



Integrated Country Strategy

Montenegro

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Table of Contents

1. Chief of Mission Priorities 2

2. Mission Strategic Framework 5

3. Mission Goals and Objectives 7

4. Management Objectives..... 12

1. Chief of Mission Priorities

Independent only since 2006, Montenegro has become a positive example in the Balkans region for its active collaboration with the United States and our allies. In June 2017, Montenegro joined NATO as the alliance's 29th member. This small nation in the Western Balkans now is progressing towards EU membership while leading its regional neighbors in resisting ethnic intolerance and political and economic stagnation. Embassy Podgorica's integrated country strategy focuses on supporting Montenegro's efforts to advance the reforms necessary for EU membership and building resilience to malign influence. Ultimately, we want Montenegro to become a strong and stable democracy where the rule of law is respected and a prosperous market-based economy provides more opportunities for both U.S. and Montenegrin businesses.

The Montenegrin government views the United States as a key strategic partner. The government looks to us for critical diplomatic support and technical assistance to help implement the reforms necessary for EU membership. While Montenegro is moving in the right direction, much work remains, particularly in strengthening the rule of law, rooting out endemic corruption, fostering economic opportunities, and safeguarding media freedom. At the same time, Montenegro remains a front-line state in the effort to counter malign influence. Most notably, Montenegro thwarted an election-day coup attempt in October 2016, allegedly masterminded by two Russian intelligence operatives, and has been addressing markedly increased cyber attacks from abroad and Russian-financed disinformation campaigns.

U.S. Mission Podgorica has identified four priority goals:

- Montenegro is fully integrated into Euro-Atlantic institutions
- Montenegro contributes to economic growth in the United States and worldwide
- The Montenegrin public supports the United States, our values, and policies
- Montenegro is actively engaged in regional and global challenges

Our priority goals support the National Security Strategy's pillars of advancing American influence by encouraging Montenegro to become a close partner; promoting American prosperity by facilitating new market opportunities; and preserving peace through strength by building Montenegro's capacity to shoulder shared responsibilities for regional and global challenges. Our goals also support the Department of State's strategic goals to promote American leadership through balanced engagement; to renew America's competitive advantage for sustained growth and job creation; and to protect America's security at home and abroad.

Euro-Atlantic Integration: Our first priority, which is also the strategic goal of the Montenegrin government, is for Montenegro to continue the Euro-Atlantic integration process by joining the European Union by 2025. The accession process provides a powerful impetus for Montenegro to make the reforms necessary to become a stable, prosperous, and democratic state.

Montenegro's greatest challenge is strengthening the rule of law so that it can effectively combat corruption and endemic organized crime, which frequently spill over into violence jeopardizing public safety. A significant challenge lies ahead in this space as critical funding for justice reform through the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) is currently slated to phase out in FY 2021, though there have been preliminary discussions to extend INL assistance.

Media freedom is also an area the European Commission has identified as a priority in the EU accession process. The Mission actively supports efforts to shield journalists from violence and to professionalize independent voices in the media. Although most funding for non-INL democracy and economic growth assistance programs has been phased out, the Department has allocated funds to Montenegro on an ad hoc basis to address emerging needs and increase the resilience of civil society, independent media, and the economic sector to external pressure. We will look for opportunities to leverage additional funds, if available.

Economic Growth: Though Montenegro represents a small market for U.S. businesses, many opportunities exist for American trade and investment. We will work to assist U.S. businesses to increase their market share and presence in Montenegro as part of our economic statecraft agenda. The keys to Montenegro's economic success are liberalizing its economy and stamping out corruption and bureaucratic over-reach. We will continue to work with the Government of Montenegro and partners such as the American Chamber of Commerce to build a more effective, leaner, and transparent legal and regulatory structure to support economic growth and allow the Montenegrin economy to continue to grow and generate jobs. A regional approach to attracting U.S. business is taking hold, and we will work with U.S. companies and trade groups to appeal for more investment and job promotion in the Western Balkans, which will positively affect Montenegro based on greater economies of scale.

Public Support: Approximately 50 percent of Montenegrins hold a positive view about the United States. That number lags behind concurrent support for the European Union and Russia. The people of this small Balkan nation have historical, cultural, and religious ties to Russia, but the attraction of a prosperous economic future with the West is an important driver of public opinion as the country makes progress on EU accession. Building off this momentum, Mission Montenegro will continue to advance public support for the United States through outreach centered on shared Western values, including a growing appetite for English-language teaching and learning. As a foil to counter Russian malign influence, the Mission will also highlight the benefits of the U.S.-Montenegrin partnership, NATO membership, and Euro-Atlantic integration through all media platforms.

Regional and Global Challenges: Montenegro remains a net exporter of security in a region that has too often been a security consumer. As a new NATO member, this country is an active contributor to several international peacekeeping efforts. In addition, Montenegro enjoys excellent relations with its neighbors after maintaining relative harmony among its various ethnic groups during the wars of the 1990s. We will work with Montenegro to leverage its

position to help the region address challenges, such as trans-national organized crime, countering violent extremism, and curbing foreign terrorist fighters. As a transit country for illegal narcotics and trafficked persons, Montenegro will need to strengthen its border control and security and the Embassy will continue to work with the Montenegrin Border Police and Customs Service to improve their capabilities, professionalism, and results.

Management Priorities: The current Embassy compound was originally acquired by USAID in 2001 when Montenegro was still part of Serbia. Since that time, two annex buildings were constructed on the compound. However, the current 35 USDH and 130 LE staff are crowded into the existing office space, and additional support staff are needed as the number of USDH is set to increase. Embassy Podgorica is currently on the Department's Capital Security List of Diplomatic Facilities priority construction projects. The project will consist of the construction of a new multi-story chancery building (NOB) on the site of the current Embassy compound. In addition to the NOB project, the Embassy IRM staff will need to ensure that the information and communications platforms meet Department-mandated standards. For example, the mandatory implementation of Office 365, a cloud-based system, requires increased bandwidth. GSO and IMO will need to coordinate efforts to ensure that a local vendor can provide this service. Finally, the Mission will continue to prioritize staff training to ensure that operations, policies, and procedures are aligned with the Department's best practices.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: Montenegro is fully integrated into Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Mission Objective 1.1: Strengthen Montenegrin institutions through targeted assistance to government institutions, law-enforcement bodies, and civil society organizations to fight crime and corruption in accordance with Euro-Atlantic standards, thereby increasing Montenegrin citizens' confidence in the public sector.

Mission Objective 1.2: Revitalize civil society and the media through assistance programs, exchanges, and outreach, to strengthen democratic institutions.

Mission Objective 1.3: Build public support for NATO and necessary Euro Atlantic reforms to increase momentum for Montenegro's continued Euro-Atlantic integration.

Mission Goal 2: Montenegro contributes to economic growth in the United States and worldwide.

Mission Objective 2.1: Promote the benefits of bilateral investment through outreach and support to the business community to increase Montenegrin investments in the United States and U.S. investments in Montenegro.

Mission Objective 2.2: Support the development of a more effective and transparent legal structure through training, facilitated communications, and outreach to business stakeholders to support bilateral economic growth.

Mission Goal 3: The Montenegrin public supports the United States, our values, and policies.

Mission Objective 3.1: Build Montenegro's ability to resist malign Russian influence through assistance to the government, civil society, and the media to maintain Montenegro's integration with Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Mission Objective 3.2: Increase travel and people-to-people contacts between the United States and Montenegro to broaden the bilateral partnership.

Mission Objective 3.3: Raise support for U.S. policies through outreach to and exchanges with key opinion makers, political leaders, and youth in order to strengthen bilateral ties.

Mission Goal 4: Montenegro is actively engaged in regional and global challenges.

Mission Objective 4.1: Support Montenegrin government institutions and law-enforcement bodies in their efforts to improve regional security and border control, thereby enhancing shared responsibilities in promoting regional and global security and addressing together regional and global challenges.

Mission Objective 4.2: Encourage Montenegro's continued contributions to international peace operations to ensure Montenegro plays a significant role in supporting NATO's goals.

Management Objective 1: Create an environment in which program staff can better meet U.S. mission goals, in particular by supporting the New Office Building project and related transition-support staffing.

Management Objective 2: Ensure the Embassy's information and communications platform meets Department-mandated standards.

Management Objective 3: Align Embassy management operations, policies, and procedures with Department best practices.

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1: Montenegro is fully integrated into Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Description and Linkages: After joining NATO as the 29th member of the Alliance in June 2017, Montenegro has set its sights next on acceding to the European Union by 2025. The United States will continue to support this effort, using a range of tools to strengthen the rule of law, fight corruption, and safeguard media freedom, key elements for achieving EU accession benchmarks. This Mission goal supports the directive to “encourage aspiring partners” in National Security Strategy Pillar IV: Advance American Influence. It also links to the Department of State’s goal to “promote American leadership through balanced engagement” as well as the EUR Joint Regional Strategy Framework’s goals to “strengthen the Western alliance” and “secure and stabilize the eastern and southern frontiers.”

Mission Objective 1.1: Strengthen Montenegrin institutions through targeted assistance to government institutions, law-enforcement bodies, and civil society organizations to fight crime and corruption in accordance with Euro-Atlantic standards, thereby increasing Montenegrin citizens’ confidence in the public sector.

Justification: Endemic corruption and organized crime is a major obstacle to Montenegro’s goal of full integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. The EU regularly notes necessary rule of law reforms and tangible results in the fight against organized crime and corruption as conditions for Montenegro’s joining the organization. Corruption and crime undermine public confidence in government institutions, scare off U.S. and other investors, and threaten the long-term health of this young democracy. In addition, they decrease resiliency to malign foreign influence in the country and empower transnational criminal organizations that threaten the U.S. homeland and the region. Of particular concern are former war criminals from the wars of the 1990s who have transformed themselves into today’s organized criminals and violent extremists tied to Russia. Strengthening the rule of law is a top priority shared by the Government of Montenegro, the U.S. government, and the European Union.

Mission Objective 1.2: Revitalize civil society and the media through assistance programs, exchanges, and outreach, to strengthen democratic institutions.

Justification: Montenegro lacks an effective and credible counterbalance to the government. Civil society is divided by political rivalry, and only a few NGOs have sufficient capacity to drive effective reform. The media also remains polarized and politicized, divided between pro-government and pro-opposition camps with each side often promoting its own agenda at the expense of credible reporting. Although voter turnout is typically high, many Montenegrins are

not actively engaged in other aspects of the democratic process. The public is generally cynical and pessimistic about the country's institutions and future prospects.

Mission Objective 1.3: Build public support for NATO and necessary Euro Atlantic reforms to increase momentum for Montenegro's continued Euro-Atlantic integration.

Justification: Although Montenegro joined NATO in 2017, public support for the alliance remains below 50 percent. Negative stereotypes about NATO continue with opponents of the alliance taking every opportunity to remind the public of NATO's 1999 air campaign to end the Milosevic regime's human rights abuses in Kosovo – a campaign during which NATO forces bombed Montenegrin sites with civilian casualties, including children. The public must understand how the responsibilities of NATO membership lead to long-term benefits for Montenegro.

Mission Goal 2: Montenegro contributes to economic growth in the United States and worldwide.

Description and Linkages: As Montenegro's economy continues to grow, the United States will collaborate with the Government of Montenegro and partners such as the American Chamber of Commerce to facilitate more opportunities for U.S. trade and investment. This Mission goal supports the directive to "facilitate new market opportunities" under National Security Strategy Pillar II: Promote American Prosperity. In addition, this goal advances the Department of State's goal to "renew America's competitive advantage for sustained growth and job creation" and the EUR Joint Regional Strategy Framework goal to "strengthen and balance the transatlantic trade and investment relationship."

Mission Objective 2.1: Promote the benefits of bilateral investment through outreach and support to the business community to increase Montenegrin investments in the United States and U.S. investments in Montenegro.

Justification: To increase the bilateral economic relationship, the Embassy will assist U.S. businesses and potential investors by disseminating information on business and investment opportunities; lead trade delegations to the United States through programs such as the International Buyers Program; promote matchmaking opportunities between U.S. and Montenegrin businesses; facilitate commercial contacts with Montenegrin businesses and the government; and provide investment guidance to U.S. companies interested in investing in the region, while engaging the government to reduce business barriers faced by U.S. companies.

Mission Objective 2.2: Support the development of a more effective and transparent legal structure through training, facilitated communications, and outreach to business stakeholders to support bilateral economic growth.

Justification: Montenegro will not be able to develop its economy fully until businesses and investors have greater confidence in the country's legal institutions and regulatory system. The country must establish a transparent framework for contracts and procurements that the legal system enforces evenly. Reduced corruption and bureaucratic blockages will increase business and investor confidence and improve the environment for foreign businesses. Stronger commercial and administrative courts that more efficiently resolve commercial disputes will also improve the business environment and boost economic growth.

Mission Goal 3: The Montenegrin public supports the United States, our values, and policies.

Description and Linkages: Malign actors continue to use disinformation and other underhanded tactics to sow distrust for the United States and our allies with the goal of derailing Montenegro's further integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions. To counter this malign influence, the United States will build support around shared values and disseminate accurate information regarding our policies through a wide range of media engagements, outreach, and exchange programs, with an emphasis on the benefits that Euro-Atlantic integration brings to Montenegro. This goal seeks to "facilitate the cultural, educational, and people-to-people exchanges" noted in National Security Strategy Pillar III: Preserve Peace through Strength. It also advances the Department of State's goal to "promote American leadership through balanced engagement" and the EUR Joint Regional Strategy Framework Goal to "secure and stabilize the eastern and southern frontiers."

Mission Objective 3.1: Build Montenegro's ability to resist malign Russian influence through assistance to the government, civil society, and the media to maintain Montenegro's integration with Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Justification: Public opinion polls reveal that Montenegro is a country divided between historical and cultural ties with Russia and the economic potential of enhanced cooperation with the European Union. Russia continues to exploit this division through a wide range of influence operations. In order to support Montenegro's chosen path of Euro-Atlantic integration, the Mission must support Montenegro's efforts to counter the effects of malign influence.

Mission Objective 3.2: Increase travel and people-to-people contacts between Montenegro and the United States to broaden the bilateral partnership.

Justification: Students, tourists, business travelers, and other visitors play a vital role in promoting the benefits of Euro-Atlantic integration. Increased international interest in Montenegro as a tourist destination likely will lead to increased opportunities to expand people-to-people ties. At the same time, the United States remains a popular destination for Montenegrin youth, creating the potential for deeper bilateral understanding.

Mission Objective 3.3: Raise support for U.S. policies through outreach to key opinion makers, political leaders, and youth in order to strengthen bilateral ties.

Justification: Anti-American rhetoric continues in Montenegro, fueled by increased propaganda from Russian supporters and Serb nationalists. As Montenegro continues on the path to full integration with Euro-Atlantic institutions, the Mission must ensure that political leaders, opinion leaders, and the general public have accurate information about U.S. policies. Polling has indicated that youth are especially susceptible to inaccurate information and remain skeptical about the United States.

Mission Goal 4: Montenegro is actively engaged in regional and global challenges.

Description and Linkages: As a new NATO member progressing toward EU accession, Montenegro can leverage its good relations with neighboring states to play a leadership role in solving regional and global challenges. The United States will continue to offer support to build Montenegro's capacity to share responsibility, advancing National Security Strategy Pillar III: Preserve Peace Through Strength. Similarly, this goal supports both the Department of State's goal to "protect America's security at home and abroad" and the EUR Joint Regional Strategy Framework goal to "strengthen the Western alliance."

Mission Objective 4.1: Support Montenegrin government institutions and security and law-enforcement bodies in their efforts to improve regional security and border control, thereby enhancing shared responsibilities in promoting regional and global security and addressing together regional and global challenges.

Justification: Montenegro's aspirations for full Euro-Atlantic integration means it must continue to align its foreign policy with that of NATO and the EU, as well as support U.S. government priorities. Since Montenegro enjoys positive relations with all of its neighbors, which is a unique distinction in the Western Balkans, Montenegro can take a leadership role in providing stability in the region by strengthening relationships and partnerships in order to effectively counter crime, terrorism, and the flow of trafficked goods and persons, as well as by institutionalizing internal law enforcement operational procedures, strengthening capacity, building a cadre of trained personnel, and establishing strong border controls at the five shared border locations.

Mission Objective 4.2: Encourage Montenegro's continued contributions to international peace operations to ensure Montenegro plays a significant role in supporting NATO's goals.

Justification: Montenegro's military is relatively small and relies on strategic partnerships and alliances to ensure Montenegro's continued security. Montenegro's NATO accession in 2017 means that it must meet new capability targets while developing a new Strategic Defense Review that will best leverage its contributions abroad.

4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1: Create an environment in which program staff can better meet U.S. mission goals, in particular by supporting the New Office Building project and related transition-support staffing.

Justification: The current Embassy compound was originally acquired by USAID in 2001, when Montenegro was still part of Serbia. Since that time, two new annex buildings were constructed on the compound. However, the current 35 USDH and 130 LE staff are crowded into the existing office space, hampering optimal implementation of U.S. mission goals, and additional support staff are needed as the number of USDH are planned to increase. Embassy Podgorica is currently on the Department's Capital Security List of Diplomatic Facilities priority construction projects and the project will consist of the construction of a new multi-story chancery building on the site of the current Embassy compound.

Management Objective 2: Ensure the Embassy's information and communications platform meets Department-mandated standards.

Justification: Embassy Podgorica's rapid growth has also had an effect on our communications infrastructure, and efforts are underway to update the information and communications platform to support the Mission goals and objectives outlined above. Mission Montenegro expects that our communications infrastructure will change dramatically in the next 3-5 years. We continue to renegotiate contracts to increase our speed on all networks, which is a requirement as IRM staff implement Office365. We will have a fully effective accountability system, capable of immediately contacting all Embassy staff via telephone, SMS, and email. Mail service will continue to improve as we establish our own Diplomatic Post Office, and transition away from sharing Embassy Tirana's DPO.

Management Objective 3: Align Embassy management operations, policies, and procedures with Department best practices.

Justification: The Department relies on the use of Collaborative Management Initiative (CMI) scores to quantify both resource requirements and the achievement of service level standards. Embassy Podgorica's management platform needs to accurately reflect the achievement of the Uniform Service Standards (USS), while also complying with both Mission and Department policies and ensuring customer satisfaction.