeal of violent extremist organizations. It also supports the third pillar of the President’s South Asia Strategy to stop the resurgence of safe havens that enable terrorist threats to America, and to expand authority for American armed forces to target the terrorist and criminal networks that sow violence throughout Afghanistan.

**Mission Objective 3.1:** A strategic partnership with Afghanistan that protects U.S. national security interests, including denying safe haven to terrorist groups and transnational criminal organizations.

**Justification:** Our strategic partnership with Afghanistan will protect U.S. national security interests through train, assist, and advise programs, building institutional security capacity through reform-oriented reforms, and by strengthening institutional border security and law enforcement mechanisms and bodies.

**Mission Goal 4: Economic prosperity in Afghanistan based on private sector led exports, and job creation with social gains in education, health, and women’s empowerment.**

**Description and Linkages:** Goal 4 advances Pillar II and III of the 2017 National Security Strategy and the President’s Strategy for South Asia by partnering with Afghanistan’s government, private sector, civil society, health, and education institutions to promote a self-sufficient, inclusive, and resilient economy and stronger, mutually beneficial relationships

between Afghanistan and key regional partners. This goal also supports the State-USAID 2018-2022 Joint Strategic Plan (JSP)

**Mission Objective 4.1:** Private sector-driven, export-led economic growth is accelerated, leading to increased domestic revenues and budget sustainability, inclusive growth, and regional economic integration (CDCS DO1).

**Justification:** The United States seeks an Afghanistan that is economically self-sufficient and driven by private sector-led growth across a range of sectors including trade, agriculture, energy, telecommunications, and services. Efforts will focus on the promotion of economic linkages that bolster connectivity and seek a stable and self-reliant Afghanistan that is economically integrated in the region. Expanding economic growth in export-oriented sectors, promoting market-oriented economic and governance reforms, as well as advancing bilateral relationships and leveraging international institutions and agreements to open markets, secure commercial opportunities, and foster investment and innovation will be critical activities. To promote inclusive growth, the efforts will focus on strengthening women's empowerment and improving the quality of education and health services. Overall, the goal remains to transition Afghanistan from an assistance recipient to an enduring economic partner, and to promote prosperity through sustained economic growth and job creation. Risks associated with not achieving these Mission Objectives include increasing youth unemployment and poverty which could provide fertile recruiting grounds for extremists and continued lack of regional integration that would impede broader U.S. security and self-sufficiency goals.

## 4. Management Objectives

### **Management Objective 1: Security Program that Facilitates U.S. Diplomacy and Keeps People and Facilities Safe**

**Justification:** The dynamic and fluid security environment in Afghanistan requires a robust security platform and risk management processes to facilitate U.S. Mission goals and objectives. We constantly review intelligence as an interagency and adjust our security posture and movements of Chief of Mission personnel using a deliberate, risk management approach. Meanwhile, we will continue to improve our vetting processes to identify potential insider threats and work with Consular to identify persons seeking to enter the United States who may pose a national security threat or are seeking to enter through fraudulent means. We continue to increase the number of diplomatic engagements on and off Embassy facilities, and signed a new Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Department of Defense in April 2018, which will allow us to leverage U.S. Military assets to travel outside of Kabul more frequently to support Mission objectives. We will also continue to assess our physical and technical security platforms, work with Management on consolidating personnel on security compliant facilities, and conduct complex exercises with our Afghan and military partners to increase our emergency readiness, including planning for potential evacuations of U.S. citizens.

### **Management Objective 2: Implement the Kabul Master Plan.**

**Justification:** Construction projects continue to mitigate deficiencies in our work and life support areas. The Kabul East Embassy Compound (KEEC) construction project, starting in 2019 with completion in 2023, will add approximately 1400 beds in hardened buildings, as well as medical facilities, fire house, warehouse, helicopter landing zone, utilities, and other support structures to the Embassy compound. Completion of this project will allow for consolidation onto the Embassy compound of personnel currently residing in non-hardened residences and work spaces at the West Villas and Camps Sullivan and Seitz. The Alvarado Phase 3 construction project, with contract award in September 2018 and completion by December 2020, will provide hardened residential and work space for personnel based at Camp Alvarado. At the end of FY20, all Alvarado personnel should live and work in hardened structures; at the end of 2023, all COM and third-party contract personnel housed by the Embassy will live and work in hardened structures. These timelines are dependent on meeting construction schedules.

### **Management Objective 3: Ensure appropriate staffing to achieve mission objectives.**

**Justification:** Implementing the President's South Asia Strategy has resulted in additional personnel requirements. Peace and reconciliation initiatives, development projects, and train/advise/assist programs are growing in response to programmatic needs. We are also

planning for the deployment of COM personnel in increasing numbers, and for longer periods of time, to USFOR-A forward operating bases in the coming year. The dynamic security environment and changes in size and scope of U.S. forces will impact our staffing requirements. Staffing at the Embassy compound will be constrained by the number of housing units. The Mission will continuously and deliberately reconcile staffing needs with foreign policy objectives to ensure it maintains the optimal number of personnel necessary to achieve key objectives.