



Integrated Country Strategy

Republic of Malta

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1. Chief of Mission Priorities

Our bilateral relationship is very strong, with excellent access and exchange of ideas. Embassy Malta is ideally placed to anchor U.S. interagency efforts to enhance American influence and advantage in the highly competitive Central Mediterranean. Regional engagement, particularly on transnational crime, security and law enforcement, consumes more of our time than managing the bilateral relationship, although both lines of effort reinforce Europe's Southern Flank by developing Malta as an emerging and capable strategic partner. Zooming in on current Bureau priorities, Embassy Valletta is a critical regional platform for working across the EUR-NEA and EUCOM-AFRICOM seams on engagement on Libya, migration, smuggling, and threat finance, as well as competition with Great Powers seeking to advance their influence in the region. This competition exists in both hard and soft power, as notably Russia and China have come to the arena with large-scale cultural performances that position these missions as some of the most active diplomatic sponsors on the local cultural scene. Aggressive commercial ventures facilitated by China also factor into the calculus of Great Power competition.

A new government in January 2020 with a strong political mandate and the promise of a fresh anti-corruption focus makes the 2020-2022 time frame a clear window to lock in the gains our bilateral relationship has brought over the last few years. Malta's booming economy makes it ripe for recruiting Maltese investment in the U.S., and the island's strategic location and business incentives make it an attractive option for many U.S. businesses seeking a gateway into EU and Middle Eastern markets.

In addition to our overarching focus on serving and **protecting American Citizens abroad**, we operationalize the elements of the National Security, National Defense, and Joint Regional Strategies referenced above through a simple "SIE" acronym: **security and law enforcement, innovation and commercial diplomacy, and empowerment.**

Aiming to preserve peace through security, we have taken recent steps to augment an already strong array of cooperative **security** partnerships. Today, Malta finds itself at a crossroads between Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East, with strong strategic security interests in migration, Libya, and trans-Mediterranean issues. Our interagency Law Enforcement Working Group (LEWG), expanded and enhanced in late 2017, is our primary vehicle for coordinated interagency engagement on a host of transnational crime issues. The revamped LEWG – which now includes representatives from the Departments of State, Treasury, Defense, Justice, and Homeland Security, as well as the FBI and DEA – seeks to encourage our Maltese partners to adopt a similar model of interagency coordination, recognizing the small but critical capabilities held by Malta's various security services. Malta's new government took office in January 2020 following two months of political turmoil related to corruption revelations and resignations – including the former prime minister – resulting from the investigation into the October 2017 assassination of journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia. The new government's mandate to clean house offers immediate opportunities for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs anti-corruption programs, along with a surge in Department of Justice Resident Legal Advisor capacity to support reforms to Malta's notoriously slow judicial system. Our anti-money laundering and financial oversight engagement will deepen further, in cooperation with UK efforts, to enable Malta to meet Moneyval and Venice Commission reform goals in time to avoid financial grey- or blacklisting in 2020. Our cooperation and assistance covers the full spectrum of intelligence, investigation, interdiction, and prosecution to ensure that Malta has all of the tools necessary to tackle these challenges effectively. Another key piece of this builds on our military cooperation, with Malta's formal signing of the NATO

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Partnership for Peace Status of Forces agreement expected in early 2020. We have reasserted our partnership with five U.S. navy ship visits from December 2017 – February 2020, and will implement Defense Department 333 funding to build a Maltese Special Operations capability interoperable with Partnership for Peace (PfP) partners and U.S. regional security interests. We also seek to conclude MOUs on 5G technology cooperation, cybersecurity partnership, and police training to support much-needed reforms within Malta’s police force.

The Central Mediterranean is a highly competitive strategic environment containing many threats to U.S. interests. Our strategy to renew America’s competitive advantages uses all of the instruments at our disposal, including a vigorous focus on **innovation and commercial diplomacy**. With unemployment rates in mid-2019 consistently among the lowest in the EU, Malta’s robust economic growth is complemented by nearly full employment. Real GDP growth in Malta has risen steadily since 2012, and the 2019 rate of 5.0 percent made it second only to Ireland in the European Union. The country’s economic growth has been supported by the growth of its financial services (including a blockchain regulatory framework to attract new fintech companies), online gaming, and tourism sectors – three of Malta’s fastest growing sectors that collectively contribute roughly half of GDP. At the same time, continued growth is limited by a number of factors, including a growing labor shortage, infrastructure challenges, physical space limitations, and excessive and risk-averse banking procedures. American ideas and companies offering advanced technical solutions and innovations can address many of these challenges. We have made our Embassy a showcase for some of these technologies, including renewable energy, electric vehicles, and smart meters. We will also continue to push the government to ensure that Malta remains fully open to American businesses and work to bring Maltese investment to the U.S., all with the goal of expanding international markets for American products and creating more jobs back home.

We continue to support human rights in Malta and the **empowerment** of vulnerable populations, where appropriate, with recent efforts focused on migration, trafficking in persons (TIP), and women’s rights. Despite its liberal and progressive European identity, Malta retains an insular character and likely will remain socially conservative by European standards. The Roman Catholic Church retains an extremely important position within Maltese society, and religion is a big part of public life. Nonetheless, over the last 5-7 years, a staunchly Catholic Malta implemented a number of new laws governing social and sexual rights, earning the country substantial praise for its human rights progress. However, the islands’ recent liberalization on LGBT issues is not mirrored in all areas. Migrant arrivals in 2019 overwhelmed Malta’s limited capacity to manage and integrate migrants, and TIP remains a concern. We are committed to working with the Maltese to help coordinate policies and procedures on border security, TIP, and management of growing cultural diversity. With female labor participation and gender pay inequality among the worst in Europe, even as the university system now graduates more women than men, we have focused on increasing science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) outreach for girls and highlighted U.S. higher education opportunities. Since the October 2017 Daphne Caruana Galizia murder, we emphasize the important balance between press freedom and responsible media, with a long-term focus on improving local investigative journalism and the role of media in effective democracy.

We recognize the need to provide a safe, accountable, and respectful work environment. We will continue to maintain our aggressive approach to security and crisis preparedness to effectively manage our risks and avoid complacency. At the same time, we take a proactive approach to occupational

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safety and health. We prioritize cost savings, and have supported regionalization efforts to more efficiently utilize the resources entrusted to us, including our IT systems. We are a member of the League of Green Embassies and we won the State Department's Greening Diplomacy Initiative award in 2018 for cost containment in energy and transportation. Mission leadership insists on inclusiveness, and has a zero tolerance policy on harassment. Customer service is a high priority across the Embassy, and we partner periodically with some of the best American brands in the private sector to import their best practices.

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2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: A Western-aligned Malta fully engaged in addressing global challenges and strengthening regional security.

Mission Objective 1.1: Strengthen Malta's rule of law through supporting the development of laws and legal systems that are procedurally and substantively fair, effectively implemented, derived through participatory democratic processes, and consistent with international human rights standards.

Mission Objective 1.2: Deter adversarial influences within Malta by educating and promoting awareness to advance unified goals, encouraging a proactive role, and assisting increased capacity and capability.

Mission Objective 1.3: Strengthen Malta's ability to counter transnational threats (both locally and regionally) by assisting in identification of transnational threats, promoting and enabling information sharing, and assisting increased capacity and capability of the country's resources.

Mission Goal 2: Promote U.S. innovation, advocate for U.S. commercial and technological solutions to Malta's largest challenges, and encourage Maltese investment in the U.S. market.

Mission Objective 2.1: Strengthen bilateral commercial ties in order to supply Malta with U.S. technologies, expertise, and products.

Mission Objective 2.2: Work to establish greater Maltese FDI into the U.S. market.

Mission Goal 3: Empower independent media and marginalized populations - including women and migrants - and promote improved responsiveness of the Maltese government to support their human rights.

Mission Objective 3.1: Strengthen societal dialogue on shared values to promote tolerance, integration, and economic empowerment for disadvantaged and/or isolated populations in Malta including migrants, religious minorities, and people living with disabilities.

Mission Objective 3.2: Promote the role of a free and responsible media and audience media literacy in an effective democracy.

Mission Objective 3.3: Promote women's rights as human rights by encouraging Malta to take steps towards a higher standard of human rights protection that include women's needs, economic empowerment, and the adequate and timely redress of abuse cases.

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Mission Goal 4: Protect the interests of American citizens in Malta and facilitate legitimate travel to the United States.

Mission Objective 4.1: Protect and support the welfare of U.S. citizens in Malta.

Mission Objective 4.2: Protect U.S. borders by ensuring legitimate travel to the U.S.

Management Objective 1: Excellence and innovation in providing support to the Embassy Community and implementing the Integrated Country Strategy.

Management Objective 2: Be a State Department model post in terms of Management Innovation and Environmental Efforts.

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3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1: A Western-aligned Malta fully engaged in addressing global challenges and strengthening regional security.

Description and Linkages: This goal reflects Pillars I and III of the 2017 National Security Strategy. Malta is committed to peace, security, and stability in the region and enjoys shared values and a close and consultative bilateral relationship with the United States. While this cooperation is currently limited, a closer affiliation of Malta with the United States through a Bilateral or NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) would greatly enhance our cooperative efforts. The Embassy will continue to focus on contributing to enhanced security cooperation. Also, the Embassy will work closely with Maltese security services to ensure robust information sharing under Homeland Security Presidential Directive 6 (HSPD-6), consistent with Malta's commitments as part of the Visa Waiver Program. The Embassy will continue to promote Rule of Law and countering smuggling, money laundering and financial crimes, human and narcotics trafficking, and other illicit activity.

Mission Objective 1.1: Strengthen Malta's rule of law through supporting the development of laws and legal systems that are procedurally and substantively fair, effectively implemented, derived through participatory democratic processes, and consistent with international human rights standards.

Justification: The Mission supports Pillar IV (Enhance American Influence) of the National Security Strategy (NSS) by developing Malta as an aspiring partner and advocating American values. Interagency Law Enforcement Working Group (LEWG) member actions will be applied systematically to build Maltese institutional capacity while preventing overlap in resources and ensuring effective results. Specific opportunities include training the next generation of leaders and civil servants, fostering more coordination within each agency, and striving for transparency of operations. The LEWG members will specifically focus on mentoring to include fostering the Maltese national security strategy; developing strategic threat identification, leadership and succession planning; and facilitating regional partnerships.

Mission Objective 1.2: Deter adversarial influences within Malta by educating and promoting awareness in order to advance unified goals, encouraging a proactive role, and assisting increased capacity and capability.

Justification: Working with other security elements, Mission Malta facilitates positive collaboration that reinforces U.S. influence. In-line with current EUR priorities, Mission Malta is a critical regional focal point for engagement on Libya, migration, smuggling and threat finance, as well as competition with Great Powers seeking to advance their influence in the region, The absence of our engagement could allow other actors space to exert influence and exploit vulnerabilities.

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Mission Objective 1.3: Strengthen Malta’s ability to counter transnational threats (both locally and regionally) by assisting in identification of transnational threats, promoting and enabling information sharing, and assisting in building capacity and capability of the country’s resources.

Justification: Mission Malta’s LEWG supports Pillar III (Preserve Peace Through Strength) of the National Security Strategy (NSS). The LEWG’s activities will support Malta’s criminal justice system, expand security force and military training and work closely with Customs on illicit trafficking and non-proliferation issues. Additional training opportunities will enable Malta to expand upon their limited resources and further develop their capacity to counter regional threats, including development of world-class niche security capacity in selected areas related to maritime security in the Central Mediterranean. Through identified training opportunities, America’s competitive advantages with its technology and processes will enable Malta to achieve effective results.

Mission Goal 2: Promote U.S. innovation, advocate for U.S. commercial and technological solutions to Malta’s largest challenges, and encourage Maltese investment in the U.S. market.

Description and Linkages: This goal reflects Pillar 2 of the 2017 National Security Strategy and supports the State-USAID 2018-2022 Joint Strategic Plan, Goal 2, Objectives 2.1 and 2.2. The Mission will seek opportunities to highlight U.S. innovation and promote U.S. commercial interests by identifying opportunities to expand U.S. export market access and promoting foreign direct investment in the United States.

Mission Objective 2.1: Strengthen bilateral commercial ties in order to supply Malta with U.S. technologies, expertise, and products.

Justification: Malta is one of the EU’s fastest-growing economies, with record-low unemployment and moderate wage growth. Although no significant bilateral economic or trade disputes between the United States and Malta exist and U.S. goods and services generally are available in Malta, significant room to expand exists, particularly as U.S. businesses have not bid on large government tenders nor entered into concessions agreements. Exposure to new and emerging technologies provides a powerful tool to bridge cultural gaps, break down gender barriers, and inspire STEM awareness and careers among the growing population. By introducing an engaging learning environment, we provide Maltese society with access to technological resources that will enable American-style creative thinking and innovative ideas.

Mission Objective 2.2: Work to establish greater Maltese FDI into the U.S. market.

Justification: Maltese businesses are interested in expanding into new markets, but often see the leap to the U.S. market as overwhelming. Demystifying the U.S. market will further the State-USAID objective of renewing America’s competitive advantage for sustained economic growth and job creation.

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Mission Goal 3: Empower independent media and marginalized populations—including women and migrants—and promote improved responsiveness of the Maltese government to support their human rights.

Description and Linkages: Societies that empower a free press and marginalized populations to participate fully in civic and economic life are more prosperous and peaceful. In addition, people who are well informed and engaged in their society are essential to a functioning democracy. This goal reflects the 2017 National Security Strategy's Pillar 3: Advance American Influence, and is also reflected in the State/ USAID Joint Strategic Plan's Goal 3: Promote American Leadership through Balanced Engagement.

U) Mission Objective 3.1: Strengthen societal dialogue on shared values to promote tolerance, integration, and economic empowerment for disadvantaged and/or isolated populations in Malta including migrants, religious minorities, and people living with disabilities.

Justification: U.S. diversity and intercultural respect provide the means for us to raise awareness on priority social issues. Malta lags in awareness of the need for acceptance of outsiders and tolerance of all people, including accessibility for those with disabilities. In addition, most Maltese exposure to the U.S. is generally through studio films which do not provide a well-rounded understanding of U.S. society. The obstacles and challenges marginalized populations encounter could be addressed if there were more frequent and in depth dialogues across all sectors of society and government. Methods include the use of IVLPs, grants, ETAs, and other cultural integration programs. We support the empowerment of vulnerable populations with recent efforts focused on migration and trafficking in persons (TIP). While we work with our Maltese security partners to improve their abilities to investigate and interdict transnational security threats, we remain concerned about the ability of Malta's notoriously slow judicial system to efficiently and impartially hear complicated cases, such as those involving human trafficking. The lack of a Maltese migrant integration policy poses challenges and prevents people, in particular African migrants, from fully integrating into Maltese society.

Mission Objective 3.2: Promote the role of a free and responsible media and audience media literacy in an effective democracy.

Justification: Following the October 2017 murder of a prominent journalist and blogger, the Mn launched a major program focused on emphasizing the important balance between press freedom and responsible media, with a long-term focus on improving local investigative journalism. Continued targeted outreach activities can reach a large percentage of Malta's small population using a full range of tools. We are increasing the quality and quantity of our interactions with the public and media through speaker programs to maximize our limited budget and tools. The Mission's increased use of social media acts as a force multiplier for a small Public Diplomacy section and provides an informal platform for communication of Mission priorities at very low cost. Both Twitter and Facebook remain popular and easy ways to reach a wide audience. If this mission objective is not accomplished, the media will continue to be overwhelmingly influenced by political forces and a lack of in-depth and objective coverage, analysis, and reporting will continue. Furthermore, audiences might struggle with determining what information disseminated by the media is accurate.

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U) Mission Objective 3.3: Promote women’s rights as human rights by encouraging Malta to take steps towards a higher standard of human rights protection that include women’s needs, economic empowerment, and the adequate and timely redress of abuse cases.

Justification: We promote the empowerment of women and women’s rights, on a moral basis as well as to maximize economic potential. Despite its new liberal and progressive European identity and the existence of local legislation that protects women’s rights, Malta retains an insular character and likely will remain socially conservative by European standards. Maltese cultural attitudes and traditions towards women are lagging. With female labor participation and gender pay inequality among the worst in Europe, women are not typically in positions of power. Local NGOs that promote human rights for women lack resources to fulfill their mission. Even as the university system now graduates more women than men, we would like to focus on increasing science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) outreach for girls and highlight U.S. higher education opportunities, as well as working to advance women entrepreneurs. If this objective is not achieved, women will continue to struggle for full participation in society and problems like domestic abuse and gender based violence will not be addressed.

Mission Goal 4: Protect the interests of American citizens in Malta and facilitate legitimate travel to the United States

Description and Linkages: This goal reflects Pillar 1 of the 2017 National Security Strategy and supports the State-USAID 2018-2022 Joint Strategic Plan, Goal 1, Objective 1.5.

Mission Objective 4.1: Protect and support the welfare of American citizens in Malta.

Justification: One of the highest priorities of the Department of State is to protect American interests and citizens around the world. Americans in Malta include residents, dual nationals, students, prisoners, businesspersons, scholars, and visitors. Mission Malta strives to serve all Americans by providing efficient, courteous, and timely services and support, while preparing to support Americans in emergencies. Malta, as with all European countries, remains potentially vulnerable to attacks from transnational terrorist organizations. Malta’s open borders with members of the Schengen zone, and its extensive coastline, allow the possibility of individual terrorists entering/exiting the country undetected.

Mission Objective 4.2: Protect U.S. borders by ensuring legitimate travel to the United States.

Justification: Mission Malta protects U.S. borders by ensuring that it complies with U.S. visa policy. The Mission supports legitimate travel by providing fair, transparent, efficient and courteous service to all visa applicants.

4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1: Embassy Valletta will operate as a State Department model for management innovation and best practices.

Justification: We have a modern facility staffed by 100% English speakers. The small embassy size coupled with a common language enables all employees to effectively and efficiently share information, tools, and resources across all sections. We are uniquely positioned to pilot any new tool or strategy to achieve Mission and State Department goals.

Management Objective 2: Recruit and retain highly qualified staff to carry out Mission Objectives

Justification: Given rapid economic growth and falling unemployment rates in recent years, Malta's job market is among the most competitive in the European Union. To attract and retain staff, it is imperative to increase wages to remain on par with peer competitors and to evaluate realignment and retention strategies to continue to support Embassy Valletta.

Management Objective 3: Improve the infrastructure of the historical Chief of Mission Residence (CMR) and develop a long term maintenance program in collaboration with the Bureau of Overseas Building Operations (OBO).

Justification: The Chief of Mission Residence (Villa Apap Bologna) dates back to turn-of-the century Malta. During World War II, the villa became a place of refuge for the local population and was bombed twice by Axis powers. The property requires constant care and maintenance due to its aging infrastructure and limestone foundation and walls. Despite repeated requests to Washington, Embassy Valletta has not had the funding or personnel on hand to provide the level of maintenance and care the facility requires. As a direct consequence, the building has fallen into a state of relative disrepair. Embassy Valletta has recently secured funding for emergency repairs, but a viable long-term maintenance plan is needed to ensure the viability of the property.