



# Integrated Country Strategy

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**ARGENTINA**

**FOR PUBLIC RELEASE**

Approved: April 13, 2022

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## **1. Chief of Mission Priorities**

The United States seeks a stable, prosperous, and secure Argentina. Today, Argentina faces deep economic crisis and political partisanship. Charges of corruption and political interference undermine rule of law and democratic institutions and inhibit investment critical to economic development. The country's political-economic challenges make Argentina vulnerable to outside pressure, including from anti-democratic actors and predatory investors, limiting its ability to capitalize on its vast resources and enormous potential. Argentina also faces global challenges, including the coronavirus pandemic and the impact of climate change. Argentina carries diplomatic heft in Latin America and international fora. A prosperous Argentina that defends democracy, global norms, and the rule of law is important to U.S. interests.

This strategy aims to ensure that Argentina works with the United States as its partner of choice, whether that partnership relates to trade and investment, security cooperation, tackling global challenges, or protecting democratic values. It is meant to help Argentina address the underlying economic conditions that restrict Argentine and U.S. citizens and businesses from investing in Argentina's future. And it seeks to open new opportunities to promote the rules-based international order founded on respect for sovereignty, the rule of law, open markets, private sector-led economic growth, and the free flow of commerce and information.

### **Promoting Shared Democratic Values**

One of the greatest U.S. strategic advantages in Argentina remains our shared commitment to democracy, human rights, and civil liberties. This common basis presents a foundation upon which Argentina and the United States can play a leading role in defending democratic principles and protecting human rights in the Western Hemisphere, international organizations, and around the globe. Argentina historically prefers to strike a "third way" that seeks positive relations with all great powers without prioritizing any single country. Our diplomatic engagement aims to create a productive, well-informed dialogue based on friendship and shared respect for democratic principles and diversity to maximize alignment between our strategic objectives, policy goals, and approaches. We seek to partner with Argentina to speak out in favor of the values embraced by our peoples and constitutions.

### **Expanding Cultural and Educational Ties and Understanding**

Our people, governments, universities, and business communities engage in the reciprocal exchange of ideas, perspectives, and information to the benefit of both societies. We will work with Argentina to promote a strong and independent media. We will expand the exchange of people and ideas between our universities. We will promote the study of English and provide opportunities for our business leaders and entrepreneurs to connect and prosper to the benefit of our peoples. As we invest in exchanges between Argentina and the United States, we will focus on including historically under-engaged groups from both countries in support of our shared values of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

### **Pursuing Prosperity in a New Century**

A G20 member with the third-largest economy in Latin America, Argentina boasts exceptional natural and human resources, and remains a country with great promise. However, the coronavirus pandemic exacerbated Argentina's multi-year recession and it is likely to take several years for the country to recover. The 2021 rebound in GDP growth did little to address high levels of inflation and poverty, and that rebound is set to lose momentum in 2022 and beyond. The government's fiscal and monetary policies continue to fuel market distortions. The external environment will become less accommodating in 2022, leaving the economy more vulnerable. Our strategy aims to encourage sustainable and inclusive economic growth in Argentina, particularly in new economy areas that could help it diversify. To get there, Argentina needs technological advancement, new businesses, and a healthy population. We will promote regulatory reforms that will incentivize trade, create greater demand for U.S. exports, and open new investment opportunities in fields that leverage Argentina's demonstrated capacity in agriculture, energy, the sciences, technology, and health.

Sustainable prosperity also depends on every country taking steps to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and to protect finite natural resources. While Argentina is not a significant producer of greenhouse gases, it is on pace to increase emissions as it continues to exploit shale oil and gas deposits. It also has large-scale potential to generate power from renewable resources and a strong interest in playing a role as a regional leader on climate. We will support Argentina with implementation of its national climate commitments and seek opportunities to leverage our mutual interests to advance international climate policy.

### **Strengthening Security Cooperation and the Rule of Law**

Argentina remains a favored destination of U.S. tourists and an increasing number of U.S. citizen residents, and the United States continues to grow in popularity as a destination for Argentine travelers. Pre-pandemic, over 400,000 U.S. citizens visited Argentina annually and Argentines made approximately 850,000 trips to the United States. Over 37,000 U.S. citizens reside in Argentina. Policymakers and experts concur that organized criminal activity, both domestic and transnational, is progressively undermining the rule of law in Argentina. The transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) that control networks of illicit activity – crime, drug trafficking, money laundering – pose a threat to both Argentina and the United States. Safeguarding our citizens and securing the defense of our nations are paramount interests for both countries. Our strategy orients U.S. assistance to facilitate military and law enforcement professionalization, address insecurity caused by major crime, and fortify respect for the rule of law and the transition to an accusatory legal system. U.S. assistance programs reinforce our objective of maintaining the United States' position as the partner of choice for training, equipment, and joint exercises. Strengthening security and safety in Argentina will also encourage tourism and investment, which are vital components of a prosperous Argentine economy.

**Supporting Our People to Achieve the Mission**

The United States has a broad and diverse agenda with Argentina. To accomplish our goals, our team needs appropriate staffing to maximize engagement; safe and secure space for staff to work; modern facilities and information technology; and the processes and policies that allow us to compete for and hire the best staff. We will upgrade our embassy compound while equipping our staff with appropriate tools for on- and off-site work. Supported by an embassy-wide Advisory Board on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA), we will promote DEIA principles internally and externally through our programs and outreach to all parts of Argentine society.

## 2. Mission Strategic Framework

### **Mission Goal 1:** Argentina is a Reliable Democratic Partner

- **Mission Objective 1.1:** Increase Argentina's support for democratic values and the rules-based international order.
- **Mission Objective 1.2:** Develop open and effective channels of communication with the Argentine public based on shared values.

### **Mission Goal 2:** Argentina has a Prosperous, Sustainable Economy

- **Mission Objective 2.1:** Promote stable economic growth, a level playing field, and improved opportunities for bilateral trade and investment.
- **Mission Objective 2.2:** Support health, scientific exchange, technological innovation, and entrepreneurship for inclusive and sustainable growth in Argentina.
- **Mission Objective 2.3:** Partner with Argentina to address global climate change.

### **Mission Goal 3:** Argentina is Safe and Secure for U.S. and Argentine Peoples

- **Mission Objective 3.1:** Protect and assist U.S. citizens in Argentina through enhanced cooperation with local authorities.
- **Mission Objective 3.2:** Increase the professional capabilities of the Argentine law enforcement, judiciary, military, and other safety and security actors to make Argentina a more effective and collaborative partner for combatting common threats.

**Management Objective 1:** Maintain a diverse, inclusive, and qualified workforce that is prepared to support Mission goals.

**Management Objective 2:** Equip Embassy teams with modern and secure facilities, IT, and administrative systems for an effective bilateral relationship.

### 3. Mission Goals and Objectives

#### Mission Goal 1 | Argentina is a Reliable Democratic Partner

**Description** | One of the greatest U.S. strategic advantages in Argentina is the common commitment both countries have to democracy, human rights, and civil liberties. This common basis presents a foundation upon which Argentina and the United States can play a leading role in favor of democratic principles in the Western Hemisphere and in multilateral organizations. U.S. efforts will focus on Argentina taking a more constant leadership role in favor of democracy and human rights.

**Objective 1.1** | Increase Argentina's support for democratic values and the rules-based international order.

- **Justification** | Despite U.S.-Argentine common agreement on the core values of democracy and human rights, Argentina has taken ambivalent positions in the region and in multilateral organizations on human rights violations and undemocratic regimes. In the Western Hemisphere, it has declined to take an unambiguous stance against undemocratic regimes and sham elections. Strengthening our commitment to promote our common values will ensure Argentina plays a constructive role as a member of the rules-based international order. We will employ dialogue, programs, and commitments to encourage Argentina to promote human rights and democracy.
- **Linkages** | Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) – Goal 1; JSP – Strategic Objective 1.5; JSP – Goal 3; Western Hemisphere Affairs/Joint Regional Strategy (WHA/JRS) – Goal 1; WHA/JRS – Objective 1.1; WHA/JRS – Objective 1.2; WHA/JRS – Goal 2; WHA/JRS – Objective 2.1; WHA/JRS – Objective 2.2; WHA/JRS – Objective 3.3.
- **Risks** | Should this objective not be achieved, we risk Argentina enabling undemocratic regimes in the Western Hemisphere and drifting toward positions that dismiss the value of democracy and human rights. Should that occur, both the Embassy and U.S. businesses would find it harder to operate in Argentina. Post is mitigating this risk by working with civil society and the free press to ensure that independent advocacy groups and watchdogs in Argentina are able to fight for accountability, transparency, human rights, and democracy.

**Objective 1.2** | Develop open and effective channels of communication with the Argentine public based on shared values.

- **Justification** | Argentina is the largest country in the world to have no constituent posts, making it challenging to reach every corner of the country. In the provinces far from the capital where favorability of the United States is low, it is crucial that our public diplomacy programs and public messaging make a measurable impact. Argentina's media environment is highly fragmented, politicized, and susceptible to disinformation. Public skepticism of the media is widespread. By building the capacity and professionalism of the Argentine media across the board – including outlets historically skeptical of the United States – we can help Argentines recognize and resist disinformation and malicious meddling of third-party actors. We will also nurture relationships with women and girls, minority ethnic, LGBTQI+ and other historically under-engaged groups, youth, and emerging leaders to ensure that channels of communication remain open, and these groups are receptive to engagement with the United States on our shared values. To do this, we will employ long-standing exchange programs, offer media literacy training to targeted emerging audiences, engage the public via social and traditional media, and incorporate diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility principles into all our public engagement. In so doing, we will cultivate an environment wherein we can more effectively promote a positive and accurate perception of the United States and U.S. policy.
- **Linkages** | JSP – Objective 1.5; JSP – Objective 3.1; JSP – Objective 3.2; WHA/JRS – Objective 1.1; WHA/JRS – Objective 2.1; WHA/JRS – Objective 2.2; WHA/JRS – Objective 6.1; WHA/JRS – Objective 6.2; WHA/JRS – Objective 6.3.
- **Risks** | Argentina's public discourse and media environment are politicized and vulnerable to misinformation – including, potentially, by third countries and non-state actors. The United States has historically been used as a scapegoat for Argentina's public ills – a trend that continues today. An environment of misinformation could lead to further erosion of U.S. favorability and decreased Argentine public support for U.S. policies.



## **Mission Goal 2 | Argentina has a Prosperous, Sustainable Economy**

**Description** | Argentina is Latin America's third-largest economy and presents enormous potential for U.S. investment and trade. Decades of restrictive trade policies, market interventions, and regulatory burdens have prevented Argentina from fully leveraging the country's impressive natural resources – energy, minerals, and agriculture – and high-quality human capital. It has one of the lowest trade-to-GDP ratios in the world. Marginal improvement in these restrictive policies could generate large gains for U.S. trade and investment, further reinforcing the United States as Argentina's international partner of choice. There is broad agreement among political and business leaders that Argentina has a commercial, financial, and geostrategic need for constructive relations with the United States. We will leverage U.S. government tools and partner with the private sector to secure U.S. commercial interests, promote U.S. innovation and creativity, and ensure our mutual economic prosperity.

**Objective 2.1** | Promote stable economic growth, a level playing field, and improved opportunities for bilateral trade and investment.

- **Justification** | Argentina's economic regulatory framework is a principal barrier to economic development and to attracting more U.S. trade and investment. The country imposes some of the highest import barriers of any international market and the government holds significant stakes in important domestic companies – including the largest energy company and the national airline – that create incentives for unequal treatment of foreign competitors. Encouraging Argentina to adopt international best practices in economic regulation, a transparent and efficient judicial system, and prudent macroeconomic and monetary policies, will create significant new investment and export opportunities for U.S. companies and help Argentina achieve the sustained economic development that has eluded the economy for decades. Some value chains, such as those in the extractives sector, merit added focus given their strategic value to U.S. manufacturing interests. The United States and Argentina are both leaders in agricultural production and price setters for staples such as wheat, corn, and soybeans. While we are competitors in third countries, we share interests in reduced barriers to international trade in agricultural products.
- **Linkages** | JSP – Goal 2; JSP – Objective 2.1; JSP – Objective 2.2; JSP – Objective 2.3; WHA/JRS – Goal 3; WHA/JRS – Objective 3.3; Goal 4; WHA/JRS – Objective 4.1; WHA/JRS – Objective 4.2.
- **Risks** | Argentina's inability to establish prudent, market-friendly economic regulations will inhibit the economy's growth, restrict new opportunities for U.S. companies, and benefit less scrupulous foreign actors that thrive in opaque, discretionary regulatory environments. The country's limited access to external financing and sovereign debt obligations to the IMF will create additional pressure to favor local producers at the expense of imports from the United States and elsewhere.

Strained public budgets will make financing from nondemocratic actors that skirt international norms more tempting, creating an even more difficult environment for U.S. companies.

**Objective 2.2** | Support health, scientific exchange, technological innovation, and entrepreneurship for inclusive and sustainable growth in Argentina.

- **Justification** | Sustainable and inclusive growth in Argentina will create greater demand for U.S. exports and create new investment opportunities. To grow, Argentina needs technological advancement, new businesses, and a healthy population. There are competing models for growth, as well as competing visions in the fields of health, technology, agriculture, and space; it is important that we continue our robust engagement so that our strategic competitors do not fill the void. It is imperative that our efforts are inclusive. More diverse and inclusive programming will not only enrich the experience for participants, but also help create a more diverse set of voices in Argentine positions of leadership.
- **Linkages** | JSP – Strategic Objective 2.2; JSP - Strategic Objective 2.3; JSP – Strategic Objective 3.2; WHA/JRS – Objective 2.2; WHA/JRS – Objective 4.3; WHA/JRS – Objective 4.4; United States Space Priorities Framework (21 STATE 120360).
- **Risks** | The Government of Argentina is at times reluctant to formalize exchanges or collaboration, either due to anti-U.S. sentiment or a desire to seek a balance between great powers. We are also at times at a disadvantage vis-à-vis our competitors when our offers lack financial backing. Some areas of potential coordination will be particularly sensitive to Argentine audiences and should be managed accordingly. Changes in the executive branch, whether at the ministerial level or at the presidency, can require starting over if an area of cooperation or exchange is not covered by a formal bilateral agreement.

**Objective 2.3** | Partner with Argentina to address global climate change.

- **Justification** | Every country must take steps to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and to protect finite natural resources. While Argentina is not a significant producer of greenhouse gases, it is on pace to increase its emissions as it continues to exploit valuable shale oil and gas deposits. The country has large-scale potential to generate from renewable resources and has demonstrated that it can play a useful role as a regional leader on climate. Argentina seeks to position itself as a regional negotiator on climate issues.

- **Linkages** | JSP – Goal 1; JSP – Strategic Objective 1.2; WHA/JRS – Goal 5; WHA/JRS – Objective 5.1; WHA/JRS – Objective 5.2; WHA/JRS – Objective 5.3; President’s Emergency Plan for Adaptation and Resilience (PREPARE); Secretary’s Policy Guidance on Exercising U.S. Leadership to Tackle the Climate Crisis (21 STATE 97546).
- **Risks** | Argentine officials have frequently commented that addressing climate change is a matter of state policy but that the country lacks the funds for implementation. Given broader macroeconomic challenges, there is a risk that Argentina will not dedicate significant resources to taking the necessary steps to implement its nationally determined contributions or develop a serious long-term strategy. The oil and gas sector and livestock sector – both of which are crucial to Argentina’s economic growth prospects – view tackling climate change as contrary to their interests. Argentina is relying significantly on land conservation credits to offset their predicted increases in greenhouse gas releases from the oil and gas and livestock sectors instead of working towards decreasing those emissions.

### **Mission Goal 3 | Argentina is Safe and Secure for U.S. and Argentine Peoples**

**Description** | Argentina remains a favored destination of U.S. tourists and an increasing number of U.S. citizen residents, and the United States continues to grow in popularity as a destination for Argentine travelers. The Argentine and U.S. governments continue to work to strengthen cooperation on law enforcement issues, and to develop the capacity of the military and security forces. Both governments seek to combat transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) and protect Argentine and U.S. citizens and residents from the threats of crime, terrorism, pandemics, natural disasters, and the proliferation of nuclear material. Policymakers and experts concur that organized criminal activity, both domestic and transnational, is progressively undermining the rule of law in Argentina. The TCOs that control networks of illicit activity – crime, drug trafficking, money laundering – pose a threat to both Argentina and the United States.

**Objective 3.1** | Protect and assist U.S. citizens in Argentina through increased cooperation with local authorities.

- **Justification** | Pre-pandemic, over 400,000 U.S. citizens visited Argentina annually and over 37,000 U.S. citizens remain resident in Argentina. TCOs and terrorist groups operate networks of illicit activity in Argentina that threaten the safety and security of U.S. and Argentine citizens. Supporting GoA activities will help mitigate these threats to Argentina, protect our citizens both home and abroad, and facilitate safe and productive trade and travel between our countries.
- **Linkages** | JSP – Strategic Objective 5.1; JSP – Strategic Objective 5.2; WHA/JRS – Objective 3.1.

- **Risks** | Not achieving this objective could endanger the safety and livelihood of Argentine citizens, U.S. citizens residing in or temporarily present in Argentina, and those in the United States that are exposed to nodes of illicit activity executed by TCOs present in Argentina.

**Objective 3.2** | Increase the professional capabilities of Argentine law enforcement, judiciary, military, and other safety and security actors to make Argentina a more effective and collaborative partner for combatting common threats.

- **Justification** | Argentina will be a more effective partner in combatting common threats with support from the United States. Through training, Argentine law enforcement and judicial actors gain a better understanding of international best practices, increasing their competency in investigating and prosecuting complex crimes and improving their responsiveness to Argentines and U.S. visitors or residents.
- **Linkages** | JSP – Strategic Objective 1.4; WHA/JRS – Objective 3.3; WHA/JRS – Objective 3.4; Presidential Policy Directive 23 (PPD23) – U.S. Security Sector Assistance Policy.
- **Risks** | If the Argentine security forces lack capacity, they will not be effective partners in protecting U.S. and Argentine citizens and residents from crime, global health crises, natural disasters, terrorism, armed conflict, and corruption. Failure to achieve this objective could reduce effectiveness and increase susceptibility to political coercion that could threaten the due process rights of U.S. citizens. If we do not work proactively to find areas of mutual concern and cooperation with Argentina, we risk ceding this territory to our competitors.

## 4. Management Objectives

**Management Objective 1 |** Maintain a diverse, inclusive, and qualified workforce that is well-prepared to support Mission goals.

- **Justification |** Human resources challenges have increased during the past two years due to COVID-19. Recruitment of new personnel is challenged by severe delays in security clearances and Post's inability to pay LE staff in U.S. dollars (at odds with the prevailing practice at comparator embassies). Mission leadership supports DEIA initiatives and seeks to expand knowledge of DEIA principles through effective training and support. To this end, we seek to inventory our Mission's DEIA concerns to establish a baseline. While approximately half of our measured service areas in the annual ICASS customer satisfaction survey rate higher than four out of five, our customer service goal is to meet or exceed the WHA regional averages in the survey. Currently, only one measured service meets that goal.
- **Linkages |** WHA/JRS – Cross Cutting Management Objective.
- **Risks |** Not achieving our goals would negatively impact the ability of the Mission to achieve its overall goals. By establishing a tiered approach to our sub-objectives, we hope to mitigate this risk.

**Management Objective 2 |** Equip Embassy teams with modern and secure facilities, IT, and administrative systems for an effective bilateral relationship.

- **Justification |** The current Chancery building was built in 1976 and its facilities are no longer suited to work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. OBO has already identified Buenos Aires' need for a NEC and is searching for a new property. The existing building has unequal space distribution for staff, antiquated building systems, and inadequate IT infrastructure.
- **Linkages:** WHA/JRS – Cross Cutting Management Objective.
- **Risks |** An inability to achieve our sub-objectives would result in further inefficient communication and building operations, hampering the embassy's personnel from doing their jobs effectively. Post endeavors to secure OBO approval and funding early in the process to aid in a successful implementation.