



# Integrated Country Strategy

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## Thailand

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## 1. Chief of Mission Priorities

In 2018, the United States and Thailand are celebrating 200 years of a close and productive relationship. What started in 1818 with the first contact between the court of Siam and President James Monroe developed in the last century into a crucial partnership supported by the United States' largest non-warzone diplomatic mission in the world. From critical security and law enforcement cooperation to bilateral health collaboration producing vaccines for HIV and tropical diseases, 49 agencies and 74 sections work in Bangkok and Chiang Mai to support vital U.S. bilateral, regional, and global priorities.

Our security partnership endures and provides a solid foundation for our bilateral relationship, with active collaboration on issues ranging from maritime security, humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping operations, counter terrorism, and countering weapons of mass destruction to trans-border law enforcement concerns such as countering trafficking in persons, drugs, and wildlife, intellectual property crimes, and criminal fugitives. We will work with the government, law enforcement, civil society, the judiciary, and the private sector to seize on the military government's stated willingness to increase efforts to combat corruption and human trafficking, including raising labor rights standards for migrants.

Our defense alliance promotes regional stability by fostering cooperation in areas that enable both nations to address complex security concerns more effectively. This deep partnership directly enhances U.S. defense and law enforcement capacities throughout the region and the world. Since the coup, however, legal restrictions have placed some limits on our cooperation and assistance. These will need to be lifted before the alliance is fully reinvigorated. We must carefully consider decision points that will allow removal of these limitations.

Thailand's tourist industry remains dynamic. The volume of U.S. citizens visiting or retiring in the Kingdom continues to increase. Close coordination will continue between the Consular Section, Public Affairs, the Regional Security Office (RSO), Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and the Royal Thai Police and Ministry of Public Health to protect U.S. citizens and prepare them for health and security emergencies. Increasing the reach of both in-person and social media-based outreach remain priorities.

Sustaining a mission of this size and regional significance continues to present substantial resource challenges. We have been able to contain costs, even with current infrastructure and human resources limitations, through implementation of innovative best management practices, but continued interagency growth will necessitate new solutions and resources in order to continue providing quality, cost-effective services in the future.

## 2. Mission Strategic Framework

**Mission Goal 1:** A rules-based order in Thailand advances democratic values.

**Mission Objective 1.1:** Restoration of free, fair, credible, participatory governance.

**Mission Objective 1.2:** Strengthened nongovernmental organizations advocating for the human and civil rights of marginalized communities.

**Mission Goal 2:** The Thai public values the strong, multifaceted U.S.-Thai partnership at all levels and supports U.S. interests, positioning the United States as the international partner of choice.

**Mission Objective 2.1:** Thailand has a positive perception of the shared history and values with the United States.

**Mission Objective 2.2:** Thai people increasingly recognize, verify, and counter disinformation.

**Mission Goal 3:** U.S. security interests at home and in Thailand are protected.

**Mission Objective 3.1:** U.S. citizens in Thailand are protected and U.S. border security is strengthened.

**Mission Objective 3.2:** Regional and global instability, violence, and transnational crime is countered, through partnership with Thailand.

**Mission Objective 3.3:** Thailand's capacity to respond to shared traditional and non-traditional security challenges is strengthened.

**Mission Goal 4:** U.S. economic impact in the Indo-Pacific region grows, and promotes sustainable and inclusive development.

**Mission Objective 4.1:** Market access and export opportunities for U.S. firms are expanded, the playing field is leveled through legal and regulatory reforms, and Thai investment in the United States increases.

**Mission Objective 4.2:** Policies and best practices that support inclusive and sustainable economic growth are adopted.

**Management Objective 1:** Mission Thailand management is able to ensure delivery of administrative services and promoting timely document approvals and clearances from Thai government officials, supporting a robust bilateral relationship.

**Management Objective 2:** Mission Thailand serves as the premier management platform for United States agencies in Asia, providing extensive support to the region across administrative functions, including human resource classifications, travel management, medical assistance, and information technology support.

**Management Objective 3:** Mission Thailand collaborates with the Bureaus of Overseas Building Operations and East Asia and Pacific Affairs, as well as with stakeholder offices and agencies in Thailand and the United States, to complete construction of a New Office Annex (NOX) in Bangkok and a New Consulate Compound (NCC) in Chiang Mai.

### 3. Mission Goals and Objectives

#### **Mission Goal 1: A rules-based order in Thailand advances democratic values.**

**Description and Linkages:** The United States values partners and allies who share a rules-based order and democratic principles. Through a broad range of activities in Thailand, Mission Goal 1 supports the National Security Strategy (Pillar IV), State Joint Strategic Plan (Goals 1, 2, and 3), EAP Joint Regional Strategy (Goals 4 and 5), and the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) functional bureau strategy.

#### **Mission Objective 1.1: Restoration of free, fair, credible, participatory governance.**

**Justification:** The military junta that took power in 2014 capitalized on widespread distrust of politicians, political parties, the media, and the political process, as well as popular concern over increased political tension and potential for violence. During its tenure, the junta-led Royal Thai Government has severely restricted civil liberties: giving the junta's leader absolute power via unreviewable administrative order; limiting political activities by prohibiting groups of five people or more; and restricting free speech concerning politics, the junta, and the monarchy. The Royal Thai Government further restricted free speech through a criminal defamation law, allowing private actors to pursue criminal charges against individuals. The Royal Thai Government most recently promised elections in February 2019, but previously announced dates have been postponed. This objective recognizes that progress on our shared goals will slow, if Thailand does not respect basic civil liberties, human rights, or the rule of law. Through a full range of activities, including bilateral meetings, multilateral fora, and working with like-minded diplomatic Missions and NGOs, the United States can help the Royal Thai Government restore free, fair, credible, participatory governance. This approach directly supports promoting a rules-based order in Thailand that advances democratic values. If Thailand fails to return to democracy, the U.S. - Thai relationship may weaken, and Thailand may choose to strengthen relationships with regional powers hostile to U.S. presence in Asia.

#### **Mission Objective 1.2: Strengthened nongovernmental organizations advocating for the human and civil rights of marginalized communities.**

**Justification:** Thailand's coup cycle has diminished the capacity of nongovernmental organizations that support human and civil rights. Restrictions on peaceful advocacy activities during coup periods have included harassment and legal sanctions directed towards human rights defenders. Third party support for public-sector capacity building through technical assistance and other programs is often withdrawn during periods of coup governance. As a result, many of Thailand's nongovernmental organizations lack fundamental skills in relevant areas, including strategic and organizational planning, and day-to-day operations. By increasing the capacity of Thailand's nongovernmental organizations through partnerships, technical assistance, educational and exchange programs, engagement, and training, productivity and confidence in these nongovernmental organizations will increase. This will work to improve

human and civil rights protections for marginalized communities, promote democratic values and to support a rules-based order.

**Mission Goal 2: The Thai public values the strong, multifaceted U.S.-Thai partnership at all levels and supports U.S. interests, positioning the United States as the international partner of choice.**

**Description and Linkages:** This goal aims to ensure that the U.S. is the international partner of choice for Thailand and values longstanding cooperation and partnership with the United States, thereby advancing U.S. interest and goals. This goal is supported by the State-USAID Joint Strategic Goal Framework Goal 3 (Promote American Leadership through Balanced Engagement) and the 2018-2022 EAP Joint Regional Strategy, particularly Goals 1, 3, and 5.

**Mission Objective 2.1: Thailand has a positive perception of the shared history and values with the United States.**

**Justification:** Overall, public opinion of the United States is relatively high among Thais. Supporters of the 2014 military coup d'état, particularly the Bangkok elite, resented U.S. condemnation of the undemocratic seizure of power, marking the low point in top-level U.S. - Thai relations since our defense alliance was established in the 1950s. This resentment was fed by disinformation narratives formulated and disseminated by third parties. However, over the past two years, opinion has become more favorable due to sustained messaging by the Mission and key visits from high-level U.S. officials. The Mission must continue to increase this positive opinion by reaching Thai society throughout the country, emphasizing our shared history and enduring friendship that has benefited Thailand and led to greater cooperation on many critical issues for both countries and the region.

**Mission Objective 2.2: Thai people increasingly recognize, verify, and counter disinformation.**

**Justification:** Anti-American disinformation readily available in Thailand, and often originating from non-Thai sources, promotes a narrative that U.S. government activities are designed to discredit and to destabilize the current government, and exert malign, hegemonic influence on Thailand. These stories are shared on social media platforms, particularly among certain media, academia, and social elites, and have infiltrated mainstream Thai media at times, exposing the general public to negative, false narratives. Thai media organizations are starting to understand the severity and consequences of disinformation, but the general public lacks reliable sources for fact-checking fake news, and remains susceptible to false messages that play to political divisions.

**Mission Goal 3: U.S. security interests at home and abroad are protected.**

**Description and Linkages:** The United States is an Indo-Pacific nation and will continue to protect Americans and to advance U.S. national security interests in Thailand and the region.

Through a broad range of activities in Thailand, Mission Goal 3 supports the National Security Strategy (Pillars I, III, and IV), State Joint Strategic Plan (Goal 1 and Goal 3), National Defense Strategy (Line of Efforts I and II), the Indo-Pacific Strategy (NSC), EAP Joint Regional Strategy (Goals I, IV, and V), and the Indo-Pacific Command Theater Strategy.

**Mission Objective 3.1: U.S. citizens in Thailand are protected and U.S. border security is strengthened.**

**Justification:** Protecting the security of all U.S. citizens is the Administration's highest priority. Mission Thailand's aim is to protect U.S. citizens residing in Thailand and to protect U.S. borders, while facilitating legitimate travel. Thailand is an increasingly popular tourist and retirement destination for U.S. citizens, with approximately one million U.S. citizens visiting each year, and over 75,000 U.S. residents. The environment within which Mission Thailand operates requires us to adapt to unforeseen events, such as terrorist activity, natural disasters, and political instability.

**Mission Objective 3.2: Regional and global instability, violence, and transnational crime is countered, through partnership with Thailand.**

**Justification:** U.S.-Thai cooperation supports regional security and a rules-based international order. Bilateral and multilateral partnership with Thailand helps to address complex regional and global challenges. U.S. support of Thailand's leadership within the region and multilateral fora supports regional states' resiliency to preserve rule of law in the Indo-Pacific region.

**Mission Objective 3.3: Thailand's capacity to respond to shared traditional and non-traditional security challenges is strengthened.**

**Justification:** Security cooperation, both bilateral and multilateral, has long been a pillar of the U.S.-Thai relationship. The principles and goals enunciated for our military alliance in the 2012 Joint Vision Statement remain fully in force and support greater peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region. The U.S.-Thai alliance supports preservation of and respect for the rule of law; threats from rogue regimes and violent extremists; transnational threats; and non-traditional security threats.

**Mission Goal 4: U.S. economic impact in the Indo-Pacific region grows, and promotes sustainable and inclusive development.**

**Description and Linkages:** The United States values working with partners and allies to promote free, fair, and reciprocal economic relationships, to address non-traditional security challenges, and to promote development. Through a broad range of activities in Thailand, Mission Goal 3 supports the National Security Strategy (Pillars II and IV), State/USAID Joint Strategic Plan (Goals 2, 3, and 4), EAP Joint Regional Strategy (Goals 3, 4, and 6), and OES Functional Bureau Strategy (Goals 1, 2, 3, and 4).

**Mission Objective 4.1: Market access and export opportunities for U.S. firms are expanded, the playing field is leveled through legal and regulatory reforms, and Thai investment in the United States increases.**

**Justification:** The U.S.-Thai commercial relationship was first formalized in the 1833 Treaty of Amity and Commerce and has continued to flourish. Thailand is the United States' 21st largest goods trading partner, with two-way goods trade totaling \$42 billion in 2017, composed of \$31.2 billion in Thai exports to the U.S. and \$10.8 billion in U.S. exports to Thailand. The local American Chamber of Commerce has valued U.S. cumulative investment in Thailand at over \$50 billion, and its 650 members employ more than 200,000 Thais. However, while our commercial relationship remains strong, Thailand's overall economy has stagnated in recent years due to political instability, natural disasters, slow global demand resulting in decreasing exports, and growing competition from regional neighbors. The Royal Thai Government has embarked on legislative and regulatory reforms in many sectors with the goal of increasing economic growth and competitiveness; however, many of the changes recently passed or currently under review could have significant negative impacts on trade and investment. Rather than resolving existing issues that have, in some cases, persisted for years, problematic legislation and non-transparent rulemaking will introduce new challenges that could jeopardize Thailand's prospects of moving up the value chain to the next level of economic development. The Mission will work with the Royal Thai Government, the Thai and U.S. private sector, research institutes, and other relevant agencies to offer consultation and input into reforming policies and procedures to encourage and to facilitate increased U.S. market access and export opportunities. The United States and Thailand have a number of dialogues to catalyze progress on economic reform issues, including but not limited to annual Strategic Dialogue outcomes and the Joint Committee under our bilateral Trade and Investment Framework Agreement.

**Mission Objective 4.2: Policies and best practices that support inclusive and sustainable economic growth are adopted.**

**Justification:** Thailand is a leader in public health and health cooperation is a central pillar of our partnership. The Mission works with Thailand on collaborative projects and research to detect, prevent, and respond to infectious disease threats, such as malaria, HIV/AIDS, influenza, tuberculosis, dengue, Zika virus, and anti-microbial resistance. Within the Mission, the DCM-chaired Health Policy Working Group ensures coordination among DoD, CDC, USAID, ECON/ESTH, PAS, MED, and other interagency public health stakeholders. Thailand has shown interest in taking on an increasingly active role in the international GHSA community, and the Mission supports Thailand's deepening participation with a view towards Thailand becoming a model in the region.

Thailand is eager to play a leadership role in environmental issues and foster resilience to the effects of climate change. Thailand can be an effective partner in the region to help to mobilize grid-powered, renewable energy to strengthen energy security through diversification of sources and supply, and to increase electricity interconnection with neighboring countries. Thailand is also well positioned to promote climate-resilient agriculture in the Mekong Basin



and to encourage urban planning for developing communities. Thailand's priority on connectivity as a catalyst for regional integration will take on increased importance as it moves forward on several infrastructure mega-projects. The Mission promotes transnational cooperation in connectivity, health, agriculture, environment, infrastructure, education, and energy through the Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI), ASEAN Connect, and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS).

Thailand still needs to address gaps in achieving international standards of labor protection, and the Mission is working with the Royal Thai Government to improve worker rights, especially for the estimated four million migrant laborers in Thailand.

## 4. Management Objectives

**Management Objective 1: Mission Thailand management is able to ensure delivery of administrative services and promoting timely document approvals and clearances from Thai government officials, supporting a robust bilateral relationship.**

**Justification:** Mission Thailand, including the largest non-war zone U.S. Embassy in the world, is a critical platform for advancing U.S. policy interests with a key treaty ally and with the entire region. In addition to the Mission's bilateral component focused on advancing democracy and working level engagement in Thailand, it also hosts important regional offices supporting development, financial administration, communications, and many other functions across Asia and beyond. Although Post has been successful in maximizing efficiencies and innovating best management practices to contain costs, continued interagency growth is not sustainable with existing human resources, infrastructure capacities, and regional service delivery models.

**Management Objective 2: Mission Thailand serves as the premier management platform for United States agencies in Asia, providing extensive support to the region across administrative functions, including human resource classifications, travel management, medical assistance, and information technology support**

**Justification:** Nearly half of Embassy Bangkok's U.S. Direct Hire (USDH) positions are focused regionally and over 75 percent of the Department of State's Locally Employed Staff (LES) and USDH positions have a regional role. Post's size, capacities, location, and highly talented and relatively low-cost local work force allow the Mission to support other posts, the EAP Bureau and other U.S. agencies. Post has been a leader in innovating best practices and administrative efficiencies, while accommodating interagency growth and maintaining high quality, cost-effective service over the years. Embassy Bangkok's Management personnel in Human Resources, Information Resources Management, Facilities Management, Financial Management have formal regional duties affiliated with their portfolios; many other management elements provide ad-hoc regional support services as required. The EAP/EX affiliated Regional Employee Development Center (REDC) also falls under the management umbrella.

**Management Objective 3: Mission Thailand collaborates with the Bureaus of Overseas Building Operations and East Asia and Pacific Affairs, as well as with stakeholder offices and agencies in Thailand and the United States to complete construction of a New Office Annex (NOX) in Bangkok and a New Consulate Compound (NCC) in Chiang Mai.**

**Justification:** Master planning to consolidate Embassy Bangkok's disparate offices onto a secure, DS-compliant Embassy annex has culminated in an approved and funded NOX project which will break ground in 2019/2020 on the Existing Office Building (EOB) compound, one of Embassy Bangkok's three USG owned compounds in downtown Bangkok. This massive project will require immense coordination including the destruction of existing facilities and the MSGQ, as well as the displacement of parking spaces on the EOB during the construction phase.

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Simultaneously, the construction of a NCC will take place in Chiang Mai on a newly acquired plot of land. Both projects will impact the Mission's operations for several years

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