



Integrated Country Strategy

Marshall Islands

FOR PUBLIC RELEASE

Approved: February 22, 2022

Table of Contents

1. Chief of Mission Priorities	1
2. Mission Strategic Framework	4
3. Mission Goals and Objectives.....	6
4. Management Objective.....	13

1. Chief of Mission Priorities

Strong ties between the United States and the Indo-Pacific region are key to supporting the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) progress in addressing issues such as: climate change, sustainable economic development, regional security, and good governance. In particular, the United States' continued strong and unique relationship with the Compact of Free Association countries: Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the RMI is key to achieving our regional goals. These are among our closest friends, with a high voting affinity in the United Nations, shared democratic values and a commitment to human rights, free trade, good governance principles, and populations that can live and work in the United States without a visa.

For the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the strategic dimension is even more important. The U.S. Army Garrison Kwajalein Atoll (USAG-KA) hosts the Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Test Range and Space Fence. It is considered a high-value asset in our national security architecture. The range provides a uniquely suited location for missile defense and space work, given its proximity to the equator, large target area for missiles launched from Vandenberg Air Base, and supportive local population. It is not surprising that the U.S. has negotiated a lease that takes us into the latter part of this century. Our challenge is to ensure that the relationship with the host government is strong, building a healthy educated local workforce for USAG-KA, and providing a political environment that allows USAG-KA's work to thrive. Adequate support for Embassy Majuro's Pol/Mil activities is vital to ensure a stable operating environment for USAG-KA, and to the promotion and support of military placement testing, recruitment, and veterans' affairs.

The Compact of Free Association provides almost \$100 million annually from over 40 federal agencies. Health, education, and infrastructure are the three priorities. Direct Compact funding for these sectors and some other economic funding ends in 2023. The United States and RMI are currently negotiating the extension of the expiring provisions of the Compact. The most challenging issue in our bilateral relationship is the nuclear legacy and the RMI government's insistence that more needs to be done – especially in the areas of environment, health, and compensation. Our challenge is to create policies that respond to the nation's needs while

Approved: February 22, 2022

adhering to historically agreed upon principles and agreements. We should continue to be the RMI's best partner and lead donor, solidifying our long-term intentions to be the indispensable leader in the Pacific region. The strong bilateral relationship between the United States and RMI was exemplified during the nation's early responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to a population with high rates of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), the spread of COVID-19 in the RMI would have been disastrous. The RMI worked hand and hand with the U.S. Embassy and USAG-KA to create protocols allowing repatriations of USG essential workers, contractors, and Marshallese citizens to enter the RMI while simultaneously keeping the nation COVID-19 free. The United States will need to continue to support the RMI in its efforts to mitigate the effects of this global pandemic through facilitating streamlined access to vaccines, science-based information readily available to the public, and supplies/infrastructure to control and contain the inevitable entry of COVID-19 in country. Addressing this healthcare issue needs to coincide with efforts to reduce NCDs and high stunted growth rates in young children.

The RMI will need continued support in education, so their young people can compete in a globalized world, contribute to the RMI's future, and do well in U.S. jobs and schools where they will continue to have access under the Compact, even after 2023. And by focusing on challenges specifically facing women and girls, including in the political sphere, and ending domestic violence, the RMI will more fully empower itself.

The People's Republic of China's (PRC) engagement within the region continues to expand. The Solomon Islands and the Republic of Kiribati have recently switched its diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to the PRC. The PRC's expanding influence threatens stability and security in the Pacific region through unfair economic practices and corruption that undermines relatively weak democratic institutions and legitimate private sector competition.

Due to the closure of national borders, the over 500 USG employees who annually enter the RMI have been unable to do so for the past two years. However, the embassy needs to be poised for the influx of visitors that will occur once the borders reopen. Managing the oversight and logistics of their programs and promoting public awareness of the unique benefits Marshallese citizens derive from Compact-related programs, requires adequate policy,

Approved: February 22, 2022

management, and public diplomacy resources. Post will need creative ways to operate in a difficult environment characterized not only by its remoteness but also by a local labor pool with low capacity and an embassy staff of only five Foreign Service professionals.

Foreign Assistance funding plays an important role in addressing the protection of RMI fisheries resources, one of the country's main sources of revenue, through U.S. Coast Guard training programs for the RMI Sea Patrol. USAID Foreign Assistance funding also provides crucial support to the RMI in preparing for natural disasters, including the effects associated with climate change, such as sea level rise, typhoons, and drought.

In highlighting the benefits derived from our continued close partnership and the Embassy's positive role as a member of the community, public diplomacy remains vital for continued RMI support on global and local issues – including USAG-KA operations.

A lack of basic infrastructure to safeguard the RMI against threats posed by cyberattacks is an ominous reality. In July of 2021, with urging from the U.S. Embassy, the RMI Cabinet established the RMI Cybersecurity Task Force and directed it to take steps to protect the RMI's critical information and communications technology (ICT) from malicious cyber intrusions. To enhance the RMI's overall national security, the Embassy will continue to work with the government to create laws, protocols, and a solid foundation for the nation to minimize risks and external threats. Consular services — U.S. citizen services in particular — remain a Mission priority. As the Marshall Islands is comprised of thousands of tiny islands and islets scattered over a large area, performing citizen services often poses major logistical challenges. Post will continue to develop and maintain strong relationships with local government officials across the RMI and will enhance its American Liaison Network to ensure excellent citizen services, especially for those living in the outer islands.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: America is recognized as the primary security guarantor and partner of choice in the region.

- **Mission Objective 1.1:** The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) continues to develop capacity to contribute to their domestic stability and security, augmenting the overall defense provided by the US in the Region.
- **Mission Objective 1.2:** Our strong partnership with RMI and targeted security and defense efforts ensure RMI actions on the global stage support the US security posture in the region.
- **Mission Objective 1.3:** Enhanced border control to facilitate legitimate and secure travel into RMI and between United States and RMI.
- **Mission Objective 1.4:** Established ICT infrastructure and capacity to enhance RMI's overall national security mechanisms.

Mission Goal 2: Advance US economic security by building a prosperous (economic) and resilient (health, education, and environment) nation for the people of RMI.

- **Mission Objective 2.1:** Strengthened public health capacity and infrastructure to achieve more sustainable health outcomes that improve quality treatment and care.
- **Mission Objective 2.2:** Improved RMI education standards by supporting the creation of an educational model that fosters innovation and meets the vocational needs of the country.
- **Mission Objective 2.3:** Focused mitigation and adaptation efforts to promote robust ecological systems' ability to tolerate the effects of climate change.
- **Mission Objective 2.4:** Enhanced sustainable economic development opportunities to promote transparent and inclusive economic growth.

Mission Goal 3: Our partnerships and engagement strengthen governance in RMI.

- **Mission Objective 3.1:** Strengthened governance framework by providing technical and financial support in high-risk areas identified by RMI.

Management Objective 1: Right-size mission human resources and capacity to strengthen public diplomacy outreach, support mission goals and objectives identified in the Integrated Country Strategy (including support of the more than 500 official visitors and temporary duty personnel assisted by post), serve, and protect US citizen interests in the RMI and comply with the Department's security, fiscal, and reporting requirements.

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1 | America is recognized as the primary security guarantor and partner of choice in the region.

Description | This goal reflects the pillars outlined in the Interim 2021 National Security Strategy, goals in USAID 2018-2022 Joint Strategic Plan and 2018 Defense strategy objectives. Mission activities will ensure the continued smooth operation of the vital strategic asset of the Kwajalein missile defense test and space surveillance radar site. Additional programming will: strengthen RMI's border security as an entry point to the U.S.; build on RMI's willingness to enforce national security sanctions on North Korea, Iran, and Libya through its major shipping flag registry; and support the RMI to establish the necessary capacity to protect its ICT infrastructure against malign actors engaging in cyber-attacks.

Objective 1.1 | The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) continues to develop capacity to contribute to their domestic stability and security, augmenting the overall defense provided by the US in the Region.

- **Justification** | Maintaining the close relationship between the U.S. and RMI will remain the paramount Embassy operational task. As Majuro has direct flights from its international airport to the U.S. (Honolulu) and also flights to Guam via the United Airlines "island hopper route", supporting the RMI to develop capacity to contribute to their own domestic stability and security in turn fosters strengthened U.S. border security. United Airlines provides the majority, if not all, commercial air traffic between Honolulu and Majuro, Marshall Islands, and United Airlines currently provides all security services for its flight between HNL and MAJ. Any disruption of commercial air service between the USA and RMI would be significant. As such, specific aviation security objectives in country are critical. TSA regularly assesses foreign airports with direct flights to U.S. airports; airports are assessed using ICAO international aviation security standards and assessment information highlights vulnerabilities and gaps in

capacity development. Contingencies on security assistance are possible. Marshallese can travel visa-free to the U.S. Increased law enforcement cooperation with the RMI Immigration Department and Ministry of Justice to increase information sharing on criminals will help prevent ineligible citizens from traveling to the U.S. Strengthened monitoring of the RMI EEZ for trafficking, smuggling, and labor exploitation will assist the RMI in meeting its national and international commitments

- **Linkages** | Presidential Proclamation 9645 states that, “It is the policy of the United States to protect its citizens from terrorist attacks and other public-safety threats,” and “information-sharing and identity-management protocols and practices of foreign governments are important for the effectiveness of the screening and vetting protocols and procedures of the United States.” Under the Proclamation, the Department of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Department of State and other agencies, must report regularly to the President on the status of foreign government performance against baseline information-sharing and identity-management criteria. Nationals of countries deemed deficient in these areas may be subject to entry and visa restrictions under the Proclamation.
- **Risks** | Decreased border control destabilizing security in RMI and U.S.

Objective 1.2 | Our strong partnership with RMI and targeted security and defense efforts ensure RMI actions on the global stage support the US security posture in the region.

- **Justification** | The RMI has been a steadfast ally to the U.S. at the United Nations with voting congruence among the highest of any of the U.S.’ allies. In the face of increasing global challenges, the U.S. will continue to need the support of the RMI in international fora. The U.S. Army’s Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defense Test Site on Kwajalein (USAG-KA) is a National Defense Asset of the United States. It is also the RMI’s second largest employer and plays an important part in the country’s economy. The test site plays a significant role in the U.S. missile defense research, development, and testing network. It is used to monitor foreign launches and provide deep-space tracking and is

an ideal near-equator launch site for satellites. Any disruptions to USAG-KA operations could pose tremendous risk to DoD operations and national security.

- **Linkages** | Interim 2021 National Security Strategy (priority #3)
- **Risks** | Lost support from the RMI in international forums such as the UN.

Objective 1.3 | Enhanced border control to facilitate legitimate and secure travel between United States and RMI.

- **Justification** | Ensuring the welfare of U.S. citizens abroad is a core responsibility of the State Department and the entire USG. This includes ensuring that Americans have the best access to information and resources available in even the most remote regions of this Pacific Island country. Embassy Majuro serves American residents and visitors by documenting citizenship, facilitating passport renewals, processing citizenship applications, providing notarial services, and preparing for and providing emergency services in times of disasters and health emergencies. Although the Compact of Free Association between the United States and the Marshall Islands allows Marshallese to work and live in the United States visa free, third country nationals must still apply for visas. RMI passports are currently not ICAO compliant and there have been multiple fraudulent passport schemes in the Marshall Islands over the past few decades. Encouraging the RMI government to upgrade its passport to a chipped ePassport will reduce the risk of fraudulent and counterfeit passports being used by nefarious actors who may try to take advantage of the Compact visa-free travel privileges to enter the U.S. illegally. As outlined in Sections 5 and 12 of Executive Order 13768, the U.S. government believes that, under international law, every state is obliged to accept the return of all its nationals that another state seeks to expel, remove, or deport. It is imperative that countries identified by ICE as Uncooperative or ARON make significant efforts to (1) issue travel documents within the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standard of 30 days; (2) agree to accept the physical return of their nationals by commercial and charter flights, as appropriate (3) agree to conduct interviews to confirm nationality, as appropriate; and (4) develop an enduring and consistent system through which ICE officials can work directly with consular officials in the United States

Approved: February 22, 2022

to obtain travel documents expeditiously for nationals subject to orders of removal. Under INA 243(d), DHS may designate a country as delaying or denying the return of their citizens or nationals, resulting in the discontinuation of at least some visa service. The Department of Justice's Office of International Affairs (DOJ/OIA) is the central authority for extradition for the USG, along with State Department. (OIA)

- **Linkages** | Interim 2021 National Security Strategy (priority #1)
- **Risks** | Providing a window of illegitimate travel to the US by those who utilizing fraudulent and counterfeit RMI passports. Increased burden on ICE to effectively manage the deportation of RMI citizens.

Objective 1.4 | Established ICT infrastructure and capacity to enhance RMI's overall national security mechanisms.

- **Justification** | RMI lacks the basic infrastructure to safeguard itself against cyber-attacks from malign actors. To enhance RMI's overall national security, U.S. Embassy Majuro urged the RMI to establish the RMI Cybersecurity Task Force with the purpose to implement the necessary steps to protect the RMI's critical information and communications technology (ICT) from malicious cyber intrusions. The Embassy Majuro will continue to work with the government to create laws, rules, and regulations for a solid foundation to minimize risks and external threats to RMI.
- **Linkages** | Interim 2021 National Security Strategy
- **Risks** | Government and private sector institutions remain ineffective in safeguarding digital assets. Stifling of growth in the areas in digital economy including: telecommunications, e-health, and e-education.

Mission Goal 2 | Advance US economic security by building a prosperous (economic) and resilient (health, education, and environment) nation for the people of RMI.

Description | This goal reflects priorities 2 (expanding economic prosperity and opportunity) and 3 (realizing and defending the democratic values at the heart of the American way of life) of the 2021 Interim National Security Strategy.

Objective 2.1 | Strengthened public health capacity and infrastructure to achieve more sustainable health outcomes that improve quality treatment and care.

- **Justification** | The incidence of non-communicable diseases in the Pacific Islands region is among the highest in the world and more than a third of Marshallese over the age of fifteen have diabetes. Over 33% stunting rates in Marshallese infants diminishes the country's intellectual capital. Raising and maintaining awareness of these health issues is critical to the heightened long-term engagement required in the social and governmental spheres.
- **Linkages** | Priorities 2 and 3 of the 2021 Interim National Security Strategy
- **Risks** | NCD and stunting pose serious and public health threats to developing countries such as RMI and also threaten economic and social development.

Objective 2.2 | Improved RMI education standards by supporting the creation of an educational model that fosters innovation and meets the vocational needs of the country.

- **Justification** | Currently, the RMI education system does not create a satisfactory foundation for employment. Some children graduate from primary schools with low reading and math ability and few options exist for much needed vocational training. Many teachers do not have the necessary skills and training, and a high level of teacher absenteeism is a major problem. In the last two years, the RMI has made great progress in raising the numbers of certified teachers in public schools. Marshallese pass the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test at Level II or above in greater numbers each year. Fundamentally however, education is among the bedrock principles for any country's future, and it lacks a prescription for any of the country's failure. Education is also the key channel toward women's empowerment and ending domestic violence, both issues of concern in the RMI.

Approved: February 22, 2022

- **Linkages** | Priorities 2 and 3 of the 2021 Interim National Security Strategy
- **Risks** | Not achieving the goal of improving educational standards in the RMI poses a tremendous threat to economic and social development of the country.

Objective 2.3 | Focused mitigation and adaptation efforts to promote robust ecological systems and ability to tolerate the effects of climate change.

- **Justification** | 2021 Interim National Security Strategy
- **Linkages** | Priorities 1, 2 and 3 of the 2021 Interim National Security Strategy
- **Risks** | Due to the RMI's vulnerability to the effects of climate change, slight increases in sea levels can result in loss of fresh water supplies, food security, and habitable terrain.

Objective 2.4 | Enhanced sustainable economic development opportunities to promote transparent and inclusive economic growth.

- **Justification** | 2021 Interim National Security Strategy
- **Linkages** | Priorities 1, 2 and 3 of the 2021 Interim National Security Strategy
- **Risks** | Without reforms by the government in the areas of land ownership and tax structure, the RMI will be unable to grow its private sector and attract foreign investment.

Mission Goal 3 | Our partnerships and engagement strengthen governance in RMI.

Description | This goal reflects priorities 2 (expanding economic prosperity and opportunity) and 3 (realizing and defending the democratic values at the heart of the American way of life) of the 2021 Interim National Security Strategy.

Objective 3.1 | [Strengthened governance framework by providing technical and financial support in identified high-risk areas.

- **Justification** | 2021 Interim National Security Strategy
- **Linkages** | Priorities 1, 2 and 3 of the 2021 Interim National Security Strategy

Approved: February 22, 2022

- **Risks** | A lack of transparency in areas of governance and fiscal responsibility will affect the RMI's ability to attract international investors and donor support.

4. Management Objective

Management Objective 1 | Right-size mission human resources and capacity to strengthen public diplomacy outreach, support mission goals and objectives identified in the Integrated Country Strategy (including support of the more than 500 official visitors and temporary duty personnel assisted by post), serve, and protect US citizen interests in the RMI and comply with the Department's security, fiscal, and reporting requirements.

Description | Majuro is a remote post with a small workforce and few resources. All staff perform multiple jobs which at larger Embassies would be completed by teams. Realigned the organization structure to address continuous challenges associated with a small workforce, increased staff training, and process reviews will increase our overall effectiveness. In addition, focusing on renewable energy and efficient space utilization will maximize our limited resources and curtail very expensive building and maintenance costs.

- **Justification** | 2021 Interim National Security Strategy
- **Linkages** | Priorities 1, 2 and 3 of the 2021 Interim National Security Strategy
- **Risks** | Insufficient resources will prevent Post from meeting reporting obligations, increasing its Public Diplomacy efforts, and meet demands of engagement with host country and international partners within the RMI. Internally, staffing shortages will lead to employee burnout along, high turnover, and a decrease in performance.