



Integrated Country Strategy

Kyrgyz Republic

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1. Chief of Mission Priorities

Our clear U.S. strategic interests in the Kyrgyz Republic are to develop cooperation in the fight against terrorism and extremism, to promote a better business climate for American investors and traders, and to support democracy and stability in this strategically important country. While the country has made great progress in its over quarter century of independence, major challenges remain. The Kyrgyz Republic enjoys a vibrant civil society and far greater press freedom than elsewhere in the region, although its political institutions remain weak and corruption is endemic. Widespread poverty persists, with one-quarter of the population living below the national poverty line and as many as one million Kyrgyz in a country of six million seeking gainful employment abroad, often in Russia. A large portion of the country's GDP is attributable to foreign remittances (37%) and to an inefficient agricultural sector (14%). While the country has benefitted greatly from eight years of stability, instability in Afghanistan and the potential growth of religious extremism at home pose potential risks. As many as 850 Kyrgyz citizens have left the country to join ISIS or other extremist organizations and some are now returning to the Kyrgyz Republic.

External pressure is likely responsible at least in part for the serious downturn in bilateral relations during the period 2014-17. That said, the new Kyrgyz administration, headed by President Sooronbai Jeenbekov, has made clear publicly that it seeks to turn the page and rebuild a broad, mutually beneficial relationship with the United States. An improved relationship and improved perception of U.S. values, policies, and programs will advance America's security, economy, and global leadership.

TERRORISM AND EXTREMISM: Given the threat posed to American interests by terrorism and extremism, the United States invests here in a number of programs designed to target communities most at risk and to provide skills and services that give vulnerable youth and the unemployed alternatives to falling prey to terrorist recruiters. For example, the Department's International Law Enforcement and Narcotics Affairs Bureau sponsors a program that assists the police in developing a community policing model in Osh Oblast, a region that faced instability in 2010 and from where several foreign fighters have originated. Similarly, USAID is working in the agricultural and small business development sectors in the poorest areas of the Kyrgyz Republic most prone to extremist ideology.

BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT: Western countries, including the United States, have few investments here and little trade. The business environment favors Chinese, Turkish and Russian investors who are able to navigate an often corrupt and heavily managed economy. The Embassy has for 15 years been promoting the development of the American Chamber of Commerce as the voice for international business. Mission Kyrgyz Republic is working to promote American values in the development of small business, improve the business enabling environment, work with the private sector to make sustainable reforms that improve the investment environment and regional cooperation on energy, and promote entrepreneurship,

STEM activities, and English language in order to develop a business climate conducive for U.S. businesses to operate in the Kyrgyz Republic.

STABILITY: Since the 2014 termination of the Manas Transit Center and our Defense Cooperation Agreement, bilateral security cooperation has waned. We are working to resurrect the robust cooperation we enjoyed for the 13 years before 2014. Both governments share similar security concerns, including ensuring the country and region never become a terrorist safe haven and that internal conditions do not generate grievances which could precipitate a rise in extremism or domestic instability. Continued instability in Afghanistan and other threats, such as the dispersal of ISIL forces once present in Syria, highlight the need to use our diplomatic engagement to foster greater regional security. While the Kyrgyz armed services, security and law enforcement bodies traditionally have relied on Russian assistance, many in the security sector welcome U.S. cooperation to modernize these structures and help bring them into conformance with democratic standards.

DEMOCRACY: It is our goal to have a democracy and human rights agenda in the Kyrgyz Republic that delivers results for the American and Kyrgyz people. To accomplish this we need a functional dialogue with the government and civil society groups. If the government fails to demonstrate that its developing democratic system serves the needs of its people, it will be vulnerable to forces advocating for a return to authoritarian norms and institutions. For this reason, our programming emphasizes enhancing the government's ability to provide improved services to its citizens, including in the areas of health, education, municipal services, and security.

MANAGEMENT: Given the country's remote location and sub-standard infrastructure, sustaining a U.S. embassy management platform that meets 21st century operational and security needs is not without challenges. The mission is blessed with a highly educated and dedicated local workforce that provides vital continuity to our work. Our state-of-the-art embassy compound reflects our long-term commitment to the Kyrgyz Republic. Looking ahead, our top management priority will be the construction of a housing compound to provide seismically safe energy efficient housing to as many of our American employees and their family members as possible. We do not foresee substantial changes to our mission footprint.

We will review the strategy at least annually to ensure the objectives remain relevant and appropriate progress is being made toward their achievement. USAID conducts regular external and independent evaluations and assessments of its assistance portfolio, both at the programmatic and strategic levels. These assessments and evaluations help the Mission to capture lessons learned and adjust implementation as needed to ensure accountability for foreign assistance resources and demonstrate impact.

The United States faces an enormous challenge in restoring our relationship to its earlier high-level of cooperation and mutual support. For almost 13 years until 2014 the Kyrgyz Republic played a critical role in supporting American and Coalition objectives in Afghanistan. We are

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committed to finding ways in which the United States and the Kyrgyz Republic can move forward together.

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2. Mission Strategic Framework

Goal 1 – Counterterrorism and Security: Focus on countering threats to U.S. national interests in Central Asia and threats to the U.S. homeland by strengthening the Kyrgyz Republic's contribution to regional security, ability to counter violent extremism, and preservation of its sovereign independence and stability in the face of transnational threats and external pressure.

Objective 1.1: Engage with the security services, government officials, educators, youth, religious leaders, and civil society to advocate for strengthened institutional capacity and greater cooperation, in order to combat and prevent the rise of violent extremism through a more inclusive and just society.

Objective 1.2: Promote the professionalism of the Kyrgyz Armed Forces, security services, and law enforcement agencies, and support their development into organizations capable of contributing to regional security and responding to natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies.

Objective 1.3: Strengthen the Kyrgyz Republic's ability to more effectively protect its borders from transnational threats including those posed by international organized crime and violent extremist organizations.

Goal 2 – Business and Free Markets: Achieve an improved business environment for American investors and traders while supporting economic prosperity for the Kyrgyz Republic through increased regional connectivity and global market integration.

Objective 2.1: Expansion of diversified and equitable economy bolsters economic growth and increases market opportunities for U.S. businesses and academic institutions, supporting investment and prosperity. (Incorporates CDCS DO3)

Goal 3 – Democracy and Stability: Achieve a more democratic, well-governed and stable Kyrgyz Republic through public engagement, diplomatic efforts, and targeted assistance that contributes to an enduring partnership with the United States and to improved perceptions of U.S. democratic values and policies.

Objective 3.1: Support a more inclusive and accountable democracy. (Incorporates CDCS DO1)

Objective 3.2: Support improved policy formation, governance, and service delivery to better connect the government to its people. (Incorporates CDCS DO2)

Objective 3.3: Strengthen the financial and managerial self-sufficiency and technical capacity of key civil society organizations (CSOs) and government institutions to

advocate more effectively for greater respect of and attention to human rights for all citizens, focusing on marginalized, at-risk minorities.

Management Objective 1: Construct a new seismically-secure Embassy housing compound.

Management Objective 2: Increase regionalization of management services with other U.S. posts in Central Asia.

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1 – Counterterrorism and Security: Focus on countering threats to U.S. national interests in Central Asia and threats to the U.S. homeland by strengthening the Kyrgyz Republic's contribution to regional security, ability to counter violent extremism, and preservation of its independence and stability in the face of transnational threats and external pressure.

Description and Linkages: In addition to economic and political stability, the Kyrgyz government's ability to safeguard the nation is vital to preventing the proliferation of extremism and the establishment of terrorist safe havens, a significant threat to both Kyrgyz and U.S. national security. The Kyrgyz Republic's limited financial resources and capacity leave it vulnerable to the destabilizing effects of transnational threats and natural disasters. Furthermore, poverty, corruption, and a limited capacity to provide social services have left segments of the population of the Kyrgyz Republic vulnerable to radicalism by extremist organizations. By building the capabilities and institutional capacities of the Kyrgyz armed forces, security services, and other governmental bodies, Embassy Bishkek will assist the Kyrgyz Republic to mitigate these threats, become a stabilizing force in the Central Asian region, and preserve its sovereignty from external political pressures. This goal advances JSP Goal 1, and JSP Objectives 3.1 and 3.4. This goal supports the U.S. Central Command's Theater Campaign Plan (TCP) Lines of Effort 1, 2, and 4; it also furthers TCP End States 1, 3, 4, 6, and 7.

Mission Objective 1.1: Engage with the security services, government officials, educators, religious leaders, youth, and civil society to advocate for strengthened institutional capacity and greater cooperation, in order to combat and prevent the rise of violent extremism through a more inclusive and just society.

Justification: The weakness of the Kyrgyz Republic's governance and security capabilities leave it vulnerable to the threat posed by violent extremism. The Kyrgyz Government estimates that as many as 800 Kyrgyzstanis left the country to fight in Syria and Iraq, and there are concerns that some departed citizens will return to the Kyrgyz Republic to spread extremist views. Kyrgyz government officials and experts are also concerned about radicalization of Kyrgyz labor migrants, primarily in Russia, and of radicalization online and in religious institutions abroad or in foreign-funded institutions in the country. In 2017, the Kyrgyz government created its first ever national program and action plan on combatting extremism, which outlines some opportunities for

cooperation with civil society and the international community. The Mission will continue to emphasize our shared interest in combatting the global challenge of extremism as a basis for expanded cooperation, while working with both government and non-government actors to combat this threat. Risks associated with not achieving this mission objective include destabilization of the GOKR and the spread of violent extremist activity throughout the region and potentially to the United States.

Mission Objective 1.2: Promote the professionalism of the Kyrgyz Armed Forces and security services, and support their development into organizations capable of contributing to regional security and responding to natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies.

Justification: Insufficient budgetary resources coupled with equipment, organization, and training left over from the Kyrgyz Republic's Soviet legacy, have resulted in military and security agencies with limited capabilities and dependent on foreign sponsorship for sustainment. At the operational level, the armed forces and security services are eager for assistance from the United States in developing modern capabilities sustainable without external support. However, Embassy Bishkek recognizes that at the senior level, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic is often reluctant to engage with the U.S. in security cooperation due to the perception that it will jeopardize their strategic relationship with other partners. Due to these concerns, Embassy Bishkek will endeavor to focus on security cooperation in areas where a clear mutual interest for both the U.S. and the Kyrgyz Republic exists. By building capabilities in those core competencies that contribute to internal and regional security through a sustainable approach, the security organizations and Kyrgyz governmental institutions will develop resiliency and will be less susceptible to external influence.

Mission Objective 1.3: Strengthen the Kyrgyz Republic's ability to more effectively protect its borders from transnational threats including those posed by international organized crime and violent extremist organizations.

Justification: The Kyrgyz armed forces and services have limited capacity to control its borders due to a combination of substantial geographic challenges and extremely limited resources. In addition, endemic corruption and influence by criminal elements further exacerbates these challenges. As a result, the country has limited capacity to prevent cross-border proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, human trafficking, transnational drug trafficking, and utilization of the Kyrgyz territories by international criminal organizations and violent extremist organizations. By developing the institutional capacity to address these threats by improving border controls, law enforcement, judicial reform, and combatting corruption, Embassy Bishkek hopes to

decrease the destabilizing effects of the transnational threats to the Kyrgyz Republic and the greater Central Asian region.

Mission Goal 2 – Business and Free Markets: Achieve an improved business environment for American investors and traders while supporting economic prosperity for the Kyrgyz Republic through increased regional connectivity and global market integration.

Description and Linkages: Bringing economic growth in the Kyrgyz Republic to parity with population growth addresses a critical risk to regional stability, and will allow for the creation of new export and investment opportunities for U.S. companies and investors. This goal supports Strategic Objectives 2.1 and 2.3 of the USAID-Department of State Joint Strategic Plan.

Mission Objective 2.1: Expansion of diversified and equitable economy bolsters economic growth and increases market opportunities for U.S. businesses and academic institutions, supporting investment and prosperity.

Justification: The country's near term economic prospects are uncertain due to untapped sources of sustainable growth and complicated geopolitics. To achieve prosperity and stability, the Kyrgyz Republic must accelerate economic growth, increase investment, diversify its economy, and ensure economic opportunity for all citizens. Embassy Bishkek will assist the Kyrgyz Republic in building a more equitable and diverse economy through initiatives that build capital in the agriculture and other sectors, partner with the government and private sector to strengthen the enabling environment for economic growth, and improve competitiveness of sectors that demonstrate potential to have a significant impact on growth, employment, and economic diversification. The Mission will also pursue opportunities for U.S. investment and U.S. export promotion in the Kyrgyz Republic. Risks associated with not achieving this mission objective include constraints in the Kyrgyz Republic's ability to exercise its sovereignty; a need to seek support through alternative, potentially predatory forms of foreign assistance offered by other donor countries; and fragility in political and economic stability, posing a risk to regional security.

Mission Goal 3 – Democracy and Stability: Achieve a more democratic, well-governed and stable Kyrgyz Republic through public engagement, diplomatic efforts, and targeted assistance that contributes to an enduring partnership with the United States and to improved perceptions of U.S. democratic values and policies.

Description and Linkages: Embassy Bishkek will reinforce the Kyrgyz Republic's democracy by supporting increased inclusivity and accountability. By supporting democracy and good governance, the Embassy will promote global stability and strengthen local capacity to address transnational crime, in line with Strategic Objective 1.3 of the USAID-Department of State Joint Strategic Plan (JSP). In addition, related improvements to government delivery of health and education services will further Strategic Objective 2.2 of the JSP.

Mission Objective 3.1: Support a more inclusive and accountable democracy.

Justification: To promote a more inclusive and accountable democracy, Embassy Bishkek will focus on increasing political participation and ensuring that a diverse constituency receives access to civically-relevant information and can make their voices heard through functional, inclusive political processes. Embassy Bishkek will support robust cooperation between civil society and government that creates the basis for effective political parties, elected officials, election administrators, non-governmental organizations, and a transparent media. Ultimately, these efforts aim to reach a mature political dialogue and the de-politicization of government operations that contribute to long-term political stability. Risks associated with not achieving this mission objective include the exploitation of fragility within and between democratic institutions by both foreign and domestic interests, leading to an overall reduction of national self-reliance, political stability, and capacity to address transnational threats to security.

Mission Objective 3.2: Support improved policy formation, governance, and service delivery to better connect the government to its people.

Justification: The Kyrgyz Republic faces challenges to adequately reforming government systems and improving service delivery. The government faces continued decay of the previously functioning education systems, health services, and basic infrastructure. With limited revenue and institutional issues, the government has been unable to demonstrate that democracy leads to a more responsive government capable of effectively delivering fundamental services to its citizens. Embassy Bishkek's programs support the government's efforts to become more responsive and demonstrate the benefits of democracy through effective governance. In partnership with civil society and nongovernmental organizations, Embassy Bishkek seeks to spur reform, greater transparency, and better policymaking within key state institutions responsible for

service delivery. Programs that improve health and education services are key components of this mission objective. Risks associated with not achieving this mission objective include a public acceptance of anti-democratic actions by political and other leaders.

Mission Objective 3.3: Strengthen the financial and managerial self-sufficiency and technical capacity of key civil society organizations (CSOs) and government institutions to advocate effectively for greater respect of and attention to human rights for all citizens, focusing on marginalized, at-risk minorities.

Justification: The development of democracy in the Kyrgyz Republic is dependent on progress on human rights and upholding the guarantees of the Constitution. Long-standing challenges to this progress include: law enforcement and judicial corruption, violations of human rights, and legislation which threatens civil society and constitutional protections. The Embassy, in tandem with other foreign missions and local partners, will address these challenges through assistance programs, diplomatic engagement, and public outreach. While human rights protections are much stronger in the Kyrgyz Republic than anywhere else in the region, the gains are fragile, reversible, and increasingly under threat from domestic and foreign anti-democratic forces and pressure. We will continue to promote human rights to help secure the Kyrgyz Republic's democratic path, improve the lives of its citizens, and combat anti-democratic forces in the region. Risks associated with not achieving this mission objective include fragility in democratic governance and stability due to limited opportunities for citizens to defend their rights and productively express their policy preferences to their elected representatives.

4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1: Establish a new seismically-secure energy efficient Embassy housing compound.

Justification: The lack of seismically safe energy efficient housing on the local real estate market in Bishkek necessitates the construction of a purpose-built housing compound for U.S. Direct-hire personnel. To reduce costs, ensure safety, and guarantee regular access to increasingly unreliable energy, it is essential that energy efficiency be an integral part of these purpose-built residences. This objective is part of a world-wide program by the Bureau of Overseas Building Operations (OBO) to build seismically safe energy efficient housing at posts located in high-threat earthquake zones. Embassy Bishkek and Consul General Almaty were the first two posts in the SCA/CEN region selected in 2017 by OBO for new housing compounds to be built. The completion of a new Embassy housing compound will improve the safety of USG employees and their families. Current Seismic Hazard Ratings of all Embassy residences predict that in the event of an earthquake, major damage will occur, including extensive structural and non-structural damage and potential structural collapse. Upon completion of the construction of new housing, we predict that in the event of an earthquake, minor damage will occur with some structural or non-structural damage and falling hazards, but these would pose minimal life hazards to occupants.

Management Objective 2: Increase regionalization of management services with other posts in Central Asia.

Justification: Leverage cost and time savings on a wide range of mutual administrative functions.