



Integrated Country Strategy

BELIZE

FOR PUBLIC RELEASE

Approved: March 23, 2022

Table of Contents

1. Chief of Mission Priorities	1
2. Mission Strategic Framework	4
3. Mission Goals and Objectives	6
4. Management Objectives	17

1. Chief of Mission Priorities

To ensure Belize continues its path as a vibrant, multiethnic, stable democracy in a region increasingly marked by an erosion of democratic norms, transnational organized crime, a lack of citizen security and related irregular migration, Mission Belmopan remains focused on:

- supporting the Government of Belize's efforts to improve good governance, rule-of-law, and civil society institutions;
- securing Belize's borders and countering illicit domestic and regional criminal networks;
- promoting and expanding U.S. business interests in Belize; and
- protecting U.S. citizens and increasing people-to-people connections.

In September 2021, Belize celebrated 40 years of independence from the United Kingdom. As the English-speaking outlier in Central America, it remains a member of the Commonwealth, with Queen Elizabeth II as its monarch and head of state. However, with over one million American tourists visiting Belize annually, almost 8 percent of the country's population a mixture of U.S. expats and dual citizens, a sizeable U.S.-based diaspora population, and a national currency pegged to the U.S. dollar, Belize and the United States enjoy very strong ties. Those strong ties include advancing our shared set of values as democracies, and Mission Belmopan will continue our work to strengthen Belize's good governance efforts in combating corruption and promoting accountability, advocating for gender and social inclusion, fostering civil society engagement, and supporting an independent media.

Belize identifies as both a Central American and Caribbean country and is an active participant in international fora. With our shared democratic values, there is an opportunity for Mission Belmopan to expand diplomatic engagement to seek Belize's greater alignment with the United States on matters such as Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba. Mission Belmopan supports Belize's continued recognition of Taiwan and will work to help Belize repulse authoritarian influences that attempt to undermine that special relationship.

The United States is Belize's preferred partner on rule-of-law, security, and defense matters, and Mission Belmopan will continue supporting Belize's efforts to improve citizen and border

Approved: March 23, 2022

security. Belize serves as a major transit corridor for U.S.-bound cocaine produced in South America. A country roughly the size of Massachusetts with the population of New Orleans, Belize has one of the lowest population densities in Central America and a substantial network of conservation areas to protect its rich biodiversity. However, these factors, along with porous borders, isolated terrain, and a seriously under-resourced security sector have contributed to a precipitous increase in narco-trafficking since 2018. Transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) are increasingly present in the country, and 2020-2021 saw a doubling of Venezuela-originated narco-flights. Interdiction success has been spotty, but on the occasions the Belizean police and military have captured planes and drugs, Belizean security sector professionals have also been arrested for collusion, indicating corruption and criminal infiltration are a problem. To prevent Belize from becoming a haven for TCOs, our Mission will fund programs to help Belize develop its capacity to disrupt and deter smuggling and utilize intelligence to target, investigate, and prosecute organized crime. In a whole-of-government approach, the United States will provide technical assistance through the Departments of State, Defense, Treasury, and Homeland Security, along with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. Our focus will cover border security, anticorruption, fiscal transparency and strengthening the anti-money laundering regime, and professionalizing law enforcement as it coordinates appropriately with the Belize Defence Force to ensure citizen security. The International Organization for Migration has flagged irregular migration as an area of concern, as democratic backsliding, violence, and bleak economic prospects fuel migratory waves in the region.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world, Belize's socioeconomic indicators were trending in a troubling direction. Estimates put Belize's 2009 poverty levels at 41 percent, compared to 56 percent in 2021. The pandemic slammed the country's tourism-reliant economy, resulting in a 14 percent contraction in GDP in 2020. Its staggering public debt ratio spurred the new government, elected in November 2020, to take on the tough and unpopular decision to cut funding and salaries in the public sector, including the wages of police officers, teachers, and military members. This cutback has gravely impacted the efficacy of government programming and law enforcement performance. In July 2021, Belize was reclassified as a lower middle-income country by the World Bank, making Belize eligible for assistance from the

Approved: March 23, 2022

Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), a U.S. government agency that provides large grants to countries meeting strict good governance criteria to reduce poverty and boost economic growth. Belize's December 2021 selection as a potential MCC compact country offers a momentous opportunity to expand and achieve Mission goals in anticorruption work, fortifying efforts to combat trafficking in persons, improve the investment climate for U.S. companies, promote green technologies and sustainable energy paths, and help Belize become more resilient to climate change. Another opportunity lies in furthering Belize's commendable leadership in innovative conservation strategies that concomitantly draw down its national debt. In November 2021, Belize gained international recognition for successfully concluding a Blue Bond Agreement with The Nature Conservancy, saving the country \$266 million in debt and establishing an endowment that will swell to \$90 million to expand marine conservation efforts. Among small states, the IMF ranks Belize as third at risk for natural disasters and fifth at risk from climate change. The Mission will continue working with the Government of Belize on opening the private sector to forge innovative, green solutions that drive economic growth and strengthen Belize's efforts to address climate change. Mission Belmopan will promote American businesses in this space.

Belize's challenges are many, but the United States is uniquely positioned to help build Belize's capacity to improve good democratic governance, thwart TCO activity while securing borders, improve the investment climate for U.S. businesses, and serve and protect the substantial number of U.S. citizens who reside in and travel to Belize.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: Belize enhances its regional role as a stable champion of democracy.

- **Mission Objective 1.1:** Belize strengthens democratic institutions and processes to improve good governance and actively supports an engaged civil society and independent media.
- **Mission Objective 1.2:** Belize promotes good governance efforts to both prevent and counter corruption, and ensures government transparency, inclusiveness, accountability, and respect for the human dignity and rights of all persons.
- **Mission Objective 1.3:** Belize sees the United States as a trusted partner and is aligned with the United States on shared values; Belize is a positive example in the region and votes and speaks as the United States does on democracy concerns in the region, remaining immune to authoritarian foreign influences.

Mission Goal 2: Belize increases institutional effectiveness to ensure citizen and border security.

- **Mission Objective 2.1:** Belize prevents the entrenchment of both local gangs and transnational organized crime networks in-country, and its military and police stakeholders coordinate effectively to counter the trafficking of drugs, weapons, people, and illicit goods.
- **Mission Objective 2.2:** Belize strengthens its legal framework, anticorruption enforcement, and prosecutorial capacities to create significant deterrents to human trafficking, smuggling, money laundering, terrorist financing, and other financial crimes.
- **Mission Objective 2.3:** Belize's security, defense, and air/sea domain awareness capabilities can effectively protect land and sea borders, making Belize a stronger bulwark against irregular migration and environmental crimes.
- **Mission Objective 2.4:** Belize builds adequate response and recovery capacity to address natural and manmade disasters and global health threats.

Approved: March 23, 2022

Mission Goal 3: Belize is an economically prosperous and reliable partner of the United States.

- **Mission Objective 3.1:** Belize improves the investment climate for U.S. companies and supports U.S. investment in strategic sectors by implementing a more transparent regulatory environment and removing barriers to doing business.
- **Mission Objective 3.2:** Belize increasingly is a regional exemplar in pursuing sustainable, green economic growth, balanced with implementation of equitable climate-change resilience initiatives to ensure protection of the country's rich biodiversity and habitats.

Mission Goal 4: Provide services to ensure the safety and welfare of U.S. citizens.

- **Mission Objective 4.1:** Augment Embassy resources and staffing to increase outreach to Belizean law enforcement, health care, and Consular Liaison Volunteer (CLV) stakeholders in key tourist areas (Ambergris Caye, Caye Caulker, Placencia, Hopkins, and Corozal), where American citizens have been vulnerable to sexual assault and other crimes.

Management Objective 1: Strengthened accountability and inventory measures lead to improved property management and fiscal oversight.

Management Objective 2: Improved efficiency and effectiveness of the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) to elevate overall customer service satisfaction.

Management Objective 3: New programs and policies improve the quality of life at Post for U.S. Direct Hire employees, family members, and Locally Employed Staff, which enhances recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce.

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1 | Belize enhances its regional role as a stable champion of democracy.

Description | Belize often works with the United States both bilaterally and within multilateral fora and supports U.S. candidates for positions in multilateral organizations. The State Department has encouraged Belize's strong relationship with Taiwan, with which Belize has had diplomatic relations since 1989. However, Belize's current foreign policy of "principled non-intervention" results in the country's passivity when it comes to taking a stand on democratic backsliding in the region. Despite U.S. calls for pro-democracy alignment, Belize has neither publicly condemned the illegitimate Maduro regime in Venezuela, which it recognizes as its president, and has rebuffed acknowledgement of Juan Guaido as the rightful leader. Additionally, Belize has a history of close ties with Cuba and Nicaragua, and frequently votes against U.S. interests in international organizations regarding these two countries. As member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Belize is inclined to align its vote with member states on key issues in international bodies such as the United Nations and Organization of American States (OAS). Other factors hampering Belize's good governance metrics include cronyism, systemic corruption, and limited local capacity at all levels of Belize's government. A unique English-speaking outlier in the Central American constellation and a Caribbean commonwealth country, Belize has been a stable democracy since its birth as an independent nation in 1981. The United States will continue engagement to ensure Belize fulfills its full potential as a champion of democracy in the region.

Objective 1.1 | Belize strengthens democratic institutions and processes to improve good governance and actively supports an engaged civil society and independent media.

- **Justification** | Belize has a robust parliamentary system of governance, with a two-party political system. However, a small, educated elite, many of whom come from the same families, dominate national politics. Inadequate government salaries coupled with lack of transparency and weak judicial institutions facilitate corruption and impunity. It

Approved: March 23, 2022

is difficult to maintain a vibrant democracy and an engaged civil society when citizens do not trust government institutions or the media. The relatively new Belizean government was elected on an anti-corruption platform and is making efforts to root out corruption while strengthening processes and institutions. Embassy Belmopan will engage with the Government of Belize to build a system to facilitate transparency and accountability.

- **Linkages** | WHA JRS Objectives 1.2, 6.3; USAID-State Strategic Objective 1.5, 3.3; NSSM-1; INSSG
- **Risks** | Inefficient and underfunded systems stand in the way of transparency and government accountability. Belize has not succeeded in fully prosecuting a financial crimes case due to multi-year delays in legal proceedings and the slowness of the justice system. COVID-19 also caused an economic downturn in Belize that decreased available government funds. Embassy Belmopan will continue to work closely with the Government of Belize to offer capacity building improving systems and transparency, and programs catalyzing citizen engagement.

Objective 1.2 | Belize promotes good governance efforts to both prevent and counter corruption, and ensures government transparency, inclusiveness, accountability, and respect for the human dignity and rights of all persons.

- **Justification** | Since Belize's independence from the United Kingdom in 1981, the country's governmental institutions have struggled with corruption at multiple levels. Routine government transactions such as distribution, government contracts, immigration and visa services, construction permits, capital availability, and licensing face frequent allegations of favoritism, nepotism, and corruption. Authorities often do not sufficiently enforce laws on important human rights issues including irregular migration and child labor. The human rights situation in Belize has improved, but challenges remain especially in the areas of human trafficking and rights for LGBTQI+ individuals. Mission Belmopan will engage with the Government of Belize to counter corruption while working closely with NGOs and civil society organizations to promote diverse voices and protect vulnerable populations.

- **Linkages** | WHA JRS Objectives 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.4, 2.2; USAID-State Strategic Objectives 1.5, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2 3.3; NSSM-1; INSSG
- **Risks** | While the current administration has declared its resolve to improve good governance, it is a difficult promise to keep across all sectors of a government. Belize remains primarily a cash economy. Its location, offshore financial sector, casinos, free trade zones, porous borders, poverty rate (56 percent), and limited capacity continue to make it vulnerable to corruption, including high-level government corruption. Discrimination against LGBTQI+ persons in Belize is common. Though courts struck down a law criminalizing same-sex sexual activity in 2016, the law does not expressly prohibit discrimination against LGBTQI+ persons in housing, employment, nationality, or access to government services. Mission Belmopan will continue to work with to advocate for broader transparency and rights for all, encouraging Belize to embrace diversity and equity for all its citizens and residents.

Objective 1.3 | Belize sees the United States as a trusted partner and is aligned with the United States on shared values; Belize is a positive example in the region and votes and speaks as the United States does on democracy concerns in the region, remaining immune to authoritarian foreign influences.

- **Justification** | Belize is a vibrant, stable democracy in a region of the world that is threatened by democratic backsliding and increased overtures from authoritarian influences that threaten international institutions and regional stability. Embassy Belmopan will partner with the Government of Belize, civil society, and other aligned actors to strengthen democracy in Belize and reinforce our shared values.
- **Linkages** | WHA Objectives 1.1, 3.3, 6.2; USAID-State Strategic Objectives 1.5, 3.1, INSSG
- **Risks** | Regional institutions such as the OAS and global multilateral institutions such as the UN would be degraded if authoritarian actors increase their influence in small yet influential states like Belize. Values Belize shares with the United States such as self-determination and human rights would be threatened. Authoritarian regimes would be emboldened in defying global norms of behavior. Post will continue to engage with

government and civil society actors to support Belizean democracy and reinforce shared norms and values.

Mission Goal 2 | Belize increases institutional effectiveness to ensure citizen and border security.

Description | Belize serves as a major transit corridor for cocaine from South America to the United States. Owing to its low-density population, remote and porous land borders, and around 450 offshore islands, the country remains vulnerable to illicit activities of transnational criminal organizations (TCOs). Traffickers increasingly utilize remote, target-of-opportunity airstrips, and roads as waystations to refuel or offload drugs from planes primarily originating from Venezuela. Illicit airstrips along both sides of the remote Guatemala-Belize border allow traffickers to keep options open while determining optimal landing spots for narcotics-laden aircraft. Belize serves as a willing partner in working with the United States on counter-narcotics efforts, but human and financial resource constraints, corruption, and limited capabilities impede Belize's ability to capture, investigate, and prosecute traffickers. Belize has no air defense systems, no primary radar capable of monitoring illicit air traffic, and no maritime radar. Despite these constraints, Belize's success in interdicting illicit drug shipments has increased significantly since 2018 due to its partnerships with the United States, Mexico, and Honduras. In January 2021, Belize joint enforcement teams seized an aircraft containing 840 kilos of cocaine and arrested nine people; November 2021 saw the seizure of more than 1200 kilos in two swoops, and the arrest of a total of 18 individuals, including five police officers. Members of the Sinaloa Cartel and Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) allegedly operate with the assistance of local Belizeans in the landings of illicit aircraft and subsequent northward movement of illegal drugs. The United States must strengthen bilateral cooperation with Belize to successfully combat transnational criminal threats, particularly in narcotics, human, and weapons trafficking.

Objective 2.1 | Belize prevents the entrenchment of both local gangs and transnational organized crime networks in-country, and its military and police stakeholders coordinate effectively to counter the trafficking of drugs, weapons, people, and illicit goods.

- **Justification** | The number of narco-plane landings in Belize doubled between 2020 and 2021 – from nine to 18. In 2021, Belize and Guatemala had nearly the same number of narco-plane landings and Guatemala is nearly five times the area of Belize. While others in the region, including Mexico and Honduras have seen reductions in narco-plane landings from Venezuela, Belize’s trajectory went in the opposite direction, showing that success in one country often means that TCO activities shift to another country in the region. Belize’s high murder count is directly related to increasing gang activity. Trafficking in persons is on the increase, with cross-border smuggling a primary source of trafficking. With large, porous borders and an extensive sea border, Belize will need to use all the tools it has to interdict TCOs, trafficking, and gang activity. Mission Belmopan’s, through the unified efforts of SCO, DEA, RSO, INL and others will continue to mentor the law enforcement and security forces arms of the Government in working together to address these significant challenges.
- **Linkages** | NSS Pillar 4; WHA JRS; INSSG
- **Risks** | Stove-piping and lack of trust inhibit coordination between the Police and Armed Forces. Allegations of corruption, a small, tight-knit ruling class, and a culture that does not reward individual action create a challenging environment to develop the close coordination required to fight TCO incursions along the extensive borders. Key leaders with clear vision and an understanding of the need for Belize to pull together are emerging. Embassy Belize has close working relationships with those leaders, helping to mentor and support their efforts.

Objective 2.2 | Belize strengthens its legal framework, anticorruption enforcement, and prosecutorial capacities to create significant deterrents to human trafficking, smuggling, money laundering, terrorist financing, and other financial crimes.

- **Justification** | The Deputy Police Commissioner accused of colluding with narco-traffickers, a driver for the Director of Public Prosecution arrested for illegal drug trafficking, the last country-wide election led to a change in political parties, primarily due to citizen disgust over corruption. The recently retired Auditor General, who received the Secretary of State's Anticorruption Award this year, riveted the country with her reports of illegal land and vehicles sales. Yet there have been only a few arrests, fewer prosecutions, and almost no convictions. The Belize legal system, based on the British model, is replete with archaic laws and sorely lacking in the people and technology necessary to deliver justice effectively in the 21st Century. As Belize steps up its border protection and enforcement it needs a modern, stronger justice system to enforce relevant laws. The threat of prosecution must be real and penalties swift and certain to deter trafficking, smuggling, money laundering and the financial crimes that seek out weak systems. Mission Belmopan will support the modernization of the justice system in Belize, working with willing actors to modernize and create a strong defense against illegal activities.
- **Linkages** | NSS Pillar 2; WHA JRS; INSSG
- **Risks** | Without strong legislation that properly addresses illegal activity, Belize will run the risk of being known as a country that is amicable to transnational criminal organizations and subsequently become a haven for those organizations to continue to foster corruption, illegal activity in all forms and financial crimes. Mission Belize will continue its ongoing efforts to strengthen Belize's rule of law sector, working with other donors to update laws, train investigators, and develop the prosecutors and judges who are eager to uphold the laws and deter wrong doers.

Objective 2.3 | Belize's security, defense, and air/sea domain awareness capabilities can effectively protect land and sea borders, making Belize a stronger bulwark against irregular migration and environmental crimes.

- **Justification** | The Belize defense enterprise is faced with a litany of challenges: a limited defense budget, unforgiving operating areas, secluded illicit activity zones, and the inability to effectively monitor these areas. By increasing Belize's land, sea, and air domain effectiveness, the defense enterprise can face and address irregular migration and environmental crimes. Mission Belize will focus efforts on communications, readiness, and response in order to assist Belize with their biggest shortcoming: domain awareness.
- **Linkages** | SOUTHCOM CCDR Priority #1: Strengthen partnerships; NSS Pillar 4; WHA JRS; INSSG
- **Risks** | The Belize defense enterprise can improve long-term planning and projection of equipment, manpower, sustainment, etc. Without proper planning, Defense leadership cannot accurately project and maintain defense entities designed to patrol Belizean borders. Additionally, with an already limited defense budget, Belize is at risk of cutting its defense force if continued economic problems persist. Lastly, if political will wanes or allocates resources outside of the defense enterprise, Belize will risk capitulating closer to narco-state status without an effective domain awareness agenda.

Objective 2.4 | Belize builds adequate response and recovery capacity to address natural and manmade disasters and global health threats.

- **Justification** | With much of the country at or below sea level, Belize has identified climate change as an existential issue. Although not technically an island, the United Nations classifies Belize as a Small Island Developing State (SIDS). Like other SIDS, Belize faces many natural disasters and remains highly exposed to climate risk. The World Bank estimates Belize incurs annual losses of four percent of GDP due to natural disasters; these events will increase in frequency and severity due to climate change. The systemic weaknesses in the country's healthcare system was exacerbated

by the COVID-19. The healthcare system remains severely constrained by gaps in medical personnel, hospital infrastructure, and other challenges to providing basic universal health care. Strengthening the capacity of Belize to address disasters and health threats is key in ensuring citizen security.

- **Linkages** | USAID-State Strategic Objectives 1.1, 1.2, WHA JRS Objective 5.2; INSSG
- **Risks** | Failing to strengthen the capacity to address disasters and health threats exposes Belize to significant risk from climate change and regional instability. As evidenced by the regional migration crisis, the stability of Central American countries is critical to U.S. border security. Mission Belmopan regularly engages with key government ministries and the interagency to support capacity building in disaster relief, public health, and climate change mitigation.

Mission Goal 3 | Belize is an economically prosperous and reliable partner of the United States.

Description | The economic development of Belize supports a key Central American priority, as directed by the Root Causes Strategy, Collaborative Migration Management Strategy, and the WHA Joint Regional Strategy Goal 4: A Prosperous Hemisphere. Belize's location offers advantages to U.S. businesses, including geographic proximity to the United States, the English language, links with Central America and the Caribbean, a stable currency fixed to the U.S. dollar, and convenient air transportation. U.S. businesses and investments remain active in tourism and agriculture, with growing interest in the energy sector. However, in recent years, U.S. companies have expressed concerns about the difficulties of doing business in Belize. Despite recent fiscal tightening, Belize still ranks as one of the most highly indebted countries in the world and its economic mainstays of tourism and agriculture make it vulnerable to the effects of climate change, including natural disasters and drought. Belize's GDP was hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, adding to the high poverty rate (between 55 and 60 percent by some estimates), income disparity, high unemployment rate, and stagnation in key economic sectors. The United States is committed to supporting vulnerable countries and communities around the world in their efforts to both manage the impact of climate change and shore up health

Approved: March 23, 2022

security. To reduce its public debt to GDP ratio, Belize has sought innovative financial solutions with enhanced conservation efforts. Belize gained international recognition for its successful conclusion of a Blue Bond financial deal in November 2021 in a unique financial arrangement, which saved Belize US\$266 million in debt and created a marine conservation endowment that will swell to US\$90 million within 20 years.

Objective 3.1 | Belize improves the investment climate for U.S. companies and supports U.S. investment in strategic sectors by implementing a more transparent regulatory environment and removing barriers to doing business.

- **Justification** | In recent years, U.S. companies have expressed concerns about the difficulties of doing business in Belize, citing lengthy bureaucratic delays, a lack of transparency, and endemic corruption within government institutions and at the political level. These conditions are an impediment to foreign direct investment, which is a key feature of Belize's economic transformation strategy. U.S. firms have also identified challenges in participating and competing in areas related to the bidding, procurement, and dispute settlement processes. Mission Belmopan will engage rigorously with the Government of Belize to promote change and transparency in the business regulatory environment, while informing U.S. companies of the challenges and benefits of operating in Belize.
- **Linkages** | WHA JRS Objectives 4.1 and 4.2; NSS Pillar 1
- **Risks** | In the short term, given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic context and a relatively new Belizean government administration still feeling its way, U.S. companies may continue to face adverse conditions in Belize that both dissuade investment as well as thwart ongoing U.S. business operations from succeeding. Several high-profile projects have failed to materialize, and at least one large American-owned company is threatening to leave because of perceived inappropriate government interference. Mission Belize continues to engage with the American business community and the GoB to advocate for U.S. companies.

Objective 3.2 | Belize increasingly is a regional exemplar in pursuing sustainable, green economic growth, balanced with implementation of equitable climate-change resilience initiatives to ensure protection of the country's rich biodiversity and habitats.

- **Justification** | Although small, Belize has been an admirable vanguard in modeling responsible stewardship of its ample natural resources and maintaining a pledge of sustainable economic growth in the face of climate change challenges. Although not technically an island, the United Nations classifies Belize as a Small Island Developing State (SIDS). Like other SIDS, Belize faces high risks of natural disasters and is at significant risk regarding climate change. Belize committed to pursuing innovative approaches to monetize its conservation efforts, for example through carbon credits and debt-for-nature swaps. In terms of energy security, Belize has invested heavily in renewable energy for its electricity needs but remains reliant on high-priced electricity from Mexico for approximately 50 percent of its energy needs. The transport sector is also highly dependent on imported fossil fuels to operate. Hence, while transitioning towards greater energy sustainability is a key policy priority, the sector is still exposed to high costs and vulnerability to external shocks to the market. These factors present an opportunity to deploy innovative green technologies.
- **Linkages** | S/SPEC Climate Crisis Policy Objectives 3, 4, and 5; WHA JRS Objectives 5; NSS Pillar 2
- **Risks** | In the long term, climate change is the most significant risk to Belize's economy and people. Tropical cyclones, hurricanes, excessive rainfall, droughts, agricultural diseases, floods, loss of coastal areas, and loss of related livelihoods would have a devastating impact on Belize. Although it sources the majority of its energy from renewables, Belize remains highly reliant on external fossil-fuel energy producers. Mission Belize will continue to engage with U.S. companies and the GoB to explore innovative solutions to introduce technologies that will secure sustainable development and help weather climate challenges.

Mission Goal 4 | Provide services to ensure the safety and welfare of U.S. citizens.

Description | The protection of U.S. citizens abroad is the Department of State’s highest priority. Embassy Belmopan estimates more than 30,000 U.S. citizens reside in Belize while more than one million American tourists visit annually. Belize’s unique geography, limited infrastructure, and underdeveloped health care system present challenges to aiding Americans in distress.

Objective 4.1 | Augment Embassy resources and staffing to increase outreach to Belizean law enforcement, health care, and Consular Liaison Volunteer (CLV) stakeholders in key tourist areas (Ambergris Caye, Caye Caulker, Placencia, Hopkins, and Corozal), where American citizens have been vulnerable to sexual assault and other crimes.

- **Justification |** In 2021, a sexual assault case involving an American tourist exposed deficiencies in Belizean law enforcement’s response to sexual assault and other crimes, as well as an absence of victim-assistance service. Embassy Belmopan must work closely with local law enforcement agencies, medical professionals, and the CLV network to quickly and effectively respond to American victims of violence and other crimes.
- **Linkages |** WHA JRS Objectives 4.1 and 4.2; NSS Pillar 1
- **Risks |** The dearth of official statistics on sexual assault and other crimes against Americans in Belize may prove an obstacle in securing GoB buy-in for proposed law enforcement and medical reforms. Although Embassy Belmopan will collect unofficial data and raise awareness of gender-based violence more broadly, the institutional hurdles that prevent victims from reporting crimes and the collection of reliable data may obscure the severity of the issue in Belize. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic and limited consular resources may preclude in-person trainings and reduce stakeholder participation, forcing the below “Key Activities” to adapt to virtual models.

4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1 | Strengthened accountability and inventory measures lead to improved property management and fiscal oversight.

- **Justification** | In August 2021, a perfunctory inventory check revealed Post's General Services Office (GSO) and Facilities sections had a 7.4 percent shortage in expendables inventory. The Management (MGT) section drafted a corrective action plan to bring all Embassy physical inventory under the one percent threshold, compliant with Department of State accountability standards. Systems changes and additional training and professionalization of our work force will be key in achieving success within the established timeframe. Preventing waste, fraud, and abuse is a key responsibility of management functions and achieving effective property management and control, as well as control of inventory within Department-wide acceptable standards is a key priority.
- **Linkages** | FAM, FAH
- **Risks** | Hiring additional staff and acquiring training could be delayed by bureaucratic and budgetary hurdles.

Management Objective 2 | Improved efficiency and effectiveness of the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) to elevate overall customer service satisfaction.

- **Justification** | The Management section has been understaffed for several years. Post will work to establish new positions in the Facilities and GSO sections to address critical staffing needs in specialist positions. A malfunctioning of the Embassy's obsolete and crumbling Building Automation System (BAS) was a primary factor in a disastrous diesel fuel spill in April 2021, which contaminated the Embassy's water reservoir and rendered piped water impotable for more than six months. Systems, machinery, and training must be improved The BAS controls not only operational functions of the Chancery, but also security-related functions (air flow and doors). A functioning and updated BAS is vital to support operations at the Embassy.
- **Linkages:** The BAS controls not only operational functions of the Chancery, but also security-related functions (air flow and doors). A functioning and updated BAS is vital to support operations at the Embassy.
- **Risks** | Travel delays for TDY personnel due to COVID-19, supply chain shortages and shipping delays, and training and hiring delays could all hamper Post's efforts to strengthen the Facilities section and employ the new BAS.

Management Objective 3 | New programs and policies improve the quality of life at Post for U.S. Direct Hire employees, family members, and Locally Employed Staff, which enhances recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce.

- **Justification |** Belmopan is an isolated capital with a population of less than 16,000 and only four diplomatic missions. There exist limited recreational activities within the radius of the city, and the Embassy has no on-site lunch and breakfast options, with only minimal catering services available in Belmopan. These factors necessitate greater creativity and involvement from Post leadership to enhance the quality of life for community members within existing realities. Additionally, LE Staff have expressed concerns with the current health and life insurance contract. Retention of Department of State personnel is a Department high priority. Post morale directly links to productivity and performance. Strengthening our recruitment and retention can improve Embassy operations across the board.
- **Linkages:** Department of State's Modernizing American Diplomacy for the 21st Century Efforts, Post Hardship Survey
- **Risks |** Hiring additional staff and acquiring training could be delayed by bureaucratic and budgetary hurdles.