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Integrated Country Strategy

BURMA

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1. Chief of Mission Priorities

The Burma military launched a coup d'état on February 1, 2021, overthrowing the democratically elected civilian government and unleashing a prolonged period of violence, repression, and instability that continues unabated. The coup and associated military campaign of violence and repression have significantly set back Burma's democratic transition and reversed gains towards economic liberalization. The trajectory of the unfolding crises suggests a prolonged period of instability, with increasingly adverse consequences both for the people of Burma and for regional stability. The United States has led the international response to press the regime to end its brutal violence against the people of Burma, release all those unjustly detained, and return Burma's path to genuine, inclusive democracy. Nonetheless, the regime continues to deploy violence and other forms of oppression against pro-democracy activists, deposed government officials, and members of ethnic and religious communities, while also seeking to silence independent journalists and its critics. For its part, the pro-democracy movement remains resilient and committed to overcome military rule, undertaking both peaceful forms of opposition as well as increasingly organized armed resistance to the regime.

Our principal goal is to restore Burma's path to inclusive democracy, which will enhance the country's long-term stability and advance U.S. interests. We will prioritize support for non-violent efforts to restore civilian rule. We will also empower and sustain individuals who are actively involved in peaceful opposition. We will facilitate progress toward a shared vision for more inclusive democratic governance across ethnic and political lines into a strong foundation for a democratic future that will address the needs and aspirations of all the people of Burma. Because a positive outcome in Burma will require the military to change course, we will continue to work with partners to urge the regime to cease violence, release detainees, and restore civilian, democratic rule.

The Embassy will also prioritize the delivery of humanitarian and development assistance to meet the basic needs of communities in crisis to save lives, alleviate suffering, and maintain dignity. Since the February 2021 coup, conflict has intensified across many new parts of the country, forcing increasing numbers of people to flee from their homes, sometimes taking shelter in neighboring communities and other times in jungles and forests with limited access to assistance. The majority of those displaced are dependent on humanitarian support for their survival and have limited options for return. The significant economic contraction stemming from the coup, coupled with the effects from COVID-19, have resulted in steeply rising poverty levels. Steep price hikes, combined with job and income losses, mean many families can no longer meet their basic needs. The result has been a far-reaching humanitarian crisis, with more than one million people internally displaced as of mid-2022, and refugee flows continuing across Burma's borders. We will continue to lead the international effort to expand humanitarian access and assistance and to prioritize life-saving assistance for the people of Burma is delivered in an impartial manner that reaches all of Burma's communities.

Through positive engagement with the people of Burma, we will mitigate coercive external influences and ensure the United States remains the partner of choice. Though now more challenging as a result of the coup, ongoing violence, and the fear that permeates much of society, building and maintaining people-to-people ties, particularly those that focus on the next generation of leaders across all sectors of society, is critically important. We will apply tools such as exchange and educational programs, including long-term investments such as the Fulbright and Lincoln Scholarship programs. We will continue supporting women's participation and leadership at all levels and in all areas. The United States' public and tangible support to the people of Burma, which is built upon decades of such support, stands in stark contrast to the coercive influences of other countries, whose reputations among the population have been greatly tarnished due to their support for the military regime.

Our highest operational priority is to ensure the safety and security of our personnel and American community. The unpredictable and deteriorating security conditions throughout the country, including in Rangoon, necessitate a heightened focus on maintaining a security posture with adequate personnel and infrastructure.

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The Burmese military coup has been a massive setback for the country's democratic and economic transition, national peace process, long-term durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced people, efforts to pursue accountability and transitional justice, and other foundational challenges. With a long history of supporting pro-democracy efforts in the country, the United States remains committed to working with the people of Burma and our allies and partners to address these immense challenges. We will evolve our policies, programs, and operations – and review our ICS goals – in a continuously evolving and likely less hospitable environment. What will remain consistent, however, is the critical role of the United States in Burma, as we are the only country with the capacity, commitment, and values to lead both international and domestic efforts in support of Burma's democratic restoration.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: Restoring Burma's path to inclusive democracy enhances Burma's long-term stability and U.S. interests.

- **Mission Objective 1.1:** Build the capacity of the Burmese people to sustain efforts toward restoring future democratic governance and economic prosperity.
- **Mission Objective 1.2:** Support the emergence in Burma of a shared and inclusive vision for the country's future.
- **Mission Objective 1.3:** Lead efforts to facilitate a return to a democracy.

Mission Goal 2: The delivery of humanitarian and development assistance helps meet the basic needs of communities in crisis to save lives, alleviate suffering, and maintain dignity.

- **Mission Objective 2.1:** Provide targeted and timely humanitarian assistance to communities in crisis to save lives, alleviate suffering, and maintain dignity.
- **Mission Objective 2.2:** Support improved access to food, healthcare, education, and other essential services to vulnerable households and communities to lessen the impacts of conflict and foster economic and other opportunities.

Mission Goal 3: Through positive engagement with the people of Burma, ensure the United States remains the partner of choice.

- **Mission Objective 3.1:** U.S. government programs and assistance build support for U.S. policies and values.

Management Objective 1: Maintain adequate Embassy resourcing.

Management Objective 2: Maintain the safety and security of Mission staff, information, and facilities through risk mitigation to ensure Post can maintain a capable presence in the country and complete the important work outlined in this strategy.

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3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1 | Restoring Burma's path to inclusive democracy enhances Burma's long-term stability and U.S. interests.

Description | We will continue to work to create conditions for a democratic, peaceful, and prosperous Burma through support for non-violent forms of opposition, creating a shared vision for more inclusive democratic governance.

Objective 1.1 | Build the capacity of the Burmese people to sustain efforts toward restoring future democratic governance and economic prosperity.

- **Objective 1.1 Justification** | The Burmese people will benefit from opportunities to develop their alliance-making, negotiation, and inclusive leadership skills.
- **Objective 1.1 Linkages** | U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy; 2022 National Defense Strategy; State/USAID Joint Strategic Plan 2022-2026; USAID/Burma DGHA Framework; and INL Functional Bureau Strategy.
- **Objective 1.1 Risks** | The fluid security environment continues to deteriorate.

Objective 1.2 | Support the emergence in Burma of a shared and inclusive vision for the country's future.

- **Objective 1.2 Justification** | Achieving greater trust among stakeholders is essential to its success. Despite the unfolding tragedy in Burma, the post-coup pro-democracy movement creates a historic opportunity for an inclusive democracy. The nascent political organizations and networks formed in the wake of the coup have undertaken intense debate about the country's future governance.
- **Objective 1.2 Linkages** | U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy; State/USAID Joint Strategic Plan 2022-2026; and USAID/Burma DGHA Framework.
- **Objective 1.2 Risks** | The fluid security environment continues to deteriorate.

Objective 1.3 | Lead efforts to facilitate a return to a democracy.

- **Objective 1.3 Justification |** The United States leads the international response in ways that complement domestic efforts to press the regime to end its brutal violence against the people of Burma and restore democratic rule.
- **Objective 1.3 Linkages |** U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy (Advance a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, Bolster Indo-Pacific Security); 2022 National Defense Strategy; INL Functional Bureau Strategy 2022 (Bureau Goal 2); Executive Order on Blocking Property with Respect to the Situation in Burma (EO 14014); and White House Anti-Corruption Strategy.
- **Objective 1.3 Risks |** The fluid security environment continues to deteriorate.

Mission Goal 2 | The delivery of humanitarian and development assistance helps meet the basic needs of communities in crisis to save lives, alleviate suffering, and maintain dignity.

Description | The Embassy will pursue multiple channels for the non-political, neutral provision of humanitarian assistance (HA) to mitigate the worsening humanitarian crisis. Additionally, we will use our leadership of position to enable health initiatives, including vaccinations, in line with our humanitarian principles. We will work with partners to press for a humanitarian pause in violence as necessary for aid delivery and for the protection civilians.

Objective 2.1 | Provide targeted and timely humanitarian assistance to communities in crisis to save lives, alleviate suffering, and maintain dignity.

- **Objective 2.1 Justification |** Since the February 2021 coup, conflict has broken out and intensified across many new parts of the country, particularly in the northwest and southeast, forcing increasing numbers of people to flee their areas of origin, sometimes taking shelter in neighboring communities and other times in jungles and forests with limited access to assistance. The majority of those displaced depend on humanitarian support for their survival and have limited options for return. Economic contraction

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stemming from the coup, coupled with tertiary effects from COVID-related impacts, have had significant impacts on rising levels of poverty. Steep price hikes, combined with job and income losses, mean many families can no longer meet their basic needs.

- **Objective 2.1 Linkages** | 2022-2026 Joint Strategic Plan Goal 1, Objective 1.3 (Reinvigorate U.S. humanitarian leadership and provide lifesaving protection and assistance in response to international disaster and humanitarian crises overseas).
- **Objective 2.1 Risks** | Humanitarian actors face increasing safety and security risks and lack access to populations in need. The fluid security environment continues to deteriorate.

Objective 2.2 | Support improved access to food, healthcare, education, and other essential services to vulnerable households and communities to lessen the impacts of conflict and foster economic and other opportunities.

- **Objective 2.2 Justification** | Burma continues to experience long-standing health issues, including some of the highest rates of HIV, malaria, tuberculosis, and maternal and child mortality in the region. Additionally, large areas and populations have not had reliable access to sufficient food, quality education and essential health services, and Burma has the lowest rate of COVID-19 vaccination in southeast Asia and routine childhood immunizations have collapsed.

Prior to 2021, an estimated 12 million learners are now out of school with educational performance in rural areas lagging, especially conflict-affected ones.

Burma now faces the worst economic collapse since independence in 1947, with GDP declining by nearly 20 percent and poverty doubling since the coup. To mitigate the effects of Burma's deepening economic crisis, the Embassy will support communities to build their resilience and meet basic food security needs. Agriculture and livelihoods programming, including aquaculture, will reduce the number of people experiencing extreme poverty and food insecurity while increasing the capacity of farmers to adapt production and market linkages in Burma's post-coup economy.

- **Objective 2.2 Linkages** | Assistance Objective 2.2 links to the 2022-2026 Joint Strategic Plan Goal 1, Objective 1.1 (Strengthen global health security, combat infectious disease threats, and address global health challenges through bilateral engagement and within multilateral fora).
- **Objective 2.2 Risks** | Implementing partners face increasing safety and security risks and lack access to populations in need. The fluid security environment continues to deteriorate.

Mission Goal 3 | Through positive engagement with the people of Burma, ensure the United States remains the partner of choice.

Description | Our positive engagement with and assistance to the people of Burma in this time of crisis strengthens our position as the partner of choice and mitigates coercive external influences.

Objective 3.1 | U.S. government programs and assistance build support for U.S. policies and values.

- **Objective 3.1 Justification** | Demonstrating U.S. policies and values underscores our support for the people of Burma and their democratic aspirations.
- **Objective 3.1 Linkages** | U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy; National Security Strategy; Joint State/USAID Strategic Plan; and 2022 National Defense Strategy.
- **Objective 3.1 Risks** | The fluid security environment continues to deteriorate.

4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1 | Maintain adequate Embassy resourcing.

- **Objective 1 Justification** | Embassy Rangoon requires consistent and effective management of personnel assignments and transfers. The staffing plan ensures those serving in Burma receive compensation commiserate with the challenges of working in the country.
- **Objective 1 Linkages** | Embassy Rangoon Interim Strategy.
- **Objective 1 Risks** | The fluid security environment continues to deteriorate.

Management Objective 2 | Maintain the safety and security of Mission staff, information, and facilities through risk mitigation to ensure Post can maintain a capable presence in the country and complete the important work outlined in this strategy.

- **Objective 2 Justification** | Due to the current fluid security situation, with widespread conflict throughout the country and Rangoon facing a likely protracted insurgency, ensuring that the RSO is properly staffed and resourced and that all staff are trained is an absolute imperative.
- **Objective 2 Linkages** | U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy; 2022 National Defense Strategy; DS Functional Bureau Strategy; and Post Interim Strategy.
- **Objective 2 Risks** | The fluid security environment continues to deteriorate.