



Integrated Country Strategy

Trinidad and Tobago

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1. Chief of Mission Priorities

The twin-island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (TT) is one of America's closest partners in the Caribbean region, with wide economic ties, historic security cooperation, and deep cultural and family connections. The mission of the U.S. Embassy in Port of Spain, leveraging its robust interagency presence in TT, is to deepen these ties by building on three pillars of bilateral collaboration between the United States and TT – Security, Governance, and Commerce.

Improving the security climate in TT is the highest priority of the U.S. mission. Rising levels of violent crime and an increasing threat of terrorism present near- and long-term challenges to the nation's security and well-being. Some of these threats also pose possible risks to the United States, meaning that improving TT's internal security may improve it in the U.S. homeland as well. Ensuring the well-being of U.S. citizens, both visiting and resident, is also paramount.

Our efforts to address security concerns are focused in three areas. First, through both bilateral cooperation and targeted U.S. foreign assistance, we are helping TT build technical capacity and institutional structures to deal with potential terror threats from Islamic extremists. In addition, we are using public diplomacy and other assistance programs to help TT, including the local Muslim community, to counter violent extremism by engaging the problem at its roots.

Second, we cooperate directly with the TT government to detect and disrupt criminal networks that smuggle narcotics and weapons, and traffic in persons. Primarily through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, the Embassy also works to build the capacity of TT's law enforcement and other security agencies, as well as support efforts to improve and reform its criminal justice system, so that TT can better control its borders, catch, prosecute and convict criminals, and deal with the root causes of TT's dangerously high violent crime rates.

Finally, as a small island state in a seismically active area only kilometers away from a much larger state that is imploding, TT is vulnerable to disaster, both natural and artificial. We will work to improve our mission's ability to manage disasters, and, at the same time, look for ways to help the TT government increase its capacities to mitigate and respond to all manner of crises.

Closely related to our efforts to improve TT's security environment are our efforts to improve governance. Though TT is a small country, it is one of the largest and wealthiest countries in the Caribbean. With that in mind, we will encourage the TT government to play a stronger leadership role in the region and hemisphere to promote our common policy goals. We will also push for opportunities and equal treatment for marginalized groups, including refugees, women, children, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV, and the LGBTI community. Finally, we will use the public's high regard for the United States to try to increase public demand for good governance as a means to confront widespread corruption and lack of accountability.

Finally, commerce is the main trunk of the U.S.-TT relationship. The mission will seek to strengthen the existing trade and investment relationship by encouraging efficient business and economic policies that promote innovation, entrepreneurship, and job creation, reduce barriers to U.S. goods and services exports, and contribute to the sustainable development of a diversified economy. We will continue to provide commercial services to U.S. companies interested in doing business in TT, and facilitate legitimate travel and study in the United States as a means to promote increased economic growth and jobs for both the United States and TT.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: Enhanced Citizen Security and the Rule of Law

Mission Objective 1.1: TT law enforcement's and security forces' capacity increases through marked improvements in border control, countering threats from terrorism and violent extremism, and reductions in violent crime.

Mission Objective 1.2: TT's institutions improve their capacity to deliver services, counter corruption, and address the underlying causes of violent extremism and crime.

Mission Objective 1.3: The TT government strengthens its strategic planning, communication, and organizational capacity to respond to local and regional crises and natural and artificial disasters.

Mission Goal 2: Increased Mutual Economic Wellbeing through Trade and Investment

Mission Objective 2.1: TT adopts more efficient business and economic policies that strengthen the bilateral trade relationship, reduce barriers to trade, and contribute to the sustainable development of a diversified economy.

Mission Objective 2.2: U.S. exports, bilateral investment, and legitimate travel that creates jobs and economic development all increase.

Mission Goal 3: Support More Effective and Accountable Government Institutions

Mission Objective 3.1: TT more closely aligns itself with U.S. objectives in regional and global fora.

Mission Objective 3.2: TT institutional capacity leads to enhanced opportunities and protections for vulnerable communities, including refugees, women, children, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV, and the LGBTI community.

Management Objective 1: Increased efficiency and improved safety in service delivery supporting Mission Objectives and improved customer satisfaction through streamlined operations, improved communication, and local staff development.

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1 Enhanced Citizen Security and the Rule of Law

Description and Linkages: Rising levels of violent crime and an increasing threat of terrorism present near- and long-term challenges to TT's security and well-being. Homicides are near a record high. A generally low clearance rate—in which police are able to identify a suspect or make an arrest—means many violent crimes go unsolved. The TT criminal justice system also moves slowly, leaving the accused to await trial—oftentimes for many years—in remand. TT has the highest number of people per capita in the Western Hemisphere who left to join ISIS in the Middle East, and TT law enforcement disrupted a planned terror attack on Carnival in February 2018. Due to its geographic location and generally porous borders, TT has long been a transshipment point for cocaine and other narcotics traveling to the United States, Europe, and Africa. Increasing numbers of people are fleeing Venezuela for TT, presenting new security challenges. These security challenges all pose risks to TT's near- and long-term stability. A breakdown in security and the rule of law in TT could result in increased security risks to the homeland, including possible increased migration flows to the United States. The Mission aims to enhance TT's ability to confront these challenges. This goal is aligned with the National Security Strategy, the Joint Strategic Plan, and the Joint Regional Strategy to protect America's security at home and abroad and ensure a secure Western Hemisphere.

Mission Objective 1.1 TT's law enforcement and security forces capacity increases through marked improvements in border control, countering threats from terrorism and violent extremism, and reductions in violent crime.

Justification: As noted above, TT faces a range of security risks, including threats of terrorism and high levels of violent crime, particularly homicide. Due to its location, TT is a key transit route for international trafficking organizations, persons who pose security risks, and criminal elements. Due to the political and economic instability in Venezuela, increasing numbers of people are fleeing that country for TT. TT law enforcement and security agencies are committed in principle to increased professionalization and improved technical capabilities, but remain challenged by a lack of training and resources, particularly in developing evidence-based investigations that regularly result in convictions. TT is also hampered by a lack of security integration, few information sharing standard operating procedures or institutional structures, and a general lack of robust cooperation among security service, police, and military elements. In addition,

ongoing economic and bureaucratic challenges inhibit TT's ability to implement needed reforms. Better security and law enforcement capacity will result in more secure borders and greater effectiveness in combatting threats from terrorism and violent extremism, illicit trafficking, and violent crime, directly contributing to increased security and support for the rule of law in TT.

Mission Objective 1.2 TT's institutions improve their capacity to deliver services, counter corruption, and address the underlying causes of violent extremism and crime.

Justification: The issue of crime and violent extremism in Trinidad and Tobago is both a social and a law enforcement issue. Crime, violence, and radicalization prosper in areas plagued by unemployment, poor education, corruption, and limited government investment. Distrust of the police means citizens are reluctant to report crimes or give evidence. Young people who lack social or economic opportunities are most vulnerable to negative influences. Preventing crime is more cost effective than prosecuting it, and countering violent extremism is critical to reducing the threat from terrorism in TT and the United States.

Mission Objective 1.3 The TT government strengthens its strategic planning, communication, and organizational capacity to respond to local and regional crises and natural and artificial disasters.

Justification: As a small island state, TT is acutely vulnerable to external events and natural and artificial disasters and the national government has only limited capacity to respond to any such crisis. The United States has a strong interest in ensuring that the TT government has robust plans to ensure the efficient use of limited resources in the event of a natural or artificial disaster in support of a stable and secure TT.

Ensuring the welfare of U.S. citizens abroad is a core responsibility of the Department and post will continue our close cooperation with TT authorities to ensure the safety of U.S. citizens in TT. For Embassy Port of Spain this priority includes ensuring U.S. citizens visiting, living, and doing business in TT have the best possible access to information and available resources. Our outreach to U.S. citizens in the farthest corners of our consular district brings the public face of America to those communities. The Embassy must be prepared to meet an increased demand for American citizen services and be prepared for events requiring the evacuation of U.S. citizens and embassy personnel from the country.

Mission Goal 2 Increased Mutual Economic Wellbeing through Trade and Investment

Description and Linkages: The United States is Trinidad and Tobago's largest trading partner, but its economy is tilted heavily toward the energy sector and exposed to the cycles of the oil and gas markets. Diversification of the economy is overdue and development of other sectors of the economy would protect against energy shocks, provide new outlets for civil society to grow, and expand potential revenue streams. It would also create new trade opportunities for U.S. businesses and, by extension, foster legitimate travel between the United States and TT. This goal is aligned with the National Security Strategy, the Joint Strategic Plan, and the Joint Regional Strategy to promote American prosperity, as well as a prosperous hemisphere, through free, fair, and reciprocal economic relationships.

Mission Objective 2.1 TT adopts more efficient business and economic policies that strengthen the bilateral trade relationship, reduce barriers to trade, and contribute to the sustainable development of a diversified economy.

Justification: TT's economy is heavily dependent on hydrocarbons, which account for around 40 percent of GDP. The TT government recognizes that for long-term, sustainable economic growth, the nation must diversify its economy into other sectors. The TT government plans to reduce the nation's deficit and diversify the economy by improving the business environment and attracting more foreign direct investment. In addition, it seeks to improve its international ranking on (1) the ease of doing business ranking, (2) transparency, and (3) competitiveness. In order to take advantage of this TT government push for diversification, Post must continue to develop and leverage relationships with applicable government ministries and business support organizations to assist in connecting ideas, initiatives, and investment opportunities to U.S. exports. U.S. businesses will benefit directly from an expansion in the market for U.S. goods and services in Trinidad and Tobago afforded by reduced bureaucracy and a more transparent and scrupulous business climate.

International perceptions of crime and governance failures, however, threaten to erode investor confidence. Efforts to improve the security situation in TT will have a direct and demonstrative impact on economic development. Inefficiencies in TT customs processes are one of the biggest hindrances to an improving business climate as slow customs clearance times restrict business and trade both domestically and internationally. The TT government plans to modernize and improve customs and excise operations, and benefits from a U.S. Customs and Border Protection advisor who assists the government

in achieving this goal. As the TT government becomes increasingly serious about improving the business climate and customs clearance times, this opens further opportunity for U.S. involvement to lend expertise and resources as well as build a mutually beneficial relationship through customs data and information sharing – translating to increased capacity for trade with the United States and improved security for imports and exports.

Mission Objective 2.2 U.S. exports, bilateral investment, and legitimate travel that creates jobs and economic development all increase.

Justification: TT is a high-income developed country with a GDP per capita of over \$20,000. The country benefits from a stable democratic political system and an educated English-speaking workforce. The commercial banking system is stable, well capitalized, and profitable—as is the insurance industry. Despite these positive qualities, U.S. businesses looking to TT would be wise to conduct extensive due diligence as information required for decision-making is often unavailable or outdated, the decision-making process for tenders and the subsequent awarding of contracts can at times turn opaque without warning, and success in TT requires a strong local partner due to a culture that relies heavily on personal relationships. The Mission will continue to advance and expand U.S. market penetration by counseling interested American companies with relevant information to help them navigate the local environment.

The Consular Section, meanwhile, will continue its mission to promote and facilitate the legitimate travel of TT citizens to the United States, which injects tourism and business revenue into the U.S. economy. The important and growing business ties between the two countries ensure that visa demand will remain high, and that the TT public will remain sensitive to the issues of visa adjudication and customer service. The Consular Section commits to providing efficient operations to improve service to the public and will collaborate with the Public Affairs section to ensure the public is aware of improvements and public perception of our efforts is positive. The Consular Section will emphasize minimal appointment wait-times, while maintaining strict fraud prevention measures and tight management controls. Continued and enhanced fraud prevention is critical to post's contribution to U.S. border protection efforts as sophisticated methods to exploit seemingly legitimate travel are detected. Expanded academic and cultural exchanges will improve the local understanding of U.S. culture, strengthening our economic and political ties.

Between 2015/16 and 2016/17, there was a 5.6% decrease in the number of local students studying in the United States. In 2016, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago implemented drastic changes that limited which nationals can receive full funding for in-country undergraduate education. These changes present an opportunity to promote study in the United States for locals with financial means.

Mission Goal 3 Support More Effective and Accountable Government Institutions

Description and Linkages: Trinidad and Tobago and the United States have broadly shared values, including democratic governments, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and the importance of independent institutions just to name a few. At the same, there is mistrust of government institutions in TT due to a perceived sense of widespread corruption and a lack of accountability. Our relationship with TT allows for a multitude of wide and productive partnerships both with the government and people. These partnerships will be increasingly important in the coming years as we work together to address the challenges of the economic crisis in Venezuela, the potential for homegrown extremism, and a rise in violent crime. This goal is aligned with the National Security Strategy, the Joint Strategic Plan, and the Joint Regional Strategy to advance American influence and ensure a hemisphere receptive to U.S. leadership and values.

Mission Objective 3.1 TT more closely aligns itself with U.S. objectives in regional and global fora.

Justification: TT is generally regarded as a leader within the Caribbean region and has the potential to assume a more robust partnership with the United States in the promotion of shared values. TT's commitment to democracy can make it an influential advocate in regional and international fora for protecting human rights, strengthening democratic institutions, and improving civilian security. There is an opportunity to leverage the positive regard for the United States to encourage increased multilateral engagement by TT on areas of shared interest.

TT could become a more positive partner and advocate for U.S. supported policy goals within the Organization of American States, as well as UN bodies. TT may be ready to move beyond its historical apathy on multilateral matters, oftentimes voting only if CARICOM has a unified position. The Embassy will encourage TT to support U.S. objectives in regional and global multilateral fora whenever possible.

Mission Objective 3.2 TT institutional capacity leads to enhanced opportunities and protections for vulnerable communities, including refugees, women, children, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV, and the LGBTI community.

Justification: Improving respect for human rights in TT will include focusing attention on refugees, vulnerable migrants, people with disabilities, people living with HIV, the LGBTI community, and other marginalized groups. The ongoing economic and social crisis in Venezuela has resulted in a mixed flow of persons fleeing that country to TT. These persons often struggle to access work, healthcare (including HIV treatment), education, and legal protections afforded to refugees under international law, and many fall victim to human trafficking. Despite the recent passage of disability legislation, those living with disabilities in TT lack reasonable access to transportation, education, and other basic services. While the LGBTI community has made some recent legal advances in obtaining equal protection under the law, there remains concern about the broad treatment of LGBTI people in TT. The TT government is also committed to increasing the number of persons who start HIV treatment immediately after diagnosis. Advancing the human rights of marginalized populations will ensure that TT remains a strong and viable partner for the United States. Such advancement includes advocating for women's rights in the social, political, and economic landscapes.

4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1 Increased efficiency and improved safety in service delivery supporting Mission Objectives and improved customer satisfaction through streamlined operations, improved communication, and local staff development.

Justification: Port of Spain's Management Platform is confronted by several obstacles that uniquely challenge the platform's capacity to provide services compliant with CMI performance goals. The main obstacle is the dispersed nature of Post's facilities. The entire Management Section works in rented office space located several city blocks from the Embassy Chancery. In another direction, several supported customer sections, including Public Affairs, DEA and portions of the POL/ECON Section, work in other rented office space. The physical separation taxes limited support resources and complicates communications.

As the section with the largest number of locally employed staff members, in generally labor intensive skills, the Management Section's performance is also highly affected by the overall Trinidad and Tobago economic and work environment. As noted in the 2017 World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report on Trinidad and Tobago, poor work ethic in the labor force, corruption, and inefficient government bureaucracy are all obstacles to getting things done. Together, these factors make it very challenging to deliver services that meet customer expectations within resource constraints.

Management will endeavor to overcome those challenges and to support the Mission's objectives by improving the provision of service, actively managing customer expectations, and implementing programs that invest in and enhance human capital.