



Integrated Country Strategy

Dominican Republic

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1. Chief of Mission Priorities

The Dominican Republic's location at the crossroads of transportation routes through the Caribbean, its status as a top five overseas American tourist destination, the family connections for nearly two million American citizens, and its close proximity to U.S. territory, make its continued development and stability vital to the interests of the United States as defined in the National Security Strategy. The United States Embassy in the Dominican Republic advances U.S. values and interests by protecting American citizens in the Dominican Republic and by countering threats originating or transiting the Dominican Republic including third-country competitors, transnational organized crime, narcotics trafficking, illegal immigration, and public health and environmental risks. The Mission strives to create a more stable and prosperous Dominican Republic, fostering democratic institutions and combatting crime and corruption in order to enhance regional security and stability and promote U.S. economic interests in the country. Finally, the Mission works to advance U.S. regional and global policy priorities, building support for American values and culture with the Dominican people and government.

- Protect America's Security at Home and in the DR

The Embassy's highest priority is serving the estimated 300,000 U.S. citizens who reside in the Dominican Republic and the estimated 3 million U.S. citizens who visit this country each year as well as the economic and business interests this constant interchange sustains. The constant flow of visitors, and close proximity to U.S. territory (Puerto Rico's Mona Island is just 40 miles away and Miami can be reached by a two-hour flight), make the Dominican Republic an attractive location for narcotics traffickers, domestic and transnational criminal organizations, terrorists, money launderers, human smugglers, and other geopolitical competitors targeting the United States. Embassy Santo Domingo seeks to protect the United States from narcotics, illicit money, illegal migrants, public health threats, and from the effects of natural disasters in the Dominican Republic.

- A Democratic Dominican Republic

While the Dominican Republic is a key security partner in the Caribbean region, a high level of corruption, weak enforcement of anti-corruption laws with few prosecutions, and a continued lack of fiscal transparency hamper its economic and democratic development. The Embassy works closely with civil society and government in order to strengthen the institutions that provide the bedrock for a prosperous democracy, including the judiciary, law enforcement, and educational system. As the Dominican Republic heads towards its 2020 presidential and legislative elections, the Mission will also work with the Dominican government to encourage the democratic participation of all Dominicans, including populations marginalized due to race, national origin, disability, gender, or sexual orientation. The Embassy will encourage the Dominican government to act with full respect for international laws and human rights to advance the U.S. interest in promoting prosperity, democracy, safety, and stability both in the

Dominican Republic and in the broader Caribbean region. The embassy will discourage predatory lending practices that may endanger Dominican sovereignty.

- A Dominican Republic that Promotes U.S. Prosperity

Embassy officers will work closely with Dominican authorities and the private sector to promote competitiveness, trade, and investment as important engines for economic growth for the Dominican Republic. The CAFTA-DR Trade agreement is a key engine for economic growth for the Dominican Republic and an important factor in creating jobs in both countries. Since CAFTA's entry into force in 2007, U.S. exports have increased 30 percent and bilateral trade has grown by \$2 billion. We will continue to focus on developing transparent rules and a level playing field for foreign investment in the Dominican Republic. Development should promote economic and environmental resiliency. Protecting the Dominican Republic from economic downturns and from natural disasters, including environmental degradation and the tropical storms and earthquakes common to the region, will improve the lives of Dominicans while curtailing mass migration, humanitarian crises, and environmental threats that could negatively affect the United States.

- A Dominican Republic Receptive to U.S. Leadership and Values

The United States has deep historic ties to the Dominican people and generally enjoys broad popular support from Dominicans. Nonetheless, the Dominican government does not always agree with U.S. policies and there remains some lingering resentment from two U.S. military interventions in the 20th century. With the emergence of global competitors, the Embassy will continue to foster deep cooperation on the many issues where our two countries share mutual interests and will actively promote support for U.S. positions, even on contentious issues, both with the government and with the Dominican people. The Dominican Republic's importance in broader geopolitics will likely grow in the coming years as it will take a seat on the United Nations Security Council in 2019. The Embassy is prepared to offer support and technical advice on how the Dominican Republic can best take advantage of this new role. To promote U.S. interests and culture, the Embassy will nourish robust relationships with leading media influencers and invite U.S. speakers to travel and engage with diverse audiences in the Dominican Republic. The Mission will use the full range of available exchange programs to create relationships to serve U.S. policy priorities and bring diverse U.S. artists and performers to the Dominican Republic, to venues both inside and outside the capital, and will use social and traditional media to engage the public.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: Protect America's Security at Home and in the Dominican Republic

Mission Objective 1.1: Increasingly effective, efficient, transparent, and professional Security and Defense Services dismantle TCOs and illicit networks

Mission Objective 1.2: Americans are protected from illegal migration and emergencies

Mission Objective 1.3: Crime & Violence Prevention Strengthened(CDCS DO 1)

Mission Objective 1.4: The HIV/AIDS Epidemic Controlled and Other Public Health Threats Decreased(CDCS DO3)

Mission Goal 2: A Democratic Dominican Republic

Mission Objective 2.1: Effective and transparent governance improved and democratic participation strengthened

Mission Objective 2.2: Respect for Human Rights strengthened and participation of vulnerable people increased

Mission Goal 3: A Dominican Republic that Promotes U.S. Prosperity

Mission Objective 3.1: Dominican Economic Resilience is strengthened

Mission Objective 3.2: Community Resilience to the Adverse Impacts of Environmental Threats Increased.(CDCS DO2)

Mission Objective 3.3: The DR is a stronger commercial partner, including removal of trade barriers and enforcement of international trade obligations.

Mission Goal 4: A Dominican Republic that is receptive to U.S. leadership and values

Mission Objective 4.1: Dominican government increasingly supports U.S. positions

Mission Objective 4.2: Dominican public increasingly supports U.S. policies and values

Management Objective 1: Provide a flexible, effective support platform that ensures continuous Embassy operations during normal periods and times of crises and protects the personnel of the U.S. Mission to the Dominican Republic.

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1 Protect America's Security at Home and in the Dominican Republic

Description and Linkages: Mission Santo Domingo's top strategic priority is to protect the nearly 300,000 U.S. citizens who reside in the country and the approximately three million U.S. citizen tourist who visit annually while also protecting the United States from criminal activities, public health risks and the effects of environmental disasters originating in the Dominican Republic. Thousands of Dominicans travel to the United States each year, providing millions of dollars to the U.S. economy but also requiring careful vetting to protect the United States from travelers who would use their travel documents for illicit purposes. The vast majority of the illegal narcotics transiting the Caribbean basin pass through the Dominican Republic before being smuggled to the United States. Identifying and minimizing the spread of infectious diseases, controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS, and keeping destructive and dangerous invasive species out of the United States are key to protecting the American people and economy. Mission programming directly protects American citizens and confronts these threats while also building the capacity of the Dominican government to combat criminal activity before it can reach American shores.

The mission goal supports the National Security Strategy's first pillar to Protect the American People, the Homeland, and the American Way of Life. It also supports the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) Strategy for Accelerating HIV/AIDS Epidemic Control (2017-2020) and the Joint State/USAID Joint Strategic Goal of Protecting America's Security at Home and Abroad. Our security cooperation also supports the Presidential Executive Order on Enforcing Federal Law with Respect to Transnational Criminal Organizations and Preventing International Trafficking and the work of the President's Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis created by Executive order on March 29, 2017.

Mission Objective 1.1 Increasingly effective Security Services dismantle TCOs and illicit networks

Justification: The activities of TCO's in the Dominican Republic undermine the security throughout the region. TCO groups compete over diversified revenue streams, including from drug, and human trafficking, money laundering, kidnapping, and extortion. They seek to neutralize and co-opt weak government institutions, particularly at the municipal and state levels. The Dominican Republic is an important transit country for illicit drugs from South America destined for North America and Europe. The U.S.

government estimates that over 80 percent of the cocaine transiting the Caribbean to those markets transships through the Dominican Republic. Maritime routes, involving the use of “go-fast” boats and commercial containers, continue to be the primary method of smuggling drugs into and out of the country. In order to combat the influence of transnational criminal actors, the United States works actively with the Dominican Republic to plan and conduct international operations to seize illicit drugs and dismantle criminal organizations.

Mission Objective 1.2 Americans are protected from illegal migration and emergencies

Justification: In 2017, Dominican travelers entered the United States roughly 50,000 times. The average Dominican traveler spends an estimated \$1,000 in the U.S. per trip. Therefore in FY2017, Dominican tourist travelers contributed about half a billion dollars to the U.S. economy. Unfortunately, the large exchanges of populations between the United States and the Dominican Republic also creates a large risk of fraud. Protecting the homeland and the integrity of U.S. travel documents through effective and efficient investigations prevents harm to the United States and its citizens from criminal and terrorist activity.

The Mission will assist in efforts to decrease the risks to millions of American Citizens who work and travel in the Dominican Republic. The Embassy will work to minimize the risks faced by American citizens including crime, natural and environmental disasters, and sub-standard medical care by preparing for and responding to emergency situations. Additionally, every effort will be made to ensure that Americans are adequately informed of these risks in order that they may safely enjoy their time in the Dominican Republic.

Mission Objective 1.3 Crime & Violence Prevention Strengthened (CDCS DO 1)

Justification: Crime continues to be a major barrier to development in the Dominican Republic. Foreign investment and tourism revenue are negatively affected by fears for personal safety. This situation is made more difficult by the Dominican Republic’s standing as a major transit point for illegal drugs, migrant smuggling and human trafficking to the United States. With one of the highest rates of domestic and gender based violence (GBV) in the world, GBV is a driver of violence in Dominican homes and communities and is a major factor in violent crime.

The U.S. government will work with at-risk youth in the country’s poorest, most violent, and most densely populated urban areas; improve the reading skills of students in targeted poor neighborhoods; and implement systemic reforms to the criminal justice system. Special emphasis will be placed on improving effectiveness, accountability and transparency in the justice sector; improving the deterrent value of prosecutions as a government response to crime; increasing the overall transparency and credibility with which the Dominican criminal justice system operates; improving the processing and

prosecution of family and GBV cases; supporting children and at-risk youth to gain the skills they need to command higher wages and be more likely to choose licit employment over criminal activity; and providing legal and other services to vulnerable populations and victims of gender-based crime and violence.

Emphasizing our successful collaboration with the Dominican government to develop an effective 911 Emergency Call system, the mission will continue to bolster the Dominican government's ability to provide security to the Dominican public and to American citizens present in the country.

Mission Objective 1.4 The HIV/AIDS Epidemic Controlled and Other Public Health Threats Decreased

Justification: Combatting Biothreats and Pandemics is a core goal in the National Security Strategy. Hazards to public health must be identified not only as to how they can affect American citizen populations within the United States, but also as how they can impact our citizen population in the Dominican Republic, as well as individuals that may travel to the United States as immigrants or tourists. Identifying and minimizing the spread of infectious diseases, controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS, and keeping destructive and dangerous invasive species out of the United States are key to protecting the American people and economy.

The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) Strategy for Accelerating HIV/AIDS Epidemic Control (2017-2020) reaffirms the U.S. government's leadership and commitment, to support HIV/AIDS efforts in the DR and around the world, ensuring access to services by all populations, including the most vulnerable and at-risk groups. The HIV/AIDS epidemic has grown on an unprecedented scale in the last three decades since it was first recognized, and is still considered a global crisis. As such, achieving Mission objective 1.3 will contribute to Mission Goal 1 given the close proximity to the U.S. and large influx of U.S. tourists. In addition, countries with healthy populations are more likely to be productive, prosperous, and peaceful. The direct costs associated with HIV include treatment associated with HIV-related illness, which has serious implications for health care budgets and higher medical costs for people living with HIV (PLHIV). Indirect costs are associated with the losses to the economy, and to PLHIV and their families, including the loss of value of production, the loss of current wages, the cost of absenteeism, higher recruitment costs, and the loss of household savings for PLHIV and their families due to illness and also stigma and discrimination. In the Dominican Republic, the epidemic is considered concentrated among high-risk populations which include PLHIV, men who have sex with men, sex workers, residents of bateyes, migrants,

and drug users. U.S. government programming will be designed to increase inclusion, and improve access to prevention, care, and treatment for HIV/AIDS.

Mission Goal 2 A Democratic Dominican Republic

Description and Linkages: The Dominican Republic's prosperity and institutions are threatened by corruption, which if unchecked, could hamper economic development and diminish public confidence in the government. Third country actors and criminal organizations could exploit corrupt politicians to subvert long-term development exchange for short term benefits. The Embassy works closely with civil society and government in order to strengthen the institutional capacity and transparency that is critical to stability and good governance. The Embassy encourages the Dominican government to act with respect for its obligations on human rights under international law. As the Dominican Republic heads towards its 2020 presidential and legislative elections, the Mission will also work with the Dominican government and civil society to encourage the democratic participation of all Dominicans, including marginalized populations.

This mission goal supports the National Security Strategy's second pillar to Preserve Peace Through Strength and Advance American Influence, the Joint State/USAID Strategic Goal to Protect America's Security and Renew America's Competitive Advantage, and the Joint Regional Strategy Goal of a Democratic Hemisphere.

Mission Objective 2.1 Effective and transparent governance improved and democratic participation strengthened

Justification: Dominican institutionality is weak, in part due to lack of capacity, but also due to rampant corruption. The Dominican Republic ranked 135th out of 180 countries in Transparency International's 2017 Corruption Perceptions Index. U.S. interests, both official U.S. government as well as private sector investments, are undermined by the corrosive effects of corruption. U.S. efforts to professionalize Dominican institutions should go hand in hand with investments in the integrity systems that hold public officials accountable. Civil society and community activism are weak in the Dominican Republic. Underscoring the important role of civil society and community engagement in a healthy democracy and improving the efficacy and credibility of these entities will reduce reliance on foreign assistance and other interventions for good governance, justice and human rights. Mission activities in support of this goal should increase civil society and community capacity to observe and report, advocate for community – including marginalized community – perspectives, and influence policy.

Mission Objective 2.2 Respect for Human Rights strengthened and participation of vulnerable people increased

Justification: A stable Dominican Republic will take into account the needs of the most vulnerable. Although the Dominican Republic's economic growth has been one of the strongest in Latin America over the past twenty-five years, the World Bank estimates that thirty percent of the population lives in poverty. Discrimination based on race, national origin, disability, gender, and sexual orientation, lack of identity documentation, labor informality, and poor working conditions trap one third of Dominican families in a cycle of poverty. Embassy programming on human rights focuses on technical assistance and capacity building with government, law enforcement, and civil society to ameliorate these root causes of inequality and assist vulnerable Dominicans to access a full range of human rights.

Mission Goal 3 A Dominican Republic that Promotes U.S. Prosperity

Description and Linkages: A prosperous Dominican Republic fosters stability within the region and serves as a catalyst for U.S. business interests. Mission Goal 3 furthers the objectives of the National Security Strategy as it pertains to promoting free, fair and reciprocal economic relationships. The Mission will continue to hold the Dominican Republic accountable to its international obligations and advocate for competitiveness and trade as important engines for economic growth. By promoting policies that lead to sustainable and inclusive economic growth in the DR, we make the country a reliable partner for the long term. As long as there is a fair playing field, the United States will remain the largest source of the country's imports.

Mission Objective 3.1 Dominican Economic Resilience is strengthened

Justification: Economic resilience is key to creating a strong and reliable trading partner. The Dominican Republic consistently ranks poorly in the Western Hemisphere in terms of academic achievement. Data from the Institute of International Education's Open Doors report indicates that the number of Dominicans studying in the United States is declining. To address these challenges, the Mission will invest in English teacher training to increase the number of professionally accredited English teachers in the nation, affording Dominicans more opportunities to learn English. In turn, Dominicans with enhanced English language skills will yield better commercial partners for U.S. companies, a more qualified work force for U.S. investment, and more qualified applicants to pay for U.S. higher education. The Embassy will continue to promote awareness of the benefits of study in the United States and opportunities for

educational partnerships. Exchange programs such as the Fulbright-MESCYT Scholarship Program will promote graduate study in priority areas for economic development.

The Dominican Republic is classified as a middle-income country by the World Bank, having the largest economy in Central America and the Caribbean. However, the country's economic progress masks high levels of inequality that permeate Dominican society. Poverty is higher today than in 2000. Small-scale and landless farmers in the border region with Haiti, along with seasonal migrant workers from Haiti, are among the poorest and most vulnerable residents. In some areas of the border, over 80 percent still use wood and charcoal for cooking. Understanding the mutual benefit of a prosperous border region, both the Dominican Republic and Haiti have committed to improving the livelihood of residents in the border zone. The Embassy is working with the Dominican government on programs that will increase formal trade and cooperation between the two countries.

Currently, 84 percent of Dominican dairy production does not meet sanitary standards, and oriental vegetable producers frequently have shipments detained by European or American officials due to the presence of pests. By encouraging sanitary/phytosanitary and quality improvements in key Dominican agricultural sectors, the rural economy will become more resilient, and the Dominican Republic will be a more reliable trading partner both in importing U.S. agricultural products and machinery and in exporting Dominican products to serve as ingredients for the U.S. food/confectionary industry.

Mission Objective 3.2 Community Resilience to the Adverse Impacts of Environmental Threats Increased (CDCS DO2).

Justification: The Dominican Republic, as a small island nation, is extremely vulnerable to Global Climate vulnerability. According to the Germanwatch 2016 - Climate Risk Index, the Dominican Republic ranks eleventh among the countries in the world most affected by weather events (with Haiti ranked 3rd worldwide). This vulnerability will only worsen as climate variability continues to bring more extreme storms, landslides, floods, and droughts, as well as slower climate variability effects, such as sea level rise and a gradual reduction in water quality and quantity. In the Dominican Republic, climate variability is already negatively impacting the stability of the freshwater supply, agroecological systems and critical coastal resources important for disaster risk reduction, food security and economic growth, with disproportionate effects on vulnerable populations and the tourism industry.

In the largest Dominican cities, Santo Domingo and Santiago, climate variability will bring more intense storms and increase flooding risk, endangering the lives and

livelihoods of the hundreds of thousands of urban poor living illegally along the cities' riverbanks and negatively impacting already tenuous access to potable water. Vulnerable coastal populations and tourism investments are also threatened by global climate variability impacts. Coral reefs along the island's coastline are badly deteriorated, with over 60% already dead. With a one meter rise in sea level (the middle of the range predicted by the end of the century), almost 200,000 people in the Dominican Republic would be affected by permanent flooding, not taking into account that 76 percent of the population growth forecasted between 2010 and 2020 is expected to occur in coastal provinces. Of more immediate concern, higher intensity hurricanes, such as those that struck Puerto Rico in 2017, are likely to cause catastrophic damage to key watersheds and food growing regions, negatively impacting food security for the Dominican Republic and Haiti, and exports to the United States and the EU.

Mission Objective 3.3 The DR is a Stronger Commercial Partner, including removal of trade barriers and enforcement of international trade obligations

Justification: Consistent with the National Security Strategy, Embassy Santo Domingo will facilitate new market opportunities for U.S. industry. Embassy Santo Domingo will build export markets, promote free competition and incentivize private sector growth, expanding U.S. trade and business opportunities and increasing the market base for U.S. goods and services.

Embassy Santo Domingo will identify new market opportunities and assist American companies in entering and expanding within the market. This will deepen the U.S.-Dominican economic relationship and ensure that robust trade results. In particular, Embassy Santo Domingo will secure business for U.S. firms in local public and private infrastructure projects including the IT, transportation and energy sectors. CAFTA-DR is in its 12th year of implementation; tariffs and TRQs for most sensitive products began to phase out in 2016. The DR is the largest market for U.S. products within the CAFTA-DR.

The Mission will continue to foster strong trade and investment ties with the DR through the promotion of sound trade policy – removing trade barriers and ensuring the continued phase-out of tariffs and TRQs under the CAFTA-DR. Improving the accountability and predictability of trade between our countries will lead to increased trade, sustainable economic growth and equitable prosperity.

Foreign direct investment contributes significantly to U.S. economic growth and prosperity. Embassy Santo Domingo will conduct outreach to prospective business investors to encourage investment in the United States.

Mission Goal 4 Dominican Republic that is receptive to U.S. leadership and values

Description and Linkages: The United States and the Dominican Republic are linked by history, culture, and 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 U.S. policies. Led by key partners in the region who act as models for self-reliance, we look to the Western Hemisphere to continue backing U.S. priorities in multilateral fora, especially the United Nations and the Organization of American States. Leveraging our vast USG alumni network (over 3,000) to engage on key ICS themes and multiply our messaging capacity. The United States will also confront the actions of third-country governments in the Dominican Republic when they conflict with U.S. interests.

Mission Objective 4.1 Dominican government increasingly supports U.S. positions in general and in multilateral fora.

Justification: As a neighbor that shares strong economic ties with the United States, Dominican and American interests converge frequently in multilateral fora. Dominican ascension to one of the 10 non-permanent member seats on the Security Council is a critical opportunity for engagement multilaterally based on shared values and interests. This is particularly vital as other countries and criminal organizations increasingly engage with the Dominican Republic and may encourage positions that damage regional stability and undercut U.S. interests. The Dominican Republic shares the the island of Hispaniola with Haiti and has a role to play at the Security Council, multilaterally and trilaterally, as part of the solution to ensuring Haiti's stability. The crisis in Venezuela affects all of Latin America. The Dominican Republic's constructive support of regional approaches to that crisis is desirable and opportune. Improved coordination between the Dominican Republic and other Caribbean nations in line with Caribbean 2020 Strategy goals increases overall security in the Caribbean basin.

Mission Objective 4.2 Dominican Public increasingly supports U.S. policies and values

Justification: The United States and the Mission enjoy a strong and positive public diplomacy profile in the Dominican Republic. Many Dominicans identify with the United States and its culture, and take pride in the achievements of the nearly two million-strong Dominican community in the U.S. That said, elite Dominicans are very sensitive to perceived infringements of sovereignty, and react strongly to official U.S. criticism of their actions.

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High favorability ratings ensure that we have standing when engaging with Dominican interlocutors on a large variety of issues. We will continue to distribute accurate information to the media and public about USG foreign policy objectives, both in the DR and around the world, engage with media via public events and interviews to demonstrate the important work we do in the DR, and engage with influencers, journalists and social media contacts to maintain strong professional relationships. The Embassy will continue to cultivate long term relationships with Dominicans who demonstrate promise to positively impact issues of U.S. interest in the future through the strategic recruitment and placement of participants in U.S. funded exchange programs. The Mission will leverage its investment in those exchange programs by nurturing its alumni community and empowering them through small grants focused on ICS goals. The Embassy will also engage civil society and the media through training opportunities and small grants to spur dialogue on issues of U.S. interest.

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4. Management Objectives

Management Objective Provide a stable, effective platform to support continuous operations in the embassy throughout normal periods and crises and to protect the personnel of the U.S. Mission to the Dominican Republic.

Justification: The Mission's ICASS Management platform is in alignment with our National Security Strategy and the Mission's Strategic Goals. The Mission currently maintains ongoing operations in Santo Domingo, Puerto Plata, and Punta Cana, with plans to establish a Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) Preclearance Operation in Punta Cana in the near future. The CBP operation will add over 80 new U.S. Direct Hire personnel, growing our customer base and extending our support services.

Embassy activities outside the capital of Santo Domingo are increasing due to expanding field operations of multiple agencies. Mission personnel typically conduct field operations via motor vehicles and often visit remote parts of the country, making stable mobile communications a priority. CBP's Preclearance Operation will be on the coast, three hours east of the capital in a country where hurricanes are prevalent. CBP's large contingent intensifies our need for dependable emergency radio communications in Punta Cana, as well as landline, mobile telephony, and network-based communications.

The Dominican Republic receives the highest possible rating, Zone 4, for seismic activity, which is, the same as Japan, Nepal, and other nations. Post has made great strides in reducing the number of residences rated poor or very poor for seismic survivability, but some still remain. Post also rents high-rise apartments to fulfill its housing needs, but presently none of the high-rise buildings available in Santo Domingo meet U.S. fire safety standards, another concern that requires great effort to eliminate. While our chancery and an OBO-built residential neighborhood were built to the highest possible earthquake resistance, the Mission is still forced to lease dozens of residences in Santo Domingo that are rated poor or very poor for seismic survivability or do not meet fire safety ratings. One solution to this problem is to allow post to increase its rental benchmarks to the same amount for all residents, based on their size and assigned rank. Presently, the OBO-built residences cost nearly twice the rental benchmark, the maximum amount allowed for other residences. This equivalency will allow post to eliminate seismically unacceptable houses and non-fire compliant apartments from our housing pool.

As post's housing footprint changes, we need to relocate pre-positioned safety equipment as part of our disaster response "rally point" program. We will also equip a meeting facility located in an embassy leased compound for use as a second Alternate Command Center. The embassy local guard force is comprised of 250 direct-hire local nationals including -five mobile patrol teams that visit all Mission residences 24 hours per day, seven days a week. A similar program will be needed in Punta Cana to protect the - families there.

The need to facilitate the flow of personnel, equipment, and supplies into and out of the Dominican Republic will continue to grow as the Mission expands. The number of short-term visitors also continues to increase. As we add more USDH personnel and families, demands for accreditation, weapons permissions, customs clearances, official and personal shipments, and problem-free immigration will increase. Much of this increase will occur in Punta Cana, outside the capital area, requiring additional drivers, vehicles, and customs clearance staff. The potential for earthquakes, hurricanes, or other disruptions to normal transportation means we must plan to use alternate airports and customs facilities. During evacuations or crises, Embassy staff must have the resources necessary to augment Consular operations at the primary airport, Las Americas International, as well as assist CBP families living in Punta Cana.