



Integrated Country Strategy

Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe

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Table of Contents

1.	Chief of Mission Priorities	2
3.	Mission Strategic Framework	3
4.	Mission Goals and Objectives	4
5.	Management Objectives.....	8

1. Chief of Mission Priorities

Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe (STP) are peaceful countries in a politically challenging sub-region. Both countries have scheduled legislative elections in 2018, and they seek to improve public management for the benefit of their citizens. In both countries, we will work to: advance mutual peace and security; increase mutually beneficial economic growth; strengthen rule of law and capacity to govern; and protect the lives and interests of U.S. citizens.

Gabon participates in African peacekeeping operations. Furthermore, it hosts a Cooperative Security Location to stage U.S. troops needed to support U.S. personnel and facilities in the region. Another key avenue for engagement with Gabon is through counter-illicit trafficking and environmental protection. Gabon is a world leader in conservation and cooperates with the United States on important initiatives in this area, including anti-poaching activities. Securing borders will reduce all forms of illegal trafficking, including people, arms, wildlife and wildlife products, drugs, and non-commercial exports of natural resources such as timber, gold, and minerals.

Assisting national efforts to strengthen the rule of law in Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe is key to achieving the goals of advancing peace and security and increasing trade and investment, as well as to protect the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Regarding countering transnational crime, a well-functioning judicial system is essential to reducing corruption and prosecuting both foreign and domestic traffickers.

Embassy Libreville will continue to engage with Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe on our shared national interests, including increasing bilateral trade and investment. In June 2017, the International Monetary Fund extended a three-year loan agreement and established a program to reform fiscal management in Gabon. As Gabon seeks to diversify its economy, Embassy Libreville will continue to project American values and leadership in promoting market-oriented economic and governance reforms and help to build mechanisms designed for combating corruption.

Capacity building remains the single greatest need in São Tomé and Príncipe. In STP, we have a willing partner, eager to develop its economy, attract foreign investment, protect its marine areas and capitalize on its economic benefits, and reduce its dependence on foreign assistance. Recent events in STP demonstrate the risks of a weak rule of law, including by discouraging foreign investment and reducing confidence in the justice sector. São Tomé and Príncipe passed a comprehensive maritime security strategy in February 2018 and we will work with other international partners to assist STP in implementing the strategy and securing its waters.

Embassy Libreville aims to ensure the effectiveness of our mission and accountability to the American taxpayer. In addition, Post seeks to increase morale in order to attract and retain a high-quality workforce.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: Advance Mutual Peace and Security Interests in Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe.

Mission Objective 1.1: Strengthen maritime, aviation, and terrestrial security capacity to develop responsible and professional partners.

Mission Objective 1.2: Bolster Gabon and São Tomé's capacity to defeat transnational crime networks.

Mission Goal 2: Increase Mutually Beneficial Economic Growth, Trade, and Investment in Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe.

Mission Objective 2.1: Improve economic governance to increase opportunities for U.S. companies.

Mission Objective 2.2: Increase economic diversification, environmental stewardship, and sustainable development in the areas of agriculture and health.

Mission Goal 3: Strengthen rule of law and capacity to govern in Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe.

Mission Objective 3.1: Strengthen democratic processes and promote strong democratic norms.

Mission Objective 3.2: Develop the media to increase professionalism and encourage civic engagement.

Mission Objective 3.3: Advocate for programs that contribute toward Gabon and STP respecting their constitutions and improving both democratic freedoms and public administration.

Mission Goal 4: Protect U.S. Lives and Interests in Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe.

Mission Objective 4.1: Work with the Gabonese and STP governments, the private sector, and civil society to achieve reciprocity and equal treatment of U.S. citizens and businesses in accordance with bilateral agreements.

Management Objective: Identify opportunities and provide resources for embassy staff to continuously improve mission effectiveness.

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1: Advance Mutual Peace and Security Interests in Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe.

Description and Linkages: Post's goal to advance mutual peace and security interests aligns directly with the State/USAID Joint Strategic Plan Goal 1: Protect America's Security at Home and Abroad. According to the AFRICOM Theater Campaign Plan, Gabon is a strategic partner in the Central African region with which the U.S. military will continue to partner. Post will continue to engage both Gabon and STP to secure their borders and waters.

Mission Objective 1.1: Strengthen maritime and terrestrial security capacity to develop responsible and professional partners.

Justification: Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe are working to address numerous security challenges across several domains, including the Gulf of Guinea maritime environment, the terrestrial borders with Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon and the Republic of Congo, and regional security challenges such as maintaining peace in the Central African Republic. To achieve this objective, Post will collaborate with both host nations through training and technical assistance.

Mission Objective 1.2: Bolster Gabon and São Tomé's capacity to defeat transnational crime networks.

Justification: This mission objective directly relates to the objective to dismantle transnational criminal organizations as outlined in the 2017 National Security Strategy. If Gabon's counter-trafficking capacity remains low, the country risks greater infiltration by transnational criminal networks, threatening the safety of citizens and wildlife. In STP, the country risks continuing to lose revenues from illegal fishing, and becoming a safe-haven for piracy as neighboring countries more effectively police their own waters. Post will partner with Gabon and São Tomé through capacity-building measures and increased information sharing.

Mission Goal 2: Increase Mutually Beneficial Economic Growth, Trade, and Investment in Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe.

Description and Linkages: This goal supports JSP Goal 2: Renew America's Competitive Advantage for Sustained Economic Growth and Job Creation. By advancing the bilateral relationship and leveraging international institutions to open markets, secure commercial opportunities, and foster investment to contribute to U.S. job creation, Post will also support host countries' priorities to increase trade and investment with the United States. The Gabonese economy suffers from a stifling debt overhang and the success of IMF and economic support programs are critical to the resumption of strong, stable economic growth. São Tomé & Príncipe's economy depends almost solely on donor funding. The Mission's goal to promote economic development in these areas will

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also serve to increase opportunities for U.S. trade and investment, promote inclusive growth and improve food security.

Mission Objective 2.1: Improve economic governance to increase opportunities for U.S. companies.

Justification: Both Gabonese and São Toméan authorities continue to seek out U.S. investment, yet both institutionalized and informal barriers remain. The lack of English speakers in both countries can make it difficult to initiate and conduct business; exit visa requirements and corruption are even greater barriers. Post will advocate on behalf of U.S. interests to achieve this objective, and leverage tools available as a Foreign Commercial Service Partner Post to support U.S. companies interested doing business here.

Mission Objective 2.2: Increase economic diversification, environmental stewardship, and sustainable development in the areas of agriculture and health.

Justification: The economy in Gabon is heavily dependent on oil, although the country has developed a strategy for economic diversification. Unemployment and poverty are widespread in both countries, and there are multiple infrastructure challenges. The futures of both countries depend on diversified economies, a strong private sector and entrepreneurial class, and sustainable development. By increasing economic diversification, Gabon and São Tomé will also open opportunities for increased trade and investment, benefiting both the host country and the United States.

Mission Goal 3: Strengthen rule of law and capacity to govern in Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe.

Description and Linkages: This goal aligns with the National Security Strategy, which states that "rule of law is the shield that protects the individual from government corruption and abuse of power, allows families to live without fear, and permits markets to thrive" (NSS 2017). A strong rule of law is a prerequisite to sustainable development and a pillar of a thriving business climate. It is also essential to protect citizens, residents, and natural resources in the country. Furthermore, this goal correlates with objective 1.3 of the Joint Strategic Plan to strengthen citizen-responsive governance, security, democracy, human rights, and rule of law.

Mission Objective 3.1: Strengthen democratic processes and promote strong democratic norms.

Justification: After the contested presidential election in 2016, the Gabonese government updated the electoral code and took steps to increase transparency in election administration. Post will continue to press Gabon to establish democratic norms and observe the will of voters as expressed at the ballot box. In São Tomé and Príncipe, Post will continue to encourage the government to strengthen democratic norms and institutions, including an independent judiciary. Failing to strengthen democratic processes in either country puts the authorities' development strategies at risk and could weaken our collaborative partnerships with both governments.

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Mission Objective 3.2: Develop the media to increase professionalism and encourage civic engagement.

Justification: The Gabonese and São Toméan media is underdeveloped and prone to self-censorship. Both Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe offer limited programming on state-sponsored radio and television that generally serves the activities of the ruling party only and, in Gabon, Freedom House ranked the media as “not free.” U.S. foreign policy interests are better served by a free press, which allows Gabonese and São Toméans access to accurate, timely and varied information. Without a free and professional press, the risk of exaggerated, unfounded, or unsubstantiated articles increases, which may run contrary to U.S. foreign policy interests. Embassy Libreville utilizes digital engagement and visitor and exchange programs, alongside local community efforts that are largely led by U.S. program alumni, to build partnerships and encourage civic engagement that positively influences foreign publics in pursuit of U.S. interests.

Mission Objective 3.3: Advocate for programs that contribute toward Gabon and STP respecting their constitutions and improving both democratic freedoms and public administration.

Justification: In both countries, the Embassy seeks to strengthen democratic freedoms. In the State Department's Human Rights Report on Gabon, harsh prison conditions, lengthy pretrial detention, and arbitrary arrests are key human rights issues. Gabon has requested assistance in implementing prison reform and addressing the harsh conditions and overcrowding present in prisons. Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe both strive to uphold their constitutions and the international treaties and conventions they have signed.

Mission Goal 4: Protect U.S. Lives and Serve the Interests of U.S. citizens in Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe.

Description and Linkages: Protecting the lives and interests of U.S. citizens is a core responsibility of U.S. embassies around the world. This responsibility extends to U.S. citizens living abroad. Embassy Libreville’s efforts will include preparing for crises and emergencies that could affect U.S. citizens in Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe, promoting fair and reciprocal treatment of U.S. citizens, and facilitating legitimate travel to the United States while protecting U.S. borders. This goal aligns with the Joint Strategic Plan Objective 1.5: Strengthen U.S. border security and protect U.S. citizens abroad.

Mission Objective 4.1: Work with the Gabonese and STP governments, diplomats from other countries, the private sector, and civil society to promote the safety and security of U.S. citizens and to achieve fair and reciprocal treatment of U.S. citizens and businesses in accordance with bilateral agreements.

Justification: The safety and security of U.S. citizens living abroad is a primary concern for every U.S. embassy. Protests following the 2016 presidential election in Gabon and a December 2017 attack by a perpetrator who hoped to harm American citizens highlighted the need for the Embassy to be prepared to respond to crises. Embassy Libreville intends to strengthen its ability to respond to crises and protect U.S. citizens by updating consular

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databases on U.S. citizens residing in country and by engaging in outreach to American citizens, local government officials, and others who could assist American citizens in the event of a crisis or emergency. Embassy Libreville will also seek fair and reciprocal treatment of American citizens in Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe. Of particular concern is a requirement that American citizens living in Gabon obtain an exit visa before leaving the country. The exit visa requirement is problematic because it is costly and hinders the ability of American citizens to leave the country on short notice. No similar requirement exists for Gabonese citizens living and working in Gabon. Nor is the requirement uniformly applied to all foreign citizen residents in Gabon. The Embassy will advocate for the elimination of the exit visa requirement for American citizens by engaging the Gabonese government. If these efforts are not successful, Embassy Libreville will work with the Bureau of Consular Affairs to achieve reciprocity through changes to fees and validity periods for visas offered to Gabonese applicants. The Embassy will also focus on achieving reciprocity between the U.S. and São Toméan visa systems.

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4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1: Identify opportunities and provide resources for embassy staff to continuously improve mission effectiveness

Justification: Post needs to develop further the skills of staff in order increase efficiency. USDH (U.S. Direct Hire) supervisors will develop training plans for staff in and across each section. USDH supervisors, and in particular entry level supervisors, will hold staff accountable for performing their duties and ensure access to appropriate counseling and training. USDH, many of whom are first tour officers and/or are working in one-officer sections, also need additional training and mentoring.

Management Objective 2: Increase post morale for LE Staff and USDH personnel

Justification: Instituting merit based compensation and re-competing the life and health insurance contracts will reward high performers and result in more responsive coverage for the LE staff. In regard to USDH morale, it is imperative that post ensure the post differential and cost of living surveys accurately reflect the reality of life in Gabon to ensure appropriate allowances for USDH personnel.