



# Integrated Country Strategy

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## Albania

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## 1. Chief of Mission Priorities

Implementing rule-of-law reforms, curtailing corruption and organized crime, strengthening security, and encouraging the development of civil society remain top U.S. policy goals in Albania.

Reform of Albania's corrupt judiciary remains the Mission's top priority. In July 2016, parliament unanimously adopted constitutional amendments to reform Albania's judicial system. Strong U.S. support for reform was viewed as vital to the successful parliamentary vote, and continued U.S. engagement is viewed as critical to ensure the reform's full implementation. As part of the reform, the United States is supporting the creation of a Special Anti-Corruption Unit (SPAK), which includes a Special Prosecution Office and National Bureau of Investigation, modeled on the FBI. The critical first step, the vetting of judges and prosecutors to root out corruption, is underway and senior members of the judiciary have been dismissed or resigned as a result.

Albania today has the smallest and least capable military force in the NATO Alliance. Nevertheless, Albania has also proven itself the most enthusiastic partner in the Alliance through its willingness to support NATO missions. The United States is working to transform Albania into a more capable NATO ally by increasing the capacity and interoperability of the Albanian Armed Forces, supporting Albania's deployment of troops to NATO missions and other international operations, and promoting increased Albanian defense spending. We also seek to develop Albanian's non-military activities in support of Alliance values. Such activities include enhancing capabilities to counter international terrorism, violent extremism, and foreign fighters, and encouraging better relations with Albania's neighbors, particularly Serbia.

Finally, to ensure the continued development of Albania's democracy, we must continue to support civil society and media to enhance their role as watchdogs for the prevention of corruption, crime, and human rights abuses. The United States is also working to improve Albania's business environment, which U.S. investors perceive as problematic, and position Albania as a stronger U.S. trade and investment partner.

Albania has witnessed dramatic changes over the past 27 years, evolving from a totalitarian communist dictatorship into a loyal and dependable NATO ally and burgeoning democracy. The United States has an opportunity over the next several years to ensure the continued implementation of critical reforms in Albania, while countering Russian influence in this pivotal Balkans country.

## 2. Mission Strategic Framework

**Mission Goal 1:** Albania effectively implements key rule of law reforms to counter corruption and organized crime as part of the EU accession process.

**Mission Objective 1.1:** Strengthened rule of law and governance. (CDCS DO 1)

**Mission Goal 2:** Albania becomes a stronger NATO ally and advances security and stability domestically and regionally.

**Mission Objective 2.1:** Support efforts to increase the capacity of the Albanian military and national security services, including readiness for domestic contingencies and deployability to other areas.

**Mission Objective 2.2:** Support Albania's efforts to act as a net contributor to stability in the region through security and civilian institutions.

**Mission Goal 3:** Albania strengthens democratic institutions and deepens economic reforms.

**Mission Objective 3.1:** Coordinate and prioritize U.S. resources and programs to create strong, representative, and independent NGOs and media.

**Mission Objective 3.2:** Conditions created for broad based, sustainable, and inclusive economic growth. (CDCS DO 2)

**Management Objective 1:** Guide the Mission through adopting collaboration tools to more effectively share information and access the right data.

**Management Objective 2:** Properly align physical spaces with current and long-term needs of the Mission to allow for more effective and efficient work practices.

**Management Objective 3:** Foster a Mission-wide culture of community to improve morale and productivity.

### 3. Mission Goals and Objectives

**Mission Goal 1: Albania effectively implements key rule of law reforms to counter corruption and organized crime as part of the EU accession process.**

**Description and Linkages:** Albania effectively implements key rule of law reforms to counter corruption and organized crime as part of the EU accession process. In support of the Department of State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan, Mission Goal 1 counters instability, transnational crime, and violence by strengthening citizen-responsive governance, security, democracy, human rights, and rule of law.

**Mission Objective 1.1 Strengthened rule of law and governance.**

**Justification:** Albania is plagued by weak rule of law, an incompetent and corrupt judicial system, constraints on the growth and effectiveness of civil society, ineffective administrative and service delivery institutions, and endemic corruption throughout all structures of government and society. These weaknesses diminish Albania's ability to integrate into the EU. In July 2016, Albania's parliament unanimously passed 58 new or amended articles to the constitution to improve the courts and prosecution, address corruption, reduce political and criminal influence (especially within the judiciary) and improve respect for human rights. In 2016-2017, 15 new laws were passed to implement the new constitution, and the new institutions are being formed in 2018. To help strengthen rule of law, the Mission will focus on the new judicial reforms, while working to enhance law enforcement's capabilities at all levels. This will be achieved by supporting new institutions of the judicial reform, including anti-corruption prosecutors, investigators, the prosecutorial and judicial councils and courts, and providing support to the International Monitoring Operation, which oversees and observes the vetting of judges and prosecutors. Mission interventions will aim to strengthen democratic institutions and increase transparency, promote rule of law and human rights, increase Albania's ability to counter corruption and transnational crime, and strengthen U.S. borders and protect U.S. citizens in Albania.

**Mission Goal 2: Albania becomes a stronger NATO ally and advances security and stability domestically and regionally.**

**Description and Linkages:** Albania becomes a stronger NATO ally and advances security and stability domestically and regionally. Mission Goal 2 supports goals in the Joint Regional Strategy to counter Russian aggression by enhancing the deterrence and defense posture of our NATO allies, promoting deeper NATO partnerships with like-minded nations, and building bridges between NATO and the EU to confront the full range of hybrid threats.

**Mission Objective 2.1 Support efforts to increase the capacity of the Albanian military and national security services, including readiness for domestic contingencies and deployability to other areas.**

**Justification:** Developing Albania's ability to provide self-defense and contribute to the collective defense of the NATO Alliance will enhance transatlantic security, strengthen regional stability, and support the U.S. European Command's mission to defend the United States. As a more capable security partner, Albania will be better prepared to secure its territory against state and non-state security threats, including criminal trafficking, natural disasters, and humanitarian crises. By developing deployable military capabilities, this effort will enable Albania to expand its participation in out-of-area Alliance and coalition operations, ensuring broad international participation and legitimacy for such missions and reducing resource demands on U.S. and other Allied forces. This objective directly supports Albania's efforts to contribute to stability in the region, to the preparedness of the armed forces, and to assist civil authorities in responding to domestic emergencies.

**Mission Objective 2.2 Support Albania's efforts to act as a net contributor to stability in the region through security and civilian institutions.**

**Justification:** The Mission will work with the GoA, NATO Allies, and the EU to assist Albania to develop domestic institutions that function as role models for the region. Working with other like-minded donors and international organizations, the Mission will seek opportunities to tackle ongoing and emerging threats, including combatting terrorism and violent extremism. For example, the Mission will support Albania's ability to function as a leader in natural areas of competence, such as by developing narratives in the Albanian language to discourage ethnic Albanians from becoming foreign fighters. The Mission will also encourage inter-ministerial cooperation, and GoA collaboration with NGOs on crosscutting issues, such as the development of educational tools and economic opportunities to discourage radicalization. Furthermore, we will assist in building Albania's capacity to handle transnational challenges, such as migration and illicit trade in contraband or sensitive items.

**Mission Goal 3: Albania strengthens democratic institutions and deepens economic reforms.**

**Description and Linkages:** Albania strengthens democratic institutions and deepens economic reforms. Mission Goal 3 supports goals in the Joint Strategic Plan to strengthen the resilience of our allies and advance U.S. economic security by combatting corruption.

**Mission Objective 3.1 Coordinate and prioritize USG resources and programs to create strong, representative, and independent NGOs and media.**

**Justification:** Strong and independent NGOs and media are critical for holding the government accountable, deterring corruption, and pushing for essential reforms in Albania. A broad range

of observers, including from Albanian civil society, have noted that, relative to counterparts in other Western Balkan countries, Albania's civil society is less developed and less capable. The Mission will develop initiatives to strengthen the capacity of local NGOs and the media to serve as government watchdogs against corruption and crime. These initiatives will help transition Albania from an assistance recipient to an enduring diplomatic, economic, and security partner, and increase the effectiveness and sustainability of our diplomacy and development investments. We will promote civic participation by young people, women, and other underrepresented groups. Leveraging our relationships with businesses, other embassies, and international organizations is necessary to increase the effectiveness and confidence of civil society organizations, and to foster a culture of corporate social responsibility in Albania.

**Mission Objective 3.2 Conditions created for broad based, sustainable, and inclusive economic growth.**

**Justification:** Albania has made notable strides in transforming its economy over the past two decades. Yet more must be done to improve the business environment and remove barriers to investors and entrepreneurs, including better enforcement of contracts, creation of a more predictable tax and regulatory regime, and increased transparency in public procurement. The Mission will continue to encourage the GoA to implement necessary reforms, including, most critically, judicial reform, to create a level playing field for U.S. investors and a more favorable destination for U.S. exports.

## 4. Management Objectives

**Management Objective 1** Guide the Mission through adopting collaboration tools to more effectively share information and more easily access the right data.

**Justification:** Technology advancements drive mission effectiveness and operational efficiencies. Today's diplomatic engagement and tomorrow's workforce demand more dynamic and digital communications channels. With the introduction of Windows 10 and Office 365, collaboration and data analytics have become critical business functions. Employees need access to reliable data everywhere -- and the ability to easily share and retrieve data -- to securely engage, internally and externally. Too often, vital knowledge for portfolio continuity is trapped in email and shared folders and is not searchable, scalable, or archived for generations of successors. The Mission must continually adapt its processes to keep pace with private sector technology advancements. Many knowledge management tools are already available to employees, and by making cloud adoption the #1 ICS Management Objective, this Mission commits to use these tools to improve our business processes. Risk: the Mission fails to take advantage of technology advancements and employees do not share their knowledge to the extent needed to achieve our goals.

**Management Objective 2:** Properly align physical spaces with current and long-term needs of the Mission to allow for more effective and efficient work practices.

**Justification:** The embassy is out of alignment regarding space. We are also eager to create more spaces for collaborative work to increase our productivity. Risks: conversion of space is not approved for budgetary or other reasons, or is delayed, which limits our ability to achieve Mission goals.

**Management Objective 3** Foster a Mission-wide culture of community to improve morale and productivity.

**Justification:** As a Mission, we achieve more when all of us – American staff, Albanian staff, and family members – are inspired to accomplish our goals. This means better collaboration on shared goals and keeping lines of communication clear. It also means supporting the needs of family members, both for employment in the Mission and for maintaining community morale in general. Risk: external and internal factors affect post morale, making it more difficult to recruit and keep qualified employees, and achieve Mission goals.