



Integrated Country Strategy

The Republic of the Marshall Islands

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Table of Contents

1. Chief of Mission Priorities 2
2. Mission Strategic Framework 4
3. Mission Goals and Objectives 5
4. Management Objectives..... 11

1. Chief of Mission Priorities

In support of America's growing strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific region, a real opportunity for the United States is to steadfastly deliver on our commitments to the Compact states: Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI). These are among our closest friends, with a high voting affinity in the United Nations, shared democratic values and commitment to human rights, free trade, good governance principles, and populations that can live and work in the United States without a visa.

For the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the strategic dimension is even more important. The U.S. Army Garrison Kwajalein Atoll (USAG-KA) hosts the Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Test Range. It is considered a high-value asset in our national security architecture. The range provides a uniquely suited location for missile defense and space work, given its proximity to the equator, large target area for missiles launched from Vandenberg Air Base, and supportive local population. It is not surprising that the U.S. has negotiated a lease that takes us into the latter part of this century. Our challenge is to ensure that the relationship with the host government is strong, building a healthy educated local workforce for USAG-KA and providing a political environment that allows USAG-KA's work to thrive. Adequate support for Embassy Majuro's Pol/Mil activities is vital to ensure a stable operating environment for USAG-KA, and to the promotion and support of military placement testing, recruitment, and veterans' affairs.

The Compact of Free Association provides almost \$100 million annually from over 40 federal agencies. Health, education and infrastructure are our three priorities. Direct Compact Sector funding ends in 2023. Our challenge is to make the most of the remaining seven years of this funding to ensure that the RMI's transition to greater independence is smooth. That said, there will always be critical needs here that the RMI government alone cannot address. We should continue to be the RMI's best partner and lead donor, solidifying our long-term intentions to be the indispensable leader in the Pacific region. The RMI will need assistance in health due to rampant non-communicable diseases and high stunted growth rates. They will need continued support support in education, so their young people can compete in a globalized world, contribute to the RMI's future, and do well in U.S. jobs and schools where they will continue to have access under the Compact, even after 2023. And by empowering women, including in the political sphere, and ending domestic violence, the RMI will more fully empower itself.

This year, the Embassy provided country clearance to more than 500 USG visitors. Managing the oversight and logistics of their programs, and promoting public awareness of the unique benefits Marshallese citizens derived from Compact-related programs, requires adequate policy, management and public diplomacy resources. Post will continue to find ways to operate in a difficult environment characterized not only by its remoteness but also by a local labor pool with low capacity and an embassy staff of only four Foreign Service Officers.

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Foreign Assistance funding plays an important role in addressing the protection of RMI fisheries resources through U.S. Coast Guard training programs for the RMI Sea Patrol. USAID Foreign Assistance funding also provides crucial support to the RMI in preparing for natural disasters, including the impacts associated with environmental changes, typhoons, and drought. In highlighting the benefits derived from our continued close partnership and the Embassy's positive role as a member of the community, public diplomacy remains vital for continued RMI support on global and local issues – including USAG-KA operations.

Consular services — U.S. citizen services in particular — remain a Mission priority. As the Marshall Islands is comprised of thousands of tiny islands and islets scattered over a large area, performing citizen services often poses major logistical challenges. Post will continue to develop and maintain strong relationships with local government officials across the RMI and will enhance its American Liaison Network to ensure excellent citizen services, especially for those living in the outer islands.

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2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: America is recognized as the primary security guarantor and partner of choice in the region.

Mission Objective 1.1: The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) continues to develop capacity to contribute to their domestic stability and security, augmenting the overall defense provided by the U.S. in the region.

Mission Objective 1.2: RMI actions on the global stage support the U.S. security posture in the region.

Mission Objective 1.3: Facilitate legitimate and secure travel between the United States and the RMI, and protect U.S. citizen interests.

Mission Goal 2: Advance U.S. economic security by promoting a healthy, educated, and productive RMI population while supporting the country's environmental stewardship commitments.

Mission Objective 2.1: Strengthen public health capacity and achieve more sustainable health outcomes that deliver quality treatment and care.

Mission Objective 2.2: Strengthen education capacity to achieve improved educational standards.

Mission Objective 2.3: Improve Environmental Resilience.

Mission Objective 2.4: Enhance economic development opportunities to promote sustainable, transparent and inclusive economic growth.

Mission Goal 3: Strengthen governance in the RMI through partnerships, technical assistance, educational and exchange programs, engagement and training.

Mission Objective 3.1: Strengthen local, regional and national governance through assistance in improving regulations and enforcement.

Management Objective 1: Ensure effectiveness and accountability to the American taxpayer

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1: America is recognized as the primary security guarantor and partner of choice in the region.

Description and Linkages: This goal reflects Pillars 1 (Protect the American people, the Homeland, and the American Way of Life), 3 (Preserve Peace Through Strength), and 4 (Advance American Influence) of the 2017 National Security Strategy. It also supports the State-USAID 2018-2022 Joint Strategic Plan, Goal 1 (Protect America's Security at Home and Abroad, Objectives 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5) and Goal 3 (Promote American Leadership through Balanced Engagement, Objective 3.1 and 3.2). The Goal also represents the following priorities listed in the EAP/ASIA Joint Regional Strategy: Goal 1 (Enhanced security at home and abroad through strengthened U.S. ties with allies and partners); Goal 2 (Convince North Korea to abandon its nuclear-weapons and ballistic-missile program); Goal 4 (A constructive relationship with China that counters Beijing's revisionist ambitions and coercive actions); and Goal 5 (A rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific that advances democratic governance and resolves disputes peacefully through international law and respect for national sovereignty). Embassy Majuro's Mission Goal 1 also supports the 2018 National Defense Strategy objectives of 1) Defending the homeland from attack; 2) Sustaining Joint Force military advantages, both globally and in key regions; 3) Deterring adversaries from aggression against our vital interests; 4) Enabling U.S. interagency counterparts to advance U.S. influence and interests; 5) Maintaining favorable regional balances of power in the Indo-Pacific, 6) Defending allies from military aggression and bolstering partners against coercion, and fairly sharing responsibilities for common defense, and 7) Ensuring common domains remain open and free. Mission activities will ensure the continued smooth operation of the vital strategic asset of the Kwajalein missile defense test and space surveillance radar site. Additional programming will strengthen RMI's border security as an entry point to the U.S. and build on RMI's willingness to enforce national security sanctions on North Korea, Iran, and Libya through its major shipping flag registry.

Mission Objective 1.1: The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) continues to develop capacity to contribute to their domestic stability and security, augmenting the overall defense provided by the U.S. in the region.

Justification: Maintaining the close relationship between the U.S. and RMI will remain the paramount Embassy operational task. As Majuro has direct flights from its international airport to the U.S. (Honolulu) and also flights to Guam via the United Airlines island hopper route, supporting the RMI to develop capacity to contribute to their own domestic stability and security in turn fosters strengthened U.S. border security. United Airlines provides the

majority, if not all, commercial air traffic between Honolulu and Majuro, Marshall Islands, and United Airlines currently provides all security services for its flight between HNL and MAJ. Any disruption of commercial air service between the USA and RMI would be significant. As such, specific aviation security objectives in country are critical. TSA regularly assesses foreign airports with direct flights to U.S. airports; airports are assessed using ICAO international aviation security standards and assessment information highlights vulnerabilities and gaps in capacity development. Contingencies on security assistance are possible. Marshallese can travel visa-free to the U.S. Increased law enforcement cooperation with the RMI Immigration Department and Ministry of Justice to increase information sharing on criminals will help prevent ineligible citizens from travelling to the U.S. Strengthened monitoring of the RMI EEZ for trafficking, smuggling, and labor exploitation will assist the RMI in meeting its national and international commitments. Presidential Proclamation 9645 states that, "It is the policy of the United States to protect its citizens from terrorist attacks and other public-safety threats," and "information-sharing and identity-management protocols and practices of foreign governments are important for the effectiveness of the screening and vetting protocols and procedures of the United States." Under the Proclamation, the Department of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Department of State and other agencies, must report regularly to the President on the status of foreign government performance against baseline information-sharing and identity-management criteria. Nationals of countries deemed deficient in these areas may be subject to entry and visa restrictions under the Proclamation.

Mission Objective 1.2: RMI actions on the global stage support the U.S. security posture in the region.

Justification: The RMI has been a steadfast ally to the U.S. at the United Nations with voting congruence among the highest of any of the U.S.' allies. In the face of increasing global challenges, the U.S. will continue to need the support of the RMI in international fora. The U.S. Army's Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defense Test Site on Kwajalein (USAG-KA) is a National Defense Asset of the United States. It is also the RMI's second largest employer and plays an important part in the country's economy. The test site plays a significant role in the U.S. missile defense research, development, and testing network. It is used to monitor foreign launches and provide deep-space tracking and is an ideal near-equator launch site for satellites. Any disruptions to USAG-KA operations could pose tremendous risk to DoD operations and national security.

Mission Objective 1.3: Facilitate legitimate and secure travel between the United States and the RMI, and protect U.S. citizen interests.

Justification: Ensuring the welfare of U.S. citizens abroad is a core responsibility of the State Department and the entire USG. This includes ensuring that Americans have the best access to information and resources available in even the most remote regions of this Pacific island country. Embassy Majuro serves American residents and visitors by documenting citizenship,

facilitating passport renewals, processing citizenship applications, providing notarial services, and preparing for and providing emergency services in times of disasters and health emergencies. Although the Compact of Free Association between the United States and the Marshall Islands allows Marshallese to work and live in the United States visa free, third country nationals must still apply for visas. RMI passports are currently not ICAO compliant and there have been multiple fraudulent passport schemes in the Marshall Islands over the past few decades. Encouraging the RMI government to upgrade its passport to a chipped ePassport will reduce the risk of fraudulent and counterfeit passports being used by nefarious actors who may try to take advantage of the Compact visa-free travel privileges to enter the U.S. illegally. As outlined in Sections 5 and 12 of Executive Order 13768, the U.S. government believes that, under international law, every state is obliged to accept the return of all its nationals that another state seeks to expel, remove, or deport. It is imperative that countries identified by ICE as Uncooperative or ARON make significant efforts to (1) issue travel documents within the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standard of 30 days; (2) agree to accept the physical return of their nationals by commercial and charter flights, as appropriate (3) agree to conduct interviews to confirm nationality, as appropriate; and (4) develop an enduring and consistent system through which ICE officials can work directly with consular officials in the United States to obtain travel documents expeditiously for nationals subject to orders of removal. Under INA 243(d), DHS may designate a country as delaying or denying the return of their citizens or nationals, resulting in the discontinuation of at least some visa service. The Department of Justice's Office of International Affairs (DOJ/OIA) is the central authority for extradition for the USG, along with State Department. (OIA)

Mission Goal 2: Advance U.S. economic security by promoting a healthy, educated, and productive RMI population while supporting the country's environmental stewardship commitments.

Description and Linkages: This goal reflects Pillars 2 (Promote American Prosperity) and 4 (Advance American Influence) of the 2017 National Security Strategy. It also supports the State-USAID 2018-2022 Joint Strategic Plan, Goal 2 (Renew America's Competitive Advantage for Sustained Economic Growth and Job Creation, Objectives 2.1, 2.2, 2.3) and Goal 3 (Promote American Leadership through Balanced Engagement, Objectives 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4). This goal also reflects Goal 1 (Enhanced security at home and abroad through strengthened U.S. ties with allies and partners) and Goal 3 (Sustained and inclusive growth and prosperity that is driven by open market economic policies, high-standard investment, increased connectivity, inclusive health and education systems, improved natural resource management, and free, fair, and reciprocal trading relationships) of the EAP/ASIA Joint Regional Strategy. Because Marshallese are free to live, work, and study in the U.S. under the Compact of Free Association, the Mission will work to improve the health and education sectors for a more self-reliant RMI that also reduces the burden of Marshallese on U.S. social services.

Mission Objective 2.1: Strengthen public health capacity and achieve more sustainable health outcomes that deliver quality treatment and care.

Justification: The incidence of non-communicable diseases in the Pacific islands region is among the highest in the world and more than a third of Marshallese over the age of fifteen have diabetes. Over thirty percent stunting rates in Marshallese infants diminishes the country's intellectual capital. Raising and maintaining awareness of these health issues is critical to the heightened long-term engagement required in the social and governmental spheres. The major risk of not achieving the objective is that NCDs and stunting pose serious public health threats to developing countries such as the RMI and also threaten economic and social development.

Mission Objective 2.2: Strengthen education capacity to achieve improved educational standards

Justification: Currently the RMI education system does not create a satisfactory foundation for employment. Some children graduate from primary schools with a low reading and math ability and few options exist for much-needed vocational training. Many teachers do not have the necessary skills and training, and a high level of teacher absenteeism is a major problem. In the last two years the RMI has made great progress in raising the numbers of certified teachers in public schools. Marshallese pass the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test at Level III or above in greater numbers each year. Fundamentally however, education is among the bedrock principles for any country's future and its lack a prescription for any country's failure. Education is also the key channel toward women's empowerment and ending domestic violence, both issues of concern in the RMI. Not achieving the goal of improving educational standards in the RMI poses a tremendous threat to economic and social development of the country.

Mission Objective 2.3: Improve Environmental Resilience.

Justification: The RMI is a low-lying Pacific Island country made up of 29 isolated, sparsely-populated atolls and 5 islands spread over nearly two million square kilometers between Hawaii and Guam. These unique characteristics make the country particularly vulnerable to natural disasters such as storm- and wave-surges, typhoons, drought, and tsunamis. The country has limited resources and capacity to address these risks and the United States has responsibilities and commitments to assist the RMI with natural disasters emergency response and reconstruction as mandated under the Compact.

Mission Objective 2.4: Enhance economic development opportunities to promote sustainable, transparent and inclusive economic growth.

Justification: With a total population of approximately 55,000 people (12,650 in the labor force) spread out over 1,200 small islands and islets across 750,000 square miles of ocean but just 70 square miles of total land mass, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) has a tiny economy

with an annual GDP of around \$186 million, per capita GDP of \$3,800 and just a 1.6% real growth rate. The remoteness of the RMI to major markets (2,300 miles from Honolulu, 1,900 miles from Guam, and 2,800 miles from Tokyo) severely impacts the economy. The Marshallese economy combines a small subsistence sector in the outer islands with a modest urban sector in Majuro and Kwajalein. The RMI government is the country's largest employer, employing approximately 46% of the salaried work force. The U.S. Army Garrison – Kwajalein Atoll is the second largest employer. A semi-modern service-oriented economy is located in Majuro and in Ebeye, on Kwajalein Atoll, and is largely sustained by government expenditures and by USAG-KA. Primary commercial industries include: wholesale/retail trade, business services, commercial fisheries, construction, and tourism. Fish, coconuts, breadfruit, bananas, taro, and pandanus cultivation constitute the subsistence sector. However, as the land in RMI is not very nutrient rich, the agricultural base is limited. The RMI has a narrow export base and limited production capacity and is therefore vulnerable to external shocks. Primary export products include: frozen fish (tuna), tropical aquarium fish, ornamental clams and corals, coconut oil and copra cake, and handicrafts. The RMI continues to rely heavily on imports and continues to run trade deficits (\$10.2 billion in 2014). Without improving economic development in the RMI, the country will continue to rely on the U.S. and other international donors.

Mission Goal 3: Strengthen governance in the RMI through partnerships, technical assistance, educational and exchange programs, engagement and training.

Description and Linkages: This goal reflects Pillar 4 of the 2017 National Security Strategy: Advance American Influence in the world as a positive force that can help set the conditions for peace and prosperity and for developing successful societies. It also supports the State-USAID 2018-2022 Joint Strategic Plan, Goal 2 (Renew America's Competitive Advantage for Sustained Economic Growth and Job Creation, Objective 2.3) and Goal 3 (Promote American Leadership through Balanced Engagement, Objectives 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3) and Goal 5 of the EAP/ASIA Joint Regional Strategy: A rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific that advances democratic governance and resolves disputes peacefully through international law and respect for national sovereignty. Strengthening law enforcement and reducing trafficking in persons and domestic violence will promote a more resilient civil society and reduce corruption which in turn will improve the implementation of Compact assistance programs.

Mission Objective 3.1: Strengthen local, regional and national governance through assistance in improving regulations and enforcement.

Justification: The Republic of the Marshall Islands is a young country with a democratic systems characterized by frequent changes of government, a lack of policy focus, and little citizen input into decision-making. Political parties and government institutions have a narrow understanding of citizen priorities and offer only minimal opportunities for public input into the policy process. The U.S. Mission is working to provide training to political parties and civil society groups on how to establish more programmatic platforms and policy agendas, provide a

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public forum of voters with candidates, and build the capacities of local partners to participate in their government in meaningful ways. We are focused on increasing the role that women play in the democratic process, from how they cast their vote to increasing their chances of holding office. The Pacific Islands have one of the lowest rates of political participation of women in formal politics in the world, with only 3-5 percent of all parliamentary seats across the region held by women, compared to the developing country average of 18 percent. Social norms and customs, as well as pervasive gender-based violence, often conspire to keep Pacific women from both running and winning seats in Parliament, pursuing higher education, starting businesses, and advocating for their rights. A recent UN study found that up to 70% of women in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) suffer from domestic violence.

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4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1: Ensure effectiveness and accountability to the American taxpayer

Justification: Majuro is a remote post with a small workforce and few resources. All staff perform multiple jobs which at larger Embassies would be completed by teams. Increased staff training and process reviews will increase our overall effectiveness. Building and maintenance costs are very expensive on the island. Focusing on renewable energy and efficient space utilization maximizes our limited resources.