



Integrated Country Strategy

Argentina

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1. Chief of Mission Priorities

As Argentina pursues economic and political reforms and reinserts itself into the global community, we will seek every opportunity to ensure that Argentina looks to the United States as its Partner of Choice. President Mauricio Macri's election in November 2015 normalized Argentina's political relations with a broad range of countries from the United States to Europe to its Mercosur neighbors. Since then, the U.S. government embarked on an intense reengagement strategy to make up for 12 years of strained bilateral ties. Argentina has re-emerged as a strong advocate for democracy, the rule of law, and market-oriented economic reforms. These shared values have enabled U.S.-Argentina relations to flourish, leading to an increase in bilateral trade, educational exchanges, and security and energy cooperation.

Economic and political stability is not guaranteed. The government must still tackle high inflation, a large fiscal deficit, and tough structural reforms in areas such as labor, justice, and trade in the face of public discontent. In mid-2018, after a steep fall of the peso, the Macri government negotiated a stand-by agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). If Argentina's economy stagnates, opposition candidates in the 2019 election cycle may appeal to voters with short-sighted, populist economic policies that deviate from the tough, necessary economic reforms for Argentina's economic stability and long-term growth. With these challenges at the forefront, our revised Integrated Country Strategy outlines a program to support economic and security reforms, and continue the positive momentum in our bilateral relationship and Argentina's renewed international engagement.

Partner of Choice

The United States is Argentina's third-largest trading partner (after Brazil and China) and its largest foreign investor, with significant investment opportunities for U.S. companies in infrastructure, health, agriculture, information technology, and mining. Argentina also has enormous potential in the areas of unconventional oil and gas, clean energy, and civil nuclear technology. In the last two years, the United States and Argentina established new mechanisms and agreements to increase dialogue and improve the business climate. This has created opportunities for continuing to open up two-way trade, expand our bilateral cooperation, and share best practices on ways to develop resources safely and responsibly.

Argentines continue to travel to the United States in record numbers as tourists, as students, and for professional exchange programs. Approximately one million Argentines will travel to the United States in 2018 for tourism, spending an average of around \$6,000 per person, although a steep devaluation of the peso in mid-2018 is likely to dampen near-term growth of

Argentine tourism to the United States. Concurrently, the number of American citizens, retirees, and Social Security beneficiaries residing in Argentina continues to increase. Serving U.S. citizens, promoting trade and investment that benefits all, furthering positive perceptions of the United States, and working together to address global challenges like promoting peace and security are among the most important U.S. interests in Argentina.

Active Internationally

Since 2015, the Argentine government has shown a willingness to work closely with the United States in regional and multilateral fora. President Macri's administration has made this a high government priority and is actively seeking to accede to the OECD to help build political backing for necessary, but politically difficult, reforms. Argentina has also proven to be a constructive regional leader, particularly as the hemisphere seeks to address the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. We will continue to support these efforts to deepen the strong partnership built over recent years in pursuit of our shared interests of democracy, human rights, and nonproliferation.

Argentina has proven itself a strong and reliable hemispheric partner. Argentina's history of participation in UN peacekeeping operations dates back more than 50 years. Although it still contributes peacekeepers to the UN, current numbers represent Argentina's lowest level in 25 years. Equipment, logistics, human capital limitations, and an aversion to risk of casualties have made it hard for Argentina to commit to expand its peacekeeping operations to include new missions, particularly in the conflict-ridden areas where they are needed most. Argentine armed forces remain severely underfunded when compared to those of other G20 nations. Since the election of President Macri, the defense and security cooperation environment has expanded rapidly, creating new opportunities for positive military-to-military engagements. We will continue to support Argentine efforts to enhance its capacity for international peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

A Model for Law Enforcement Cooperation

Argentina has made progress in prioritizing reform in its civilian security forces and judicial system. The United States and Argentina signed agreements in 2016 to facilitate information sharing, including a Preventing and Combating Serious Crime Agreement and a Joint Statement on Security Cooperation and Travel Facilitation. In 2017, the Department of State, in coordination with U.S. law enforcement, established a bilateral working group on cybersecurity. We will continue to build law enforcement capacity through technical assistance, justice sector programming, and police professionalization mostly through International Narcotics and Law

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Enforcement Affairs (INL) funding. In addition, we will continue to work closely to share best practices and develop strategic plans to prevent and respond to transregional and multi-functional threats that conduct illicit activities such as drug trafficking, money laundering, and terrorism. The U.S. and Argentina have a mutual interest in combating these state and non-state actors, and safeguarding the security of our citizens and defense of our nations.

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2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: Increasing Trade and Boosting Argentina as Regional Champion of Open Economies

Mission Objective 1.1: Improve opportunities for U.S. businesses by supporting economic and regulatory reforms, deepening high-level engagement, and fostering business-to-business exchanges to increase trade and investment

Mission Objective 1.2: Leverage multilateral engagement by encouraging Argentina's OECD accession process and implementation of best practices of international financial and trade institutions

Mission Goal 2: Cultivating a Constructive Ally on Global and Regional Foreign Policy Priorities

Mission Objective 2.1: Use Argentina's stature and role in global and regional fora to maximize pursuit of shared interests such as democracy, human rights, nuclear non-proliferation and countering weapons of mass destruction (WMD)

Mission Objective 2.2: Encourage a deeper Argentine commitment to international peacekeeping and bilateral defense cooperation

Mission Goal 3: Fostering a Source of Future South American Energy Stability and Growth

Mission Objective 3.1: Promote policies, regulations, and practices that facilitate U.S. investment and export opportunities, balance economic growth with environmental protection and soundly develop all of Argentina's energy sources to include oil and gas, renewable energy, mineral resources, and nuclear energy

Mission Objective 3.2: Support Argentina's efforts at sub-regional policy, regulatory, and technological collaboration in furtherance of regional energy integration that promotes energy stability and security for Argentina and its neighbors

Mission Goal 4: Strengthening the Rule of Law and Citizen Security

Mission Objective 4.1: Support GOA actions and capacity to combat terrorist, transnational, and domestic criminal organizations

Mission Objective 4.2: Support GOA capacity to build and sustain the rule of law and restore trust in state institutions

Mission Goal 5: Creating a Public Opinion Environment that is Supportive of U.S. Policy Initiatives

Mission Objective 5.1: Public Diplomacy initiatives including media outreach, educational and professional exchanges, and cultural programs build public understanding of U.S. policies and values and strengthen the U.S. position as Argentina's partner of choice

Mission Objective 5.2: Build goodwill with the general public by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of non-immigrant visa (NIV) and American citizens services (ACS) in Argentina

Management Objective 1: Embassy Buenos Aires delivers ICASS Leasing and Residential Maintenance Services rated in the top one-third bureau-wide as measured by the annual ICASS Customer Satisfaction Survey

Management Objective 2: The OBO Major Rehab project modernizes the Chancery

Management Objective 3: Strengthen recruitment and retention of quality LE Staff and ensure total remuneration is market competitive

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1: Increasing Trade and Boosting Argentina as Regional Champion of Open Economies

Description and Linkages: This mission goal seeks to promote American prosperity and renew the United States' competitive advantage in a growing and prosperous hemisphere. By encouraging Argentina's continued market-based economic reforms, we will improve opportunities for U.S. businesses, support the implementation of regulatory best practices, and promote Argentina as a model for the region. Argentina's path to OECD accession would solidify its long term collaboration with the United States as a like-minded market-oriented partner.

Mission Objective 1.1: Improve opportunities for U.S. businesses by supporting economic and regulatory reforms, deepening high-level engagement, and fostering business-to-business exchanges to increase trade and investment.

Justification: After 12 years of populist rule and global isolation, Argentina undertook economic reforms to address an unsustainable fiscal deficit, declining international trade, high inflation, and mounting pressure on the balance of payments. The Macri administration implemented pension, tax, capital markets, and fiscal reform, and reduced poverty levels within the country from 33 to 25 percent of the population in 2018. However, a run on the Argentine peso in mid-2018 led the government to negotiate a \$50 billion Stand-By Arrangement with the IMF and adopt new macroeconomic measures that slowed economic growth and accelerated unpopular fiscal deficit reduction measures.

As part of the bilateral reengagement strategy, the United States and Argentina established new mechanisms and agreements to increase dialogue and improve the business climate. We will use mechanisms -- such as the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA), an MOU supporting small and medium enterprise development, a Digital Economy Working Group, a Commercial Dialogue between the Department of Commerce and the Ministry of Production, a Forum on Innovation and Creativity for Economic Development (i.e. intellectual property) under the TIFA, and a bilateral Tax Information Exchange Agreement -- to share best practices and encourage further reforms. The latter helped bolster tax revenue through the declaration of billions of dollars of Argentine assets in the United States.

The United States, Argentina's largest foreign investor in the country, will continue cooperation to expand bilateral trade, improve Argentina's investment climate, and increase opportunities for U.S. firms. President Trump approved partial re-entry of Argentina in the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program in December 2017, which Congress reauthorized in March 2018 through 2020; we can leverage full benefits through improved performance in protecting intellectual property. As Argentina's number three trading partner (behind Brazil and China), the United States exported \$17.8 billion in goods and services to Argentina and imported \$7.1 billion from

Argentina in 2017. Both countries successfully resolved long-standing bilateral agricultural market access issues, which resulted in the first exports of U.S. pork and Argentine lemons in 27 and 17 years respectively. Through the existing mechanisms and dialogues, we will promote further reforms to increase trade and economic stability in Latin America's third largest economy.

Mission Objective 1.2: Leverage multilateral engagement by encouraging Argentina's OECD accession process and implementation of best practices of international and multilateral financial and trade institutions

Justification: Since December 2015, the Macri administration has reinserted Argentina into international world markets and forums to revitalize a largely uncompetitive economy hindered by high operating costs and an inflexible labor market. By adopting OECD best practices, Argentina seeks to consolidate its economic reform gains and prevent future governments from reverting to harmful populist policies. Leveraging the OECD and other multilateral organizations will help build political backing for difficult structural reforms in areas such as labor, justice, and trade. In June 2018, the IMF approved a three-year Exceptional-Access Stand-By Arrangement for \$50 billion after negotiations with Argentina. Under the arrangement, Argentina committed to tighter fiscal policy and more realistic inflation targets, with the bulk of the fiscal adjustment to come from cuts in infrastructure spending, subsidies, transfers to the provinces, and public servants' salaries.

In April 2017, President Trump pledged his support for Argentina's accession to the OECD during his meeting with President Macri at the White House. Embassy Buenos Aires will continue to support Argentina's OECD accession aspiration and its active participation in all OECD working groups. The United States will promote new U.S. commercial activities through the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, Export-Import Bank, and the U.S. Trade and Development Agency, facilitators of U.S. private capital, exports, and services. The Mission also will continue to support the presence in Argentina of the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Technical Assistance, which is providing expert advice and embedded advisors to the Argentine Financial Intelligence Unit, Ministry of Finance Office of Public-Private Partnerships, and the national insurance regulatory body.

Mission Goal 2: Cultivating a Constructive Ally on Global and Regional Foreign Policy Priorities

Description and Linkages: This mission goal seeks to strengthen our partnership with Argentina to further U.S. foreign policy objectives, particularly our interests in protecting American security at home and abroad and promoting American leadership through balanced engagement. By cultivating this partnership and encouraging constructive Argentine

engagement on key regional and global security, democracy, and human rights issues, we can counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, enhance global peace and stability, and promote democratic governance and the rule of law. As Argentina seeks to reengage with the global community, it will continue to play an increasingly important role in international fora, where close coordination will serve to advance U.S. priorities.

Mission Objective 2.1: Use Argentina's stature and role in global and regional fora to maximize pursuit of shared interests such as democracy, human rights, nuclear non-proliferation and countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)

Justification: Since the election of a new government in late 2015, Argentina has demonstrated a clear commitment to promoting and protecting democracy and human rights, and continued its efforts in securing nuclear non-proliferation and countering WMD. Argentina is a leader in regional efforts to confront the deterioration of democracy and human rights in Venezuela, advancing efforts in Mercosur, the Organization of American States and the Lima Group to coordinate multilateral statements and actions to put pressure on the Maduro regime. Argentina prides itself on its advocacy for human rights issues in multilateral fora and has served eight terms on the UN Security Council (UNSC). At the OAS, Argentina has shared our commitment to upholding the principles of the Inter-American Democratic Charter and maintaining a strong, independent Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). In each of these venues, we will continue to seek collaboration to craft resolutions drawing attention to human rights violations, advocate for minority group representation, and oppose resolutions that may be used to justify discrimination against minority groups. We will also continue to coordinate with Argentina to improve the status of women in the region – working through both UN and OAS mechanisms – and build on partnership opportunities around Argentina's emerging leadership on LGBTI issues. We will also continue to support efforts of Argentine disability-focused NGOs that promote equity and inclusion for persons with disabilities.

Argentina has similarly worked closely with the United States on pressing global concerns such as non-proliferation, countering WMD, the prohibition of chemical weapons, and counter-terrorism. It is a recognized and rule-abiding exporter of civil nuclear technology and a country with which we work effectively in this area. It is a leader in international bodies such as the International Framework for Nuclear Energy Cooperation (IFNEC) and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT). We seek to ensure Argentina continues to safeguard its nuclear technology and materials at the highest standards and to encourage Argentina to sustain a leadership role on multilateral nuclear non-proliferation issues in the IAEA and UN framework. We will encourage Argentina to strengthen its cooperation with EXBS and the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA). Argentina has increased its role as a regional leader and has hosted regional workshops on nuclear security and safeguards. We will encourage it to continue this work as a valuable partner in the region and collaborate with other countries in Latin America. Argentina has been a

voice for maintaining a firm stance against Iran's nuclear weapons program, and can continue to be an important partner on multilateral efforts to address Iran's nuclear weapons program, ballistic missile program, and support for terrorism. In the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Argentina has worked closely with the United States and like-minded countries to condemn the use of chemical weapons in Syria and elsewhere, and consistently opposed efforts to weaken investigative mechanisms. We will continue to encourage Argentina to maintain its strong positions to ensure the strength of the OPCW system.

Mission Objective 2.2: Encourage a renewed Argentine commitment to international peacekeeping and bilateral defense cooperation

Justification: Argentina has been an active contributor to UN peacekeeping operations for decades. However, its level of deployed assets fell to a 27-year low in 2017. We will encourage Argentina to improve its capacity to conduct and contribute to PKO missions worldwide. We will encourage Argentina to strengthen the Latin America Association of PKO Training Centers as an additional element in enhancing its regional contributions to PKO missions worldwide. We will support and encourage Argentina to conduct combined PKO missions with other partner nations, including the United Kingdom. We will continue to seek ways to assist Argentina to fulfill its requirements to and make operational the combined Argentine-Chilean PKO unit "Cruz del Sur."

Despite fiscal challenges, the Argentine government will continue to seek to upgrade aging military capabilities and operational readiness, as well as deepen mil-to-mil engagement with the United States. Bilateral defense talks were held in 2016 and 2018 with a focus on PKO, Science and Technology cooperation, and defense governance development. Assistance accounts including International Military Education and Training (IMET), U.S.C. Title 10 Section 333, Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) and Grant Excess Defense Articles (EDA) are key U.S. tools to support the development of Argentina's armed forces. In the short term, initial FY18 Section 333 funds are being executed by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency to improve Argentina's capacity to respond to CBRN events. Additionally, Post has employed DoD's Humanitarian Assistance Program to build Argentina's capacity to respond to natural disasters, which is complimented by USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance renewed interest in training Argentina in disaster response. In the medium term, Post will continue to employ available assistance accounts efficiently and effectively to build capacity and professionalize Argentina's armed forces. Insofar as the Argentine Armed Forces continue to fill long-term training billets offered to them at U.S. institutions, additional billets should be made available.

Mission Goal 3: Fostering a Source of Future South American Energy Stability and Growth

Description and Linkages: This mission goal promotes energy security, fosters growth, and champions U.S. technological innovation in Argentina’s energy sector. U.S. expertise resulting from our own energy transition can provide a solid platform for Argentina to develop its vast energy resources and integrate with its regional trading partners. It would also create opportunities for U.S. companies to invest, provide services, and contribute to a more prosperous hemisphere.

Mission Objective 3.1: Promote policies, regulations, and practices that facilitate U.S. investment and export opportunities, balance economic growth with environmental protection and soundly develop all of Argentina’s energy sources to include oil and gas, renewable energy, mineral resources, and nuclear energy

Justification: Argentina’s 2014 energy trade balance was a net negative \$6.2 billion. Upon assuming office, the Macri Administration inherited an energy sector plagued by policies such as exchange controls and massive energy subsidies. This constrained Argentina’s ability to soundly develop all of its energy resources, with the result that the electricity generation matrix has become heavily reliant on hydrocarbon sources. The Macri Administration has made efforts to attract foreign investment, phase out subsidies, reduce development costs, and increase productivity across the country’s energy mix. Argentina’s interest in expanding energy production and diversifying energy sources aligns well with U.S. interests in supporting stable, secure, and diverse energy resources. As the world’s leading producer of shale oil and shale gas, we have much to share and learn as Argentina expands its production. Argentina has noted that it lacks the smaller, independent oil and gas exploration companies that were critical to the U.S. shale boom. The United States is also the world’s leading producer of wind energy, a center of innovation in solar technology, and has a strong government focus on public policy for energy efficiency, making these areas also ripe for further collaboration and strong commercial opportunities. In the past two years, Argentina has auctioned off more than 147 projects that added nearly 4,500 MW of renewable energy to the grid. Argentina seeks to increase the renewables portion of the energy matrix from two to 20 percent by 2025. Argentina also looks to increase the nuclear portion of its energy mix from 6 percent to 10 percent by 2025. Embassy Buenos Aires will continue our strong outreach to government, industry, and public policy stakeholders to identify new and expanded areas of cooperation with an emphasis on government-to-government dialogue, addressing regulatory reform, advancing commercial opportunities, and enhancing Argentina’s socio-economic stability through energy security.

Mission Objective 3.2: Support Argentina’s efforts at sub-regional policy, regulatory, and technological collaboration in furtherance of regional energy integration that promotes energy stability and security for Argentina and its neighbors

Justification: Supporting Argentina’s efforts to lead and work with its neighbors will help the sub-region to balance its energy security, economic development, and

environmental protection. There is a base of work from which to further support Argentina in this area. Argentina and Chile have nine pipeline connections that were previously used for Argentine liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports. Argentina also has pipeline connections with Brazil and Uruguay, and two terminals for importing LNG (both operated by U.S. firm Excelebrate Energy). The Embassy will seek to support Argentina and its neighbors to implement the same best practices and standards in the management of energy resources. We will encourage regional energy integration to promote prosperity and economic stability. Interconnection expands the size of power markets, creating economies of scale that can attract private investment, lower capital costs, and reduce electricity costs for consumers, making businesses more competitive and creating jobs. Creating compatible standards across countries will increase commercial opportunities for American companies in power generation, transmission, distribution, metering and efficiency, and the integration of smart technologies in power systems.

Mission Goal 4: Strengthening the Rule of Law and Citizen Security

Description and Linkages: This mission goal promotes the strengthening of Argentina's justice sector and law enforcement through collaboration with U.S. military, law enforcement, and justice sector actors. U.S. efforts to promote greater security sector professionalization and modernization of justice will help Argentina better protect its citizens and American citizens from falling victims to crime or impartial and inefficient justice. By helping Argentina increase its capacity to fight organized crime, drug trafficking, and terrorism, the United States will be better able to protect the homeland, U.S. interests abroad, and deny a safe space for criminals in Argentina. U.S. efforts to strengthen security and the rule of law in Argentina will also lead Argentines to develop greater confidence in their government and its institutions.

Mission Objective 4.1: Support GOA actions and capacity to combat terrorist, transnational, and domestic criminal organizations

Justification: Argentina – once one of Latin America's safest countries – has suffered a steady increase in crime during the past decade that it now seeks to curtail. Polls show crime consistently tops the public's list of concerns. Policy makers and experts concur that organized criminal activity, both domestic and transnational, is progressively undermining the rule of law in Argentina.

Since 2016, the Argentine and U.S. governments have worked to rebuild historically close cooperation on law enforcement. Closer law enforcement cooperation has resulted in Argentine requests for greater U.S. assistance to combat organized criminal activity. To respond to increasing demands for joint security cooperation and capacity building, the United States will seek to support Argentina along three lines: 1) enhance information sharing and case cooperation focused on disrupting and degrading terrorist and transnational criminal organizations with a nexus to the United States; 2) build the capacity of justice and security institutions that are bulwarks of the rule of law through training, joint bilateral cooperation, exposure to U.S. best practices, and renewed engagement with international partners; and 3) encourage and support greater regional

cooperation and information sharing between Argentina and its neighbors to better identify, investigate and disrupt transnational crime and terror threats.

Post intends to pursue higher funding levels and request recurrent International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs budget allocations to support increased engagement on law enforcement and justice sector reform. Similarly, due to a substantial increase in the volume of case cooperation with Argentine ministries, lead agencies at post will seek temporary or permanent increases to staff levels.

Argentina's Ezeiza International Airport (EZE, Buenos Aires), is an active last point of departure airport with passenger (898,664 per year) and passenger-cargo flights direct to U.S. airports. If aviation security vulnerabilities are not effectively mitigated, each flight to the U.S. has the potential for risk to Americans, U.S. industry, and U.S. interests.

Argentina is an active member of the International Civil Aviation Organization's Aviation Security Panel of Experts (ICAO AVSEC Panel)—of which the United States is also an active member. The AVSEC Panel develops international civil aviation Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs). Argentina's currently serves as the Chair of the ICAO Latin American Civil Aviation Commission Aviation Security and Facilitation Regional Group (ICAO/LACAC/AVSEC-FAL/RG). This group is responsible for, among other initiatives, maintaining and updating the Global Aviation Security Plan (GASeP) regional roadmap in coordination with ICAO's North American, Central American and Caribbean (NACC) and South American (SAM) Regional Offices, and other involved entities, as appropriate. The GASeP provides the foundation to States, industry, stakeholders, and ICAO to work together with the shared and common goal of enhancing aviation security worldwide. Argentina's leadership role in ICAO provides an opportunity for Argentina to help raise the aviation security baseline in the region.

Mission Objective 4.2: Support GOA capacity to build and sustain the rule of law and restore trust in state institutions

Justification: The Macri Administration has sought to rebuild the public's faith in the state's rule of law institutions by attacking corruption, increasing the capacity and integrity of its institutions, and implementing best practices. Notwithstanding commitment to reform and institutional strengthening, many challenges remain and Argentina continues to look for U.S. support to improve state institutions. Embassy sections and agencies coordinate capacity building assistance through post's Law Enforcement Working Group. Key interlocutors include the ministries of security, justice, and (in an auxiliary role) defense; federal and provincial public ministries and prosecutors, federal customs; judges and legal secretaries; lawmakers and congressional staffers; substance abuse treatment professionals; and provincial police and justice officials. In addition to bilateral cooperation, post will foment GOA interaction with competent regional and international bodies, including the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

As outlined in Sections 5 and 12 of Executive Order 13768, the U.S. government believes that, under international law, every state is obliged to accept the return of all its nationals that another state seeks to expel, remove, or deport. It is imperative that countries identified by ICE as Uncooperative or ARON make significant efforts to (1) issue travel documents within the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standard of 30 days; (2) agree to accept the physical return of their nationals by commercial and charter flights, as appropriate (3) agree to conduct interviews to confirm nationality, as appropriate; and (4) develop an enduring and consistent system through which ICE officials can work directly with consular officials in the United States to obtain travel documents expeditiously for nationals subject to orders of removal. Under INA 243(d), DHS may designate a country as delaying or denying the return of their citizens or nationals, resulting in the discontinuation of at least some visa service.

Mission Goal 5: Creating a Public Opinion Environment that Is Supportive of U.S. Policy Initiatives

Description and Linkages: Our Public Diplomacy engagement strategically uses the full slate of Public Diplomacy programs to underscore the common values and interests we share as partners. These include, but are not limited to, economic prosperity, institutional capacity, governance, security, and social inclusion. Linking our strategy to people-to-people relationships and exchanges will strengthen collaboration on academic, professional, cultural and youth engagement. We also seek to show that the United States can be a trusted partner for Argentina, and work in tandem on a broad range of hemispheric and global issues, including strengthening the capacity of Argentina's judiciary, prosecutors and police.

Mission Objective 5.1: Public Diplomacy initiatives including media outreach, educational and professional exchanges, and cultural programs build public understanding of U.S. policies and values and strengthen the U.S. position as Argentina's partner of choice.

Justification: The United States and Argentina have had a complex relationship. Although a majority of Argentines look favorably on many aspects of U.S. education, culture, and entrepreneurship, a significant portion remain skeptical of U.S. foreign policy in general, and of military actions in particular. There are important sectors of society, the elite and working class, who oppose basic concepts of market-based economic policy, and expect a substantial public sector role in running the economy. The current administration, both at the federal and state level, is in the midst of a cultural transformational rewarding innovation and efficiency. Our Public Diplomacy strategy seeks to mitigate the unfamiliarity about the United States, and build upon the admiration for our judicial and enterprising spirit and goodwill developed over years of people-to-people exchanges.

Our Public Diplomacy engagement strategically uses the full slate of Public Diplomacy programs to underscore the common values and interests we share as partners. These include, but are not limited to, economic prosperity, institutional capacity, governance,

security, and social inclusion. Linking our strategy to people-to-people relationships and exchanges will strengthen collaboration on academic, professional, cultural and youth engagement. We also seek to show that the United States can be a trusted partner for Argentina, and work in tandem on a broad range of hemispheric and global issues.

We have a strong institutional and programmatic base that will allow us to advance our shared interests. We continue to strengthen the American Spaces network, consisting of 13 Bi-national Centers that offer engagement platforms to reach emerging and established audiences in Argentina's diverse and far-flung provinces. These platforms host many of our Access English language program, as well as programs promoting U.S. culture, STEM learning, and study in the United States. We plan to open a new American Space in the largest province's capital city. The Binational Fulbright Commission, in partnership with the government of Argentina, manages post-graduate degrees scholarships and last year sent over 1,000 students and scholars to study in the United States. Through an innovative public-private partnership, the Embassy and the Fulbright Commission offer new undergraduate study opportunities in the United States for Argentine college students funded in part by the private sector. These educational programs reach youth who have a limited understanding of the United States and are inherently important in promoting social inclusion, and changing U.S. perception.

Another program pillar is our Embassy Public Diplomacy Grants Program. By funding \$10,000 to \$100,000 to tightly focused programs with local and U.S. partners through an annual grant competition, we empower others to build bridges between the United States and Argentina. We deepen our relationship with our USG exchange alumni association, NGO groups, foundations, think tanks and universities to connect to emerging and established audiences around the country and further disseminate information about our shared values and interests globally.

The United States remains a primary and preferred destination for Argentines. The Public Affairs and Consular Sections will continue to leverage informational campaigns to demystify the visa application process and promote tourism and showcase the strong educational ties between the United States and Argentina. We expect Argentina's demand for visas to continue. We expect to leverage new technologies to effectively engage directly with emerging voices and established opinion-makers to explain and advance U.S. policies. Innovative use of social media allows the Mission to directly engage with youth and journalists, major users of Twitter, on social and cultural topics of interest, as well as promote Embassy activities and U.S. policy statements. Facebook remains the preferred platform of choice to amplify and tout Mission-wide programs, while providing policy context to users. In May of 2018, Argentina had 34 million social media users, of which more than 67 percent were on Facebook and 32 percent were on Twitter.

Mission Objective 5.2 Build goodwill with the general public by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of non-immigrant visa (NIV) and American citizens services (ACS) in Argentina

Justification: Argentina is a major attraction for more than 400,000 American citizen tourists and a popular country for those wishing to live outside of the United States. At the same time, crimes against foreigners, both tourists and residents, are becoming more frequent and violent, partly because of an unstable economic environment. To help American citizens in Argentina, we will strive to provide ever more efficient and convenient routine services, as well as provide realistic, timely information. In a country as large as Argentina, the largest country (by land area) in the world with no constituent posts for consular services, we will use outreach trips, the Community Liaison Volunteer program, university briefings, social media, and other internet tools to help American citizens keep in touch with the Embassy and each other.

Despite the many areas of collaboration, the lack of commitment by the Argentine judiciary in returning U.S. children involved in parental abduction cases is the greatest sticking point for our consular relationship. Since 2014, the State Department has cited Argentina for judicial and law enforcement authorities' failure to implement and abide by provisions of the Hague Abduction Convention. We will work to help Argentina change the culture of jurisprudence to allow for full implementation of the Convention, using targeted outreach as a primary tool for education.

Non-immigrant visa (NIV) demand has surged in Argentina over the past five years, largely as a result of high local inflation, which adds to the appeal of shopping in the United States. NIV workload continues at a steady rate with Post adjudicating an average of 30,000 visas monthly. Although NIV demand has dropped, due primarily to the falling value of the Argentine peso in mid-2018, we will continue to be a busy post in terms of visa demand, but our staffing will be more than sufficient to handle the workload. We have taken numerous steps to increase efficiency, doing more NIV adjudications in less time and reducing wait times for visa appointments. We will also continue our use of nationwide and social media for visa education and guidance.

4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1: Embassy Buenos Aires delivers ICASS Leasing and Residential Maintenance Services rated in the top one-third bureau-wide as measured by the annual ICASS Customer Satisfaction Survey

Justification: The quality and maintenance of Embassy Buenos Aires housing has consistently been one of the lower-rated ICASS services. Due to the hyperinflationary local economy, maintenance and repairs conducted by property owners is often inadequate to U.S. standards. Government-owned residences have also historically suffered from inadequate funding and maintenance. Dedicated focus on housing and subsequent maintenance are essential to reversing these trends.

Management Objective 2: The OBO Major Rehab project modernizes the Chancery

Justification: Embassy Buenos Aires' chancery was completed in the early 1970's and no longer meets both modern fire-safety standards and the needs of 21st century diplomacy. OBO has funded a \$79 million major rehab that will update the physical plant, supporting infrastructure, and replace the existing general work area with a furniture refresh and physical layout. The project is slated for implementation beginning in the fall of 2018 and will last 42 months.

Management Objective 3: Strengthen recruitment and retention of quality LE Staff and ensure total remuneration is market competitive

Justification: Wages and retention are matter of constant concern for Embassy Buenos Aires LE Staff. Despite receiving authorization for multiple wage increases over the past several reviews, continued double-digit inflation erodes Post's recruiting efforts. Improving the wage-elements of compensation will always be a priority in Argentina. However, other avenues of compensation also require attention such as LE Staff health insurance, miscellaneous benefits and allowances, and finding better ways to reward high performance. Post is slated for a Merit Based Compensation (MBC) conversion in 2019.