



Integrated Country Strategy

The Bahamas

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1. Chief of Mission Priorities

Securing our Border

As the U.S. government prioritizes enhanced security at the U.S. southwest border, it is critical to maintain focus on the equally vast, porous border just off the coast of Florida. At its closest point, the Bahamian archipelago lies just 50 miles from the Florida coast and its 700 islands and 2,000 cays have been used as an illicit smuggling and trafficking corridor throughout history. Consequently, many criminal networks operating throughout The Bahamas have direct ties to criminal organizations in Florida. Fortunately, the Bahamian government has proven itself a steadfast partner, as demonstrated through the flagship tripartite Operation Bahamas, Turks and Caicos, one of the world's most enduring multinational law enforcement operations. We must be prepared, however, for an increase in illicit smuggling and trafficking via The Bahamas as transnational criminal organizations find themselves under pressure in South and Central America and Mexico. Transnational criminal threat networks do not discriminate, and are willing to smuggle and traffic anything to and from The Bahamas and the United States which will make a profit, whether drugs, migrants, special interest aliens, weapons, or other illicit goods. Robust bilateral law enforcement cooperation accordingly reaps benefits on both sides of the Florida straits.

Violent crime continues to threaten the safety of the over five million annual U.S. visitors to The Bahamas and leaves the The Bahamas' tourism-based economy vulnerable. The Mission's work to improve Bahamian security forces' capabilities helps the country become a stronger and more capable partner and helps increase U.S. homeland security as well as the welfare of American citizens visiting and residing in The Bahamas. As the Bahamas' criminal justice system continues to allow criminals to act with relative impunity, the United States will partner with the Bahamian government to promote an increase in transparency and efficiency in the judicial sector to address the low prosecution rate and delays in court decisions. In addition to new initiatives, the Mission will continue to screen nearly one and a half million commercial airline passengers traveling to the United States at U.S. Customs and Border Protection Pre-clearance facilities in Nassau and Freeport, pushing homeland security out beyond the U.S. physical border.

Increasing Prosperity

For The Bahamas to make greater investments in security, it must grow its economy and diversify beyond tourism. Our geographic proximity means The Bahamas should be a natural investing ground for U.S. companies. Increased U.S. investment would benefit both countries and stave off investments from other sources that do not operate under a rules-based system. To attract such investment, The Bahamas must improve the ease of doing business and increase transparency in the business and real estate sectors. The Mission will intensify advocacy for market-oriented economic and governance reforms that create a more competitive, efficient, and transparent business and investment climate. Energy sector reform will lower costs and

decrease a significant barrier to investment, opening opportunities for growth in other parts of the Bahamian economy and stimulating job creation. Tourism undoubtedly will remain The Bahamas' economic mainstay, but the Mission will continue to encourage diversification to better ensure economic resiliency when The Bahamas experiences natural disasters.

Addressing Hemispheric Challenges

As a Caribbean Community member (CARICOM), the Bahamian government has often in the past sought CARICOM consensus positions, somewhat limiting its attention to shared, broader regional challenges. This is shifting, however, and The Bahamas has begun to play a more dynamic role in regional institutions and multilateral fora, advocating for democratic values and norms. Nevertheless, public interest in addressing challenges to democratic governance has lagged. While the region coalesced around democratic governance against corruption at the April 2018 Summit of the Americas, so too has the Bahamian government committed itself to tackling the endemic corruption that stifles growth and allows criminal actors to operate with impunity. However, there has not yet been a groundswell of public support – and demand for – addressing corruption despite its daily impact on many Bahamians' lives.

The Mission does not take for granted the high level of cultural affinity for the United States that exists in The Bahamas, including our shared democratic values. The Mission will renew its focus on using outreach and public diplomacy to build support to address challenges to these values among opinion leaders and the public at large. Absent intensified U.S. engagement, external actors who do not share our values could find a fertile ground for increased activity in The Bahamas. Consequently, increasing the number of future Bahamian leaders and opinion makers who study in the United States is an important goal we intend to achieve through the establishment of a more robust Fulbright program, sending students from The Bahamas to the United States at the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral levels.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: A more secure U.S-Bahamian Border

Mission Objective 1.1: Increase the Bahamas' capacity to counter transnational criminal organizations by strengthening organic security training programs and increasing information sharing.

Mission Objective 1.2: Improve The Bahamas' ability to prevent illegal immigration to and through its territory by encouraging forward basing of assets and building maritime capacity.

Mission Goal 2: Increased U.S. and Bahamian prosperity

Mission Objective 2.1: Improve support for U.S. companies seeking opportunities in The Bahamas, as well as streamline investment processes and procedures.

Mission Objective 2.2: Promote Bahamian government reform to create a more level playing field, particularly for U.S. commercial interests.

Mission Objective 2.3: Promote diversification and infrastructure development in the energy sector to increase The Bahamas' energy security and attract U.S. investment.

Mission Goal 3: Increased Bahamian Support For Addressing Shared hemispheric challenges

Mission Objective 3.1: Increase Bahamian role in advocating for democratic values and human rights in regional and multilateral fora.

Mission Objective 3.2: Increase in public awareness of, and demand for, addressing shared hemispheric challenges.

Mission Objective 3.3: Increase the number of Bahamians who choose to study in the United States.

Management Objective 1: Improve current space configuration at the Chancery and facilitate the New Embassy Compound project.

Management Objective 2: Improve quality of management services through improved management techniques.

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1 A more secure U.S-Bahamian Border

Description and Linkages: In line with Pillar I of the National Security Strategy (NSS) (Protect the American People, the Homeland, and the American Way of Life) and Joint Regional Strategy (JRS) Strategic Objectives 1.1 and 1.2, we have made strengthening control over our borders and fighting transnational criminal organizations our Mission's top priorities. We will protect the maritime border by disrupting illicit networks and cutting off trafficking routes that lead to the United States. We will prioritize the safety and security of U.S. citizens at home and U.S. citizens in The Bahamas by working to address the drivers of transnational crime and irregular migration. We will improve information sharing with our Bahamian partners to enhance the security of the pathways through which people and goods enter and exit the United States. By improving the Bahamian government's capacity to fight crime and secure its own border, the Embassy protects U.S. citizens at home and abroad.

Mission Objective 1.1 Increase Bahamian capacity to counter transnational criminal organizations by strengthening organic training and increasing information sharing (State USAID Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) 1.3, JRS 1.1).

Justification: Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) rely on existing pathways through The Bahamas to the United States to smuggle narcotics and people into the United States and weapons out of the United States. The porous maritime border presents a major vulnerability to the security of the United States and The Bahamas. Increasing the capacity of The Bahamas to counter these threats and close these illicit pathways improves the security of this border, which supports our Mission objective, as well as NSS Pillar I, JSP 1.5, and JRS Goal 1.

Mission Objective 1.2 Improve The Bahamas' ability to prevent illegal immigration to and through its territory by encouraging forward basing of assets and building maritime capacity.

Justification: This Mission objective supports Pillar I of the NSS, JSP 1.5, and 1.2 of the JRS. National security starts overseas and our aim is to create conditions that help secure the U.S.-Bahamian maritime border while facilitating legitimate international travel that builds the U.S. economy and protects U.S. interests abroad. The Mission will work with Bahamian law enforcement and defense forces to disrupt TCOs involved in narcotics, weapons, human, and other illicit smuggling as far from our borders as possible, and deter and prevent illegal immigration into the United States in line with the NSS objective to strengthen border control and immigration policy.

Mission Goal 2 Increased U.S. and Bahamian Prosperity

Description and Linkages: In line with Pillar II of the NSS (Promote American Prosperity), and Goal 2 of the JSP and the JRS, we have prioritized strengthening the Bahamian economy, including through reforms that promote the ease of doing business and increase transparency, open up opportunities to increase U.S. prosperity through U.S. investment, and ensure an active and stable partner in reaching U.S. security goals in the The Bahamas and regionally.

Mission Objective 2.1 Improve support for U.S. companies seeking opportunities in The Bahamas, as well as streamline investment processes and procedures.

Justification: In line with JRS 2.1 and 2.2, maintaining and augmenting the close trade relationship with The Bahamas, as well as ensuring U.S. economic equities remain strong in The Bahamas, will require stepped-up efforts to ensure the ease of doing business for U.S. companies. These actions will result in an increased number of successful U.S. investments in The Bahamas and will continue to develop the Bahamian economy, supporting Pillar II of the NSS which seeks to facilitate new market opportunities for U.S. companies.

Mission Objective 2.2 Promote Bahamian government reforms that create a more level playing field, particularly for U.S. commercial interests.

Justification: Both the U.S. and Bahamian private and public sectors benefit from predictable and consistently applied rules-based regimes that align with U.S. equities. This objective supports Pillar II of the National Security Strategy which prioritizes efforts to counter foreign corruption so that U.S. companies can compete fairly in transparent business climates, as well as the second objective of the Joint Strategic Plan.

Mission Objective 2.3 Promote diversification and infrastructure development in the energy sector to increase The Bahamas' energy security and attract U.S. investment.

Justification: In furtherance of JSP 2.3, increased reliable and sustainable energy production reduces costs that make doing business in The Bahamas easier for both U.S. and domestic businesses. In support of the JRS 2.3, U.S. participation in developing renewable energy allows access to first-hand technology and know-how and allows Bahamian and U.S. businesses to benefit from advanced and cutting edge technology.

Mission Goal 3 Increased Bahamian Support For Addressing Shared Hemispheric Challenges.

Description and Linkages: The strong ties between the United States and The Bahamas include a shared, fundamental respect for democracy and democratic institutions. Within the Western Hemisphere, however, regimes are challenging the fundamental values of democracy and human rights that underpin the region's stability. The Bahamas is an important partner in championing democratic values and addressing shared regional challenges, including reinforcing democratic governance against corruption and addressing issues with regional security. In support of Pillar IV of the NSS, Goal 3 of the JSP, and Goal 3 of the JRS, the Mission will support The Bahamas assuming a more dynamic role within regional and global multilateral fora.

Mission Objective 3.1 Increased Bahamian role in championing democratic values and human rights in regional and multilateral fora.

Justification: Due in part to its geography, and also in part to its history, culture, and values, The Bahamas serves as a vital bridge between the United States and the Caribbean region. The Bahamas is capable of playing an increased leadership role within the region, with the potential to galvanize support around important goals, such as respect for human rights and democratic values. This objective furthers National Security Strategy Pillar IV and Joint Strategic Plan objective 3.2.

Mission Objective 3.2 Increase in public awareness of, and demand for, addressing shared hemispheric challenges.

Justification: Supporting efforts to address problems with endemic corruption in The Bahamas aligns with the National Security Strategy's regional context for the Western Hemisphere, as well as JRS 3.2 and 3.3. International organizations estimate corruption costs The Bahamas between 2-4% of its annual GDP per capita income. Pervasive crime costs an additional 3-5% per year. One reason given for the pervasiveness of these issues is the general lack of public awareness or demand for change.

Mission Objective 3.3 Increase the number of Bahamians who choose to study in the United States.

Justification: In support of Pillar IV of the NSS, JSP Goal 3, and JRS Goal 4, The United States and The Bahamas are interconnected by history, language, and culture, and by a rich web of person-to-person and societal ties. Reinforcing these networks among civil society organizations, education groups, and the private sector shores up support for U.S. positions and builds a positive, nuanced understanding of the United States and U.S. policies. We will look to The Bahamas to continue supporting U.S. priorities in multilateral fora, especially the United Nations and the Organization of American States

4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1 Improve current space configuration at the Chancery and facilitate the new embassy compound project.

Justification: In support of JSP Goal 4 and JRS Management Objectives, we will maintain a secure and efficient diplomatic platform from which to advance our regional interests. Currently, an aging, poorly configured, 1960s-era chancery in constant need of repair is at maximum operational density. In the short term, Management must identify under-utilized office space and re-apportion it to relieve overcrowding issues. In the long term, Management will assist OBO with the award of a contract for a new embassy compound (NEC) with construction to begin in 2019.

Management Objective 2 Improve quality of service through improved management techniques to include a staffing review, implementation of Merit based Compensation, and a study on outsourcing.

Justification: In support of JSP Goal 4 and JRS Management Objectives, the Embassy will maintain an agile workforce structure that ensures the agencies have the right people at the right time with the right expertise. The Mission's 150 U.S. Direct-Hire positions and 166 dependents greatly outnumber the 75 Locally Engaged (LE) Staff positions. The Management Section has suffered in recent years from excessive turnover in both American and LE positions. Many local staff have not had proper leadership or training. Management has implemented Merit Based Compensation (MBC) as a means to improve the communications between staff and supervisors while rewarding high performers. Management will analyze staffing from the bottom up and develop a plan to address areas of concern by providing training, realigning staffing, hiring new staff, and outsourcing where economically feasible. A properly staffed, well supervised and better trained workforce will be a force multiplier and lead to increased confidence in service delivery.