



# Integrated Country Strategy

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## Uzbekistan

**FOR PUBLIC RELEASE**

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## 1. Chief of Mission Priorities

The historic official visit of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to Washington in May 2018 renewed our strategic partnership and enhanced our focus on areas where bilateral relations can deepen and strengthen. The visit underlined our success at finding common ground on regional and global issues, including efforts to support a stable and prosperous Afghanistan, prevent the influence of violent extremism and end the trafficking of people, narcotics and illegal goods. The Integrated Country Strategy outlines how U.S. strategic goals will be supported over the next five years through U.S. Mission Tashkent's engagement with government and people of Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan is undergoing transformative change led by President Mirziyoyev, whose extensive reforms provide a unique opportunity for the United States to pursue its security and economic interests in a strategically located state in the heart of Central Asia. While our key priority has remained the same since the country's 1991 independence -- encouraging stability by supporting Uzbekistan's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity -- Mirziyoyev's reform agenda has opened new avenues for engagement. U.S. Mission Uzbekistan will work in partnership to assist the development of a secure, democratizing and prosperous Uzbekistan that cooperates with its neighbors and the broader international community to promote peace and stability. We seek to engage Uzbekistan through expanded ties reflecting a new era in the bilateral relationship.

President Mirziyoyev came to power in 2016 after the death of Uzbekistan's First President, Islam Karimov. Mirziyoyev quickly launched across-the-board reforms reflected in Uzbekistan's five-year country development strategy, announced in early 2017. This strategy identifies five priority areas -- (1) government administration, (2) the judicial and law enforcement sector, (3) economic liberalization, (4) the social sector, and (5) foreign policy. Mirziyoyev accompanied this strategy with sweeping changes to Uzbekistan's government structure and personnel. In the succeeding year and a half, the government has liberalized currency exchange, pursued foreign investment, freed prisoners of conscience, removed Uzbek citizens from "blacklists," loosened media restrictions, and increased judicial independence. All of these are longstanding U.S. priorities. In foreign policy, Uzbekistan unveiled a "good neighbors" policy that has significantly improved the tone of its relationships with all its neighbors, including Afghanistan, and has encouraged regional trade and interconnectivity. Uzbekistan has been a strong supporter of the U.S. South Asia policy and is a critical backer of the Central Asia 5 + United States (C5+1) regional grouping that fosters Central Asian cooperation in security, the economy, and the environment.

**Supporting U.S. Interests in Regional Stability.** A key goal of the U.S. South Asia strategy is to strengthen partnerships with Central Asian republics and foster regional connectivity to promote stability, resiliency, and prosperity in Central Asia and neighboring Afghanistan. Afghanistan's stability is bolstered by the important logistical access Uzbekistan provides for supplies and equipment used by U.S. and Afghan forces. To further these goals, the Mission will maintain a collaborative security partnership with Uzbekistan that supports the professionalization of its security agencies, encourages Uzbekistan's leadership role in the C5+1 mechanism and other regional platforms, and commends Uzbekistan's efforts to promote Afghan peace and security. As relationships with Uzbek law enforcement agencies improve, we seek enhanced cooperation that protects U.S. security and bolsters stability by focusing joint efforts on violent extremists, transnational criminals, proliferation threats, and traffickers of narcotics and persons. U.S. Mission Uzbekistan is also looking at supporting efforts to expand regional demining and conventional weapons security and destruction programs to Uzbekistan.

**Championing U.S. Values and Countering Instability.** Uzbekistan's actions to improve human rights, including the release of prisoners of conscience, the end of systematic child labor and significant progress in eliminating adult forced labor, should be recognized and sustained. Uzbekistan is also taking steps to promote greater religious freedom while loosening restrictions on civil society, NGOs and the media and enhancing accountability to its citizens. The government is seeking greater cooperation in addressing the threats posed by tuberculosis and other communicable diseases. U.S. interests benefit directly and indirectly when states pursue responsive and effective governance, human rights, and the rule of law. The Mission will be a willing partner in supporting Uzbekistan's efforts to meet its international human rights commitments, strengthen the role of independent media and the courts, and improve its public health capabilities.

**Fostering Economic Reforms to Create New Opportunities for U.S. Firms.** Economic liberalization and improvements in the investment climate, including Uzbekistan's pursuit of World Trade Organization membership and better protections for intellectual property rights, could provide openings for U.S. trade and investment. Through its "good neighbor" policy, Uzbekistan has taken steps to enhance regional trade and connectivity. The Mission supports strengthening the role of the private sector, reducing the regulatory burden on economic actors, promoting regional trade, enhancing stewardship of natural resources, and encouraging science and technology.

**Broadening Engagement with the Citizens of Uzbekistan.** With the majority of Uzbekistan's population under the age of 25, expanded U.S.-Uzbekistan educational, science and technology, business, and cultural links empower Uzbekistan's next generation in realizing the country's potential. The strong desire for English language instruction and higher education cooperation allows for more dynamic educational platforms and growth in the numbers of American Spaces across Uzbekistan.

**Building an Efficient Management Support Platform.** Accomplishing mission objectives requires a flexible and cost efficient management platform, with adequate resources to ensure strong internal management controls. Mission Uzbekistan has become a recognized global leader among Embassies in using data driven management techniques to save time and money while maintaining high levels of customer service. We can achieve even greater efficiencies and savings by tapping the full potential of automated systems. To bolster support of the management platform, we will enhance efforts to attract the best workforce – American and local – to ensure the accomplishment of mission priorities outlined in this strategy.

## 2. Mission Strategic Framework

**Mission Goal 1:** Protect America's security by supporting a sovereign and stable Uzbekistan capable of addressing security threats.

**Mission Objective 1.1:** Promote regional stability and advance the U.S. South Asia Strategy by ensuring reliable access for U.S. Forces in Afghanistan and enhancing security and economic cooperation across the wider region.

**Mission Objective 1.2:** Reduce the ability of violent extremists, criminals, and others to threaten domestic and regional stability and U.S. security.

**Mission Objective 1.3:** Strengthen security and law enforcement cooperation to thwart transnational criminal organizations and protect American borders.

**Mission Goal 2:** Safeguard American interests by improving governance, strengthening institutions, battling corruption, and addressing human rights abuses

**Mission Objective 2.1:** Improve Uzbekistan's compliance with international commitments and implementation of positive reforms concerning human rights.

**Mission Objective 2.2:** Increase public access to and trust in Uzbekistan's justice system toward a more accountable and consistent administration and enforcement of justice, including through positive reforms.

**Mission Objective 2.3:** Improve the quality of public health and safety services available to citizens.

**Mission Goal 3:** Create opportunities for U.S. exports and investments and strengthen political stability by promoting economic reforms leading to inclusive growth and fair, open, and transparent access to Uzbek markets.

**Mission Objective 3.1:** Improved investment climate for domestic and international investment.

**Mission Objective 3.2:** Increased trade with the United States and the wider region.

**Mission Objective 3.3:** Improved agricultural, energy, and natural resource management that develops markets for U.S. firms while increasing stability and prosperity by reducing food, water, and energy poverty.

**Mission Goal 4:** Promote the United States as a partner of choice through engagement on shared values with the people of Uzbekistan.

**Mission Objective 4.1:** Uzbekistan's population becomes more resistant to malign disinformation and propaganda about the United States through greater understanding and appreciation of U.S. culture and values.

**Mission Objective 4.2:** Uzbekistan's educational institutions move into greater alignment with international norms in order to facilitate increased academic cooperation and exchange with U.S. institutions.

**Management Objective 1:** Increase operational effectiveness by using data-driven analysis to optimize resource management.

**Management Objective 2:** Increase morale and productivity by maintaining an agile, highly skilled workforce.

### 3. Mission Goals and Objectives

**Mission Goal 1: Protect America's security by supporting a sovereign and stable Uzbekistan capable of addressing security threats.**

**Description and Linkages:** This goal directly supports the President's South Asia Strategy and the National Security Strategy in term of safeguarding the United States and U.S. interests by strengthening regional security cooperation, especially in the promotion of a stable and peaceful Afghanistan. The goal also supports Presidential Directives on combatting transnational criminal organizations, narcotics trafficking, and trafficking in persons.

**Mission Objective 1.1: Promote regional stability and advance the U.S. South Asia Strategy by ensuring access for U.S. Forces in Afghanistan and enhancing security and economic cooperation across the wider region.**

**Justification:** Since President Shavkat Mirziyoyev assumed power in 2016, Uzbekistan has been working to develop strong ties with Kabul and assume a leadership role in regional efforts to stabilize Afghanistan. During his May 2018 visit to Washington, President Mirziyoyev reiterated his support for the U.S. South Asia Strategy and pledged increased support for U.S. operations in Afghanistan. The United States should encourage the Government of Uzbekistan (GOU) to continue its efforts to promote Afghan peace and security and strengthen the role of the C5+1 mechanism in regional cooperation, as well as enhance the capacity of Uzbek security agencies to counter internal and external threats, directly advancing the U.S. interest in a secure and stable region.

**Mission Objective 1.2: Reduce the ability of violent extremists, criminals, and others to threaten domestic and regional stability and U.S. security.**

**Justification:** Because of improving relations with its neighbors, Uzbekistan has reopened multiple border crossing points, increasing its vulnerability to the movement of violent extremists and illicit narcotics, as well as smuggling of weapons of mass destruction and chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) materials. Uzbekistan remains concerned about the potential for spillover of terrorism from Afghanistan and other Central Asian neighbors, and attacks from returning fighters from Russia or Syria. At the same time, the GOU has demonstrated willingness to increase cooperation on CBRN interdiction and engage in bilateral and multilateral activities countering terrorism and violent extremism. The inability to meet this objective could cause gaps in our security cooperation that would make Uzbekistan more vulnerable to terrorists, traffickers, and other transnational criminal elements who seek to harm the United States and our regional partners.

**Mission Objective 1.3: Strengthen security and law enforcement cooperation to thwart transnational criminal organizations and protect American borders.**

**Justification:** As the most populous country in the region, that borders all other Central Asian republics and Afghanistan, Uzbekistan is a natural transit point for criminal organizations and enterprises. The country' improving external relations and growth in international commerce, including with the United States, increase opportunities for detecting and interdicting a wide variety of transnational crimes, such as money laundering, counterfeiting, narcotics, human trafficking, and cybercrime. Uzbekistan's law enforcement bodies are showing increased latitude and willingness to cooperate bilaterally and multilaterally on law enforcement issues.

The United States should seize the opportunity to develop law enforcement cooperation on all fronts, preventing transnational criminal organizations from establishing a base of support in Uzbekistan that could harm U.S. interests.

**Mission Goal 2: Safeguard American interests by improving governance, strengthening institutions, battling corruption, and addressing human rights abuses**

**Description and Linkages:** This goal champions American values and directly supports the State-USAID Strategic Objective of countering instability and violence that threatens U.S. interests by strengthening citizen responsive governance, security, democracy, human rights, and rule of law.

**Mission Objective 2.1: Improve Uzbekistan's compliance with international commitments and implementation of positive reforms concerning human rights.**

**Justification:** Human Rights values, as expressed in universal principles and documents, remain the world's standard toward which all societies should strive in order to create long-term stability, prosperity, and social harmony inside borders. The United States remains committed to speaking out about human rights and supporting people with this same commitment in Uzbekistan. The United States is prepared to provide support for effective programs that empower civil society, reform governance, and advance positive change in Uzbekistan. Shared human rights values form the basis of strong bilateral cooperation. Lack of progress on human rights increases the risks of instability and social conflict and could hamper the further development of the U.S.-Uzbek relationship.

**Mission Objective 2.2: Increase public access to and trust in Uzbekistan's justice system toward a more accountable and consistent administration and enforcement of justice, including through positive reforms.**

**Justification:** Strengthening the capacity, transparency, and accountability of Uzbekistan's judicial institutions is vital to ensuring long-term public confidence in the country's legal system. Leveraging extensive experience in the rule of law, the United States is well positioned to support Uzbek policymakers, legal practitioners, and civil society groups in efforts to foster genuine and lasting judicial reform and a strong rule of law. Strengthening the capacity and transparency of Uzbekistan's judicial system will facilitate greater legal cooperation with the United States, help prevent human rights abuses, and create a more attractive investment climate for U.S. companies.

**Mission Objective 2.3: Improve the quality of public health and safety services available to citizens.**

**Justification:** The GOU needs technical assistance to transition from inpatient to outpatient-centered care and adopt more evidence-based approaches. This is particularly important given the high prevalence of dangerous infectious diseases such as various drug-resistant strains of tuberculosis. In this seismically active country, improving Uzbek disaster response capabilities and the ability to respond to a major disaster is critical in terms of public health and safety. Failure to achieve this objective may leave infectious disease outbreaks unchecked, threatening public health regionally and potentially infecting U.S. citizens.

**Mission Goal 3: Create opportunities for U.S exports and investments and strengthen political stability by promoting economic reforms leading to inclusive growth and fair, open, and transparent access to Uzbek markets.**

**Description and Linkages:** This goal directly supports Pillar II of the President’s National Security Strategy (NSS) to “promote free, fair, and reciprocal economic relationships” and “use the tools of economic diplomacy for the good of Americans and others.” It also supports the NSS and the President’s South Asia strategy to “encourage the economic integration of Central and South Asia to promote prosperity and economic linkages that will bolster connectivity and trade,” particularly with Afghanistan.

**Mission Objective 3.1: Improved investment climate for domestic and international investment.**

**Justification:** An investment climate based on market principles and led by the private sector provides the best means for achieving economic growth and prosperity, which are the foundations of political stability. A welcoming investment climate is essential to attract U.S. firms to the Uzbek market. U.S. firms also serve as an example for Uzbek companies to become more efficient and successful, contributing to economic growth. Economic prosperity creates greater trade opportunities for U.S. firms with Central Asia’s most populous country.

**Mission Objective 3.2: Increased trade with the United States and the wider region.**

**Justification:** Increased U.S. trade with Uzbekistan leads to more U.S. jobs and exports and helps Uzbekistan diversify its trading partners and reduces undue influence from any one trading partner. Increased Uzbek trade with its neighboring countries improves regional integration and binds Central Asian countries together to improve regional stability, particularly through inclusion of Afghanistan in regional economic fora and expansion of Afghanistan’s trading routes and markets in Central Asia. Identifying and removing barriers to trade increases the efficiency and volume of Uzbekistan’s trade with the United States and its neighbors. Resumption of past Uzbek isolationist and protectionist economic policies would not only reduce Uzbekistan’s economic growth prospects, but also would also damage currently improving regional political relations, increase the economic advantage of Russia and China in Uzbekistan and the wider region, and impede trading opportunities throughout Central Asia, including Afghanistan.

**Mission Objective 3.3: Improved agricultural, energy, and natural resource management that develops markets for U.S. firms while increasing stability and prosperity by reducing food, water, and energy poverty.**

**Justification:** Agriculture remains a major component of Uzbekistan’s economy. Supporting private sector actors along the high-value agricultural value chain helps to assist some of the poorest and most vulnerable, but also has significant multiplier effects. High value agricultural production reduces the proportion of land used for cotton production, which is resource-intensive and requires a large amount of water and labor. At the same time, this sector promotes high-quality jobs for Uzbek citizens domestically, increasing income levels, and creating markets for U.S. firms. Increased energy efficiency and diversification of sources of energy improves water and natural resources use, while decreasing environmental degradation. Lack of progress in this area likely will lead to greater numbers of Uzbekistan’s growing population living in poverty and without adequate access to water, energy, and sanitation, which increases their vulnerability to forced labor and trafficking in persons. Without proper

resource management, air pollution will worsen, desertification of the Aral Sea and other regions will accelerate, and resources will be depleted, increasing their cost.

**Mission Goal 4: Promote the United States as a partner of choice through engagement on shared values with the people of Uzbekistan.**

**Description and Linkages:** This goal directly supports Pillar IV of the National Security Strategy: Advance American Influence, specifically by encouraging an aspiring partner and championing American values. The State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy for South and Central Asia further elaborates key U.S. goals in the region: to increase stability and sovereignty by increasing resiliency to Russian coercive pressure or meddling in internal affairs by other countries; to improve access to independent and unbiased information that can help avoid destabilizing factors; and to expand sustainable and inclusive economic growth by improving educational opportunities for all people. Together, achieving these goals will enhance Uzbekistan's willingness and ability to cooperate with the United States.

**Mission Objective 4.1:** Uzbekistan's population becomes more resistant to malign disinformation and propaganda about the United States through greater understanding and appreciation of U.S. culture and values.

**Justification:** Due to its shared history and language with Russia, Uzbekistan is extremely vulnerable to Russian disinformation campaigns, which frequently seek to undermine U.S. influence and policy objectives. In order to counter this malign influence, the Mission will increase the population of Uzbekistan's exposure to accurate information about and positive experiences of the United States. This exposure will generate resilience against efforts to misrepresent the United States by giving the population first-hand appreciation and understanding of U.S. culture and values. Failure to address Russian disinformation would give Russia an advantage in manipulating public opinion in Uzbekistan, thus damaging the United States' credibility and influence in the region.

**Mission Objective 4.2:** Uzbekistan's educational institutions move into greater alignment with international norms in order to facilitate increased academic cooperation and exchange with U.S. institutions.

**Justification:** The educational system in Uzbekistan remains entrenched in antiquated, Soviet academic models, which severely limits both their capacity to collaborate with U.S. institutions and their graduates' readiness to work with U.S. businesses and organizations. By addressing the gaps between educational practices in Uzbekistan and the United States, the Mission will help redefine the academic model in a way that will facilitate greater cooperation and exchange with U.S. institutions, and prepare graduates with skills that will enable them to engage productively with U.S. businesses and interests. Failure to address this need would allow other actors who may be hostile to U.S. regional interests to occupy this niche and influence Uzbekistan's development, and would limit the viability of the Uzbek labor market for U.S. businesses.

## 4. Management Objectives

**Management Objective 1: Increase operational effectiveness by using data-driven analysis to optimize resource management.**

**Justification:** Embassy Tashkent has shown through the use of data-driven analytical techniques costs can be reduced and productivity increased. Key areas for analysis included overtime and utility usage. Data-driven techniques also guide us in improving the productivity of staffing patterns. The Department has placed an emphasis on rolling out new data-based analytical platforms. Post will continue to pilot these platforms and train staff on these in Tashkent and across the region.

**Management Objective 2: Increase morale and productivity by maintaining an agile, highly skilled workforce.**

**Justification:** The quality of our workforce in Tashkent is the most important input to successfully fulfilling the goals of our Mission. Embassy Tashkent is working hard to improve the quality of the workforce through engagement with and lobbying for high quality direct hire bidders, maintaining adequate levels of highly skilled EFM staff, and a transparent recruiting process for our locally engaged staff. The quality of this workforce is also continually improved by the great emphasis Post places on expanding training and mentoring opportunities for all staff.