



Integrated Country Strategy

SURINAME

FOR PUBLIC RELEASE

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1. Chief of Mission Priorities

The Chief of Mission will promote American leadership through balanced and effective diplomatic engagement in partnership with Suriname in order to:

- strengthen citizen security, national institutions, and extend governance;
- expand economic opportunity and prosperity;
- establish Suriname as a more cooperative partner in the region; and
- create a public opinion environment that supports U.S. policy initiatives.

The most pressing of these goals is to expand economic opportunity and prosperity.

Suriname is slowly emerging from an extended period of dramatic economic decline brought on by the fall in prices across the extractive industries upon which the nation relied. In particular, the 2016 departure of U.S. aluminum producer ALCOA marked the end of a 100-year relationship with Suriname, a significant economic setback for the nation.

The Government of Suriname faced pre-existing challenges with capability and capacity issues, but now struggles to consistently provide basic services such as education and health care, and to investigate and prosecute crimes. Additionally, the lack of effective governance in its remote border regions challenges its sovereignty there and facilitates transnational criminal activity within the country.

Suriname's offshore oil industry remains aspirational. Should Suriname be able to transition from oil exploration to production, it will not realize significant profits for another decade. Gold production, once again on the upswing due to gold's increased value, is simply not sufficient to replace bauxite production as the prime economic driver.

The responsibility for Suriname's economy falls on the president who has assiduously consolidated political power in the Office of the President during his time in office. Suriname's president is no stranger to controversy. Democratically elected twice and now serving his second five-year term, he was convicted in absentia in the Netherlands on drug trafficking charges. He is also a defendant in the ongoing *December Murders Trial* where he stands accused of complicity in the 1982 murders of 15 prominent opponents of the military dictatorship which he led. His son was convicted in U.S. federal court on drug trafficking charges, weapons charges, and supporting terrorism, and remains in prison in the U.S. Nonetheless, the Government of Suriname generally respects human rights and religious freedom in a multi-ethnic society.

Traditionally, Suriname has never looked to the United States as its primarily international interlocutor. As a former Dutch colony, it maintains strong familial, cultural, and economic ties

to the Netherlands, although bilateral political ties are strained. Suriname looks to its Caribbean neighbors, including Venezuela and Cuba, for support and political alliances but, as a rule, avoids taking high profile positions on international issues.

Suriname enjoys significant support from China and India. Each provides financial and infrastructure support, as well as full scholarships for Surinamese students to study at their universities.

Notwithstanding this background, and a president well known for his anti-colonial rhetoric, the government is functionally transactional and is open to increased cooperation with the United States in limited areas. The transactional nature of the Surinamese government and the generally favorable view of the United States held by the Surinamese, combine to provide a stable platform for engagement by U.S. businesses and the U.S. government.

International law enforcement training and military-to-military programs continue to have the support of the Government of Suriname, enhancing the professionalism of these institutions and enabling them to combat financial crimes and strengthen governance over border regions. The Government also takes its counter-terrorism responsibilities seriously and is prepared for deeper cooperation with the U.S. in this area.

Having recently ratified the Minamata Convention on Mercury, Suriname is taking steps toward addressing the use of mercury by the numerous small-scale gold miners who operate in its interior regions. Our new Embassy, the only LEED certified building in Suriname, provides an ideal platform from which to promote green building technology, resource management, and sustainable development.

Surinamese media enjoy press freedom but suffer from limited resources, a lack of training, and a self-imposed restraint on critical reporting on the government (possibly due to the violence inflicted upon the press during the military dictatorship of the 1980s). The Embassy will continue to engage the media on U.S. government policy priorities and seek opportunities for training to enhance the quality and professionalism of reporting.

The United States remains the destination of choice for Surinamese students and academics seeking educational and exchange opportunities. Because such opportunities remain cost prohibitive, the Embassy will promote lower cost alternatives such as community college.

As Suriname readies for its 2020 national elections, the Embassy has already initiated training opportunities for election officials and will continue to engage the Government of Suriname to support free and fair elections.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: Strengthened citizen security, national institutions, and extended governance.

Mission Objective 1.1: Promote transparency and good governance to strengthen democratic institutions.

Mission Objective 1.2: Increase the protection of U.S. Citizens.

Mission Objective 1.3: Enhance the rule of law by building the capacity of law enforcement institutions.

Mission Goal 2: Expanded economic opportunity and prosperity.

Mission Objective 2.1: Promote U.S. economic growth through increased trade and investment with Suriname.

Mission Goal 3: Suriname is a more cooperative U.S. partner in the region.

Mission Objective 3.1: Mission Suriname enjoys enhanced partnership with Suriname's foreign policy makers.

Mission Goal 4: A public opinion environment that supports U.S. policy initiatives.

Mission Objective 4.1: United States seen as a trusted partner and positive example in the region.

Management Objective 1: Advocate for staffing to best support Mission goals.

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1: Strengthened citizen security, national institutions, and extended governance.

Description and Linkages: A stable and secure Suriname, connected to the U.S. by shared democratic values and economic interests, achieves National Security Strategy and State-USAID goals to reduce threats to our common security, and limit opportunities for adversaries to gain influence or to operate in close proximity to us by increasing the capacity and strengthening the resiliency of Suriname to combat transnational crime, promote citizen-responsive government, and counter malign influences from state and non-state actors.

Mission Objective 1.1: Promote transparency and good governance to strengthen democratic institutions.

Justification: A free and expressive media environment is a cornerstone to any functioning democracy. As Suriname prepares to hold national elections in 2020, the freedom of the press will be an essential check in the hands of civil society against potential election irregularities.

The Mission's engagement will also focus on enhancing women's participation in national institutions, including the National Assembly and executive agencies. Although the majority of university students in Suriname are women, they continue to be underrepresented in key industries. Highlighting the key role of women as participants in the national economy, especially through the mentorship of women entrepreneurs, can build bridges with U.S. firms, promote small business development, and empower a new generation of community leaders.

Mission Objective 1.2: Increase the protection of U.S. Citizens.

Justification: Protection of the American people is a fundamental responsibility of their government. As Suriname's economy grows, the number of American citizens employed in its key industries and visiting Suriname will increase. Strengthened communication with American citizens will allow them to receive important information from the Embassy about safety conditions in Suriname, thereby helping them to make informed travel decisions, and assisting the Embassy in contacting American citizens during emergencies such as natural disasters, civil unrest, or a family emergency.

Failure to protect and inform American citizens could result in adverse safety and financial consequences for citizens living in and traveling to Suriname.

Mission Objective 1.3: Enhance the rule of law by building the capacity of law enforcement institutions.

Justification: The rule of law is a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions, and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced, and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards. It requires, as well, measures to ensure adherence to the principles of supremacy of law, equality before the law, accountability to the law, fairness in the application of the law, separation of powers, participation in decision-making, legal certainty, avoidance of arbitrariness and procedural and legal transparency.

Frequent Ministry and police leadership changes and reduced funding due to ongoing economic issues undermines capacity, even as reports of narcotics trafficking increase. But the government's concern with increased crime offer opportunities for engagement. Post's efforts will align with regional efforts to dismantle criminal organizations, impede narcotics trafficking, and strengthen borders by extending governance. We will focus efforts on improving the anti-money laundering/combating financing of terrorism regime (AML/CFT), securing borders, and increasing functional capacity of law enforcement and judicial actors.

In 2020, the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF) will complete the next Mutual Evaluation (ME) of Suriname's AML/CFT regime. Without improvements, Suriname risks losing access to international financial markets and a corresponding reduction in economic activity.

Weak borders ease the operation of transnational criminal organizations and drug and human traffickers. Post will continue to invest initiatives to extend governance to sparsely populated coastal regions and the isolated jungle interior. The lack of governance also makes Suriname vulnerable to human trafficking and the government must show ongoing improvement to maintain Tier Two Watch List status and, ideally, to move off the watch list.

Mission Goal 2: Expanded economic opportunity and prosperity.

Description and Linkages: A stable and prosperous Suriname, connected to the U.S. by shared democratic values and economic interests, will achieve National Security Strategy and State-USAID Strategic goals by providing increased market opportunities

for U.S. goods and services, energy and infrastructure projects, as well as direct investment opportunities, while combatting corruption and promoting market-oriented economic and governance reforms.

Mission Objective 2.1: Promote U.S. economic growth through increased trade and investment with Suriname.

Justification: Better investment and export opportunities for American businesses depend on an improved business climate and careful sustainable development. Suriname is rich in natural resources, both oil and gold, as well as having Amazonian rainforest cover 90% of the country and a mangrove-lined shore. U.S. companies that seek to develop these resources would benefit from greater fiscal transparency, less red tape in accessing the market, protection of intellectual property rights, and sustainable development. To that end, we continue to encourage Suriname to participate in the Extractive Industries Transparency Index (EITI), to implement reforms that improve the ease of doing business, and to ratify the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). We will advocate for improved fiscal transparency and for legislation and enforcement that protects intellectual property. A well-regulated, business friendly Suriname will enhance our security and benefit our economy, while denying our competitors operating space in the region.

We will continue to engage the government, business partners, and NGOs to reduce the usage of mercury in artisanal gold mining and to preserve Suriname's unique environmental heritage – a potential basis for an eco-tourism industry. The Mission promotes U.S. exports and jobs by supporting American firms such as the Apache Corporation, Kosmos Energy, Newmont Mining, and Coca-Cola, which all do business in Suriname.

Mission Goal 3: Suriname is a more cooperative U.S. partner in the region.

Description and Linkages: A stable, friendly, and prosperous Suriname will achieve National Security Strategy and State-USAID goals to enhance regional security and benefit our respective economies. As a democratic state connected to the U.S. by shared values and economic interests, Suriname will be a partner in efforts to reduce violence, drug trafficking, and illegal immigration that threaten our common security, and will limit opportunities for adversaries to operate from an area in close proximity to the U.S.

Mission Objective 3.1: Mission Suriname enjoys enhanced partnership with Suriname's foreign policy decision makers.

Justification: The Government of Suriname often aligns itself regionally with Venezuela and Cuba, resulting in voting contrary to the U.S. position at the UN and the OAS.

The government of Suriname requires even routine correspondence to go by diplomatic note, which taxes Post resources with no OMS in the POL/ECON Section and only one OMS for the Front Office.

In the past, Suriname requested assistance in developing a partnership with the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) to develop their own diplomatic academy. We were unable to fulfill this request and the government has since announced an MOU with the Diplomatic Academy of China, and another with the Government of Russia to provide training and technical assistance to Surinamese diplomats at their own in-country training facility. While an FSI partnership is not feasible, Post will seek other opportunities to provide training and deepen relationships with foreign policy decision makers.

Mission Goal 4: A public opinion environment that supports U.S. policy initiatives.

Description and Linkages: Many Surinamers are unaware of the deep and ongoing ties between our two nations, and the Embassy seeks to enhance the view of the United States as a trusted partner and a positive example in the region. Fostering a public opinion environment that supports U.S. policy initiatives such as inclusive and sustainable development, opening new markets, and supporting U.S. prosperity and security objectives will demonstrate the connections between our two countries, reinforce our shared democratic values and economic interests, and limit the malign influence of other states which pose a threat to Suriname's sovereignty.

Mission Objective 4.1: United States seen as a trusted partner and positive example in the region.

Justification: As a former Dutch colony, Suriname still maintains strong cultural, economic, and familial ties to the Netherlands. At the same time, this small country draws out-sized attention from China, Cuba, Venezuela, and more recently Russia - all of whom stand ready to exert their influence. In addition, its weak border control and ineffective law enforcement make Suriname an inviting platform for drug traffickers, money launderers, and alien smugglers.

Notwithstanding these other influencers, Surinamers have a generally positive attitude toward the United States, share our democratic and economic ideals, and value a multi-cultural society. In order to leverage these areas of commonality, it is important that Surinamers, both within and outside of government, have a positive perception and better understanding of the United States. We seek to make the United States a partner of choice rather than a partner of necessity.

Communicating to all Surinamers the positive role the U.S. government plays in Suriname is key to successful public diplomacy. We must influence key opinion leaders, community leaders, and program partners throughout the country by messaging proactively on key regional and bilateral issues, while at the same time ensuring that our efforts are made known to the general public. The Surinamese press should highlight positive aspects of U.S. policy, and the United States should seek and encourage positive recognition for its programs through all media outlets and via its own digital media platforms. With these three elements – positive policies, positive programs, and positive messages – the United States may achieve a more effective bilateral and multilateral partnership in Suriname and avoid being kept at arm's length on important issues.

4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1: Advocate for staffing to best support Mission goals.

Justification: Since 2015, the number of LE staff positions at Embassy Paramaribo has grown by over 50%, from 57 to 86. These additional LE staff positions have increased the workload for the financial management and human resources staff considerably. In addition, our new Embassy is 10 times the footprint of our former Embassy. These factors have increased the workload for all ICASS staff, and this increase is felt most acutely by the understaffed HR & Finance Sections, both of which are without a US direct hire (i.e., Human Resources Officer, Financial Management Officer). In order to properly support the Mission, the Management Section should work to advocate for necessary financial and human resources not only within Management, but also for those resource requests mentioned within other ICS mission objectives.