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Integrated Country Strategy

Montenegro

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1. Chief of Mission Priorities

The August 2020 national elections were a watershed event in Montenegro's history on par with its 2006 independence and its 2017 entry into NATO. After almost three decades of single-party rule by the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) and following a year of peaceful, civic protests against passage of the 2019 Law on Religious Freedom, voters declined to return DPS and its allies to power. They instead ushered in a broad coalition that wedded civic-oriented, pro-Western parties with radical pro-Serb and pro-Russian parties under Prime Minister Zdravko Krivokapic. Although some coalition partners lacked a strong track record of supporting Euro-Atlantic values, the resulting government quickly declared its commitment to them, including reinvigorating the EU accession process, fulfilling international commitments, maintaining recognition of Kosovo, and "ensuring an uncompromising fight against organized crime and corruption."

The peaceful transfer of power following the elections was itself a step-forward for Montenegro's democracy. Political actors and civil society no longer see DPS rule as inevitable, thereby opening political and civic space for other voices and incentivizing DPS intraparty reform. Although the Krivokapic government faithfully maintained its pledge of a western-oriented foreign policy and fulfilled international commitments, its performance in advancing reforms was greatly hamstrung by a lack of support from its own coalition. The government lost a vote of no confidence in February 2022, and was succeeded in April 2022 by the minority government of Prime Minister Dritan Abazovic. The Abazovic government included parties spanning the political spectrum and received support from the DPS, which remained formally out of government. Although entering with a stated intention to prioritize the continued path toward EU succession, in August 2022, PM Abazovic signed a controversial agreement with the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC), which precipitated the fall of Abazovic's government later the same month. The subsequent failure of parties to agree on a new majority coalition, combined with institutional crises in the judicial sector, left the Abazovic government in technical status until June 11, 2023, parliamentary elections when a new political party, Europe Now – a centrist movement focused on economic reforms, won convincingly. The parliamentary victory

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followed closely on the heels of Europe Now party co-founder, Jakov Milatovic, decisively beating incumbent president Milo Djukanovic in April 2, 2023. Europe Now's emergence on the Montenegrin political scene reflects an electorate weary of identity politics and has ushered in a new generation of leaders unencumbered with the political baggage of the 1990s.

Since 2020, there has been progress in bolstering the efficacy and professionalism of the national police and high-profile drug seizures and arrests, including the former chief of the supreme court, head of the administrative court, an assistant national police director, and the head of customs. Taken more broadly, post-DPS reform results have fallen short of expectations as the governments have failed to reinvigorate an already-stalled EU accession process, missed opportunities to strengthen participation in NATO, weakened state bureaucracies through widespread dismissals of civil servants, and gained the ignominious distinction of having among the highest COVID death rates per capita in the world. A resurgence of hate speech, attacks on journalists, and on the LGBTQI+ community have likewise marred the new governments' records. Despite these shortfalls, Montenegro has remained a steadfast NATO Ally contributing to the defense of Ukraine against Russia's ongoing invasion. Polls conducted ahead of the Vilnius 2023 Heads of State summit show NATO's approval rating continues to rise in Montenegro and stand close to approval ratings in the United States.

As of July 2023, forward progress on key reforms linked to EU accession largely depend on the success of Europe Now in building a stable, pro-European coalition that avoids the past ill of rampant clientelism and instead fields a civil cadre chosen for their skills, experience, and talent and marked by sufficient political will to make necessary reforms.

As a friend, partner, and NATO Ally, a stable, prosperous, multiethnic Montenegro, firmly rooted in Euro-Atlantic institutions and values, is in our interests. To achieve such an outcome, the U.S. Mission in Podgorica has identified four priority end-state goals:

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- **Strengthened democratic institutions support Montenegro's EU candidacy.** Montenegro is strongly pro-European with around 80 percent of Montenegrins supporting EU accession. Helping Montenegro secure its place among the nations of Europe will require strong institutions that promote rule of law, fight entrenched corruption, ensure media freedom, and deliver results to citizens. We will achieve this goal through advocacy, expertise, exchanges, and foreign assistance supported capacity-building programs such as those led by INL's rule of law program, ICITAP's law enforcement development, and PAS's democracy commission small grants program.
- **The Montenegrin public understands and supports the values and the policies of the United States.** The U.S. consistently trails Russia and China in favorability polling, yet leads as an educational, professional, and recreational destination. We will improve understanding of American values and policies through exchanges, cultural programs, and youth engagements. To counter malign influence, we will build media literacy while seeking to identify and debunk disinformation. Finally, foreign assistance plans will bolster civil society and build support for tolerance, diversity, and inclusion to forestall growing polarization.
- **A broadly prosperous and economically resilient Montenegro.** Following a serious pandemic-driven slump, the country's economy rebounded in 2021 with 15 percent GDP growth underpinned by a strong tourist season. Yet, manufacturing jobs continue to disappear while the unstable political scene, opaque commercial regulations, and entrenched corruption hinders investment. We will advocate for economic policies that promote transparency, stability, and ease the cost of doing business while using our bilateral Economic Dialogue to promote equitable growth and entrepreneurship, create jobs, protect environmental resources, and attract foreign investors.
- **Montenegro contributes to resolving global and regional security challenges.** As a nation of less than a million inhabitants, Montenegro has long appreciated alliances as force multipliers and stands ready to partner on tackling regional and global challenges. We will continue to strengthen Montenegrin participation in NATO through force modernization and infrastructure development, while seeking new avenues for

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international cooperation on issues like health security, climate change and human rights.

Our goals support the Department of State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan to renew U.S. leadership to address global challenges, promote inclusive and sustainable prosperity, and strengthen democratic institutions. We will also fulfill our core mission to serve U.S. citizens and facilitate international exchanges. To empower our diplomatic workforce, we will deploy modern IT tools, use flexible work practices, and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion principles. Construction of a New Office Building will stand as a visible commitment to our bilateral relationship while providing a state-of-the-art platform for 21st century diplomacy.

This Integrated Country Strategy is the product of a series of offsites, both virtual and in-person, conducted between October-December 2021 by Post's country team. It will be reviewed every January at the sub-objective level with action plans updated accordingly.

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2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: Strengthened democratic institutions support Montenegro's EU candidacy.

- **Mission Objective 1.1:** Strengthened Montenegrin institutions achieve measurable progress in combatting entrenched corruption, bolstering effective rule of law, transparency, and good governance, in accordance with Euro-Atlantic standards.
- **Mission Objective 1.2:** An empowered pro-European, civic-oriented government and more capable civil society, political parties, and like-minded allies foster an accountable, resilient democracy.

Mission Goal 2: The Montenegrin public understands and supports the values and the policies of the United States.

- **Mission Objective 2.1:** Societal polarization is moderated by building support for tolerance, diversity, and inclusion.
- **Mission Objective 2.2:** Civil society, media, and the broader public have an improved ability to recognize and push back against malign foreign influence and domestic anti-democratic forces.
- **Mission Objective 2.3:** The bilateral partnership is broadened and mutual understanding advanced by fostering people-to-people ties through exchanges and other activities, especially engaging youth, and emerging leaders.

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Mission Goal 3: A broadly prosperous and economically resilient Montenegro.

- **Mission Objective 3.1:** Montenegro's economic policies and business climate promote equitable, inclusive growth and entrepreneurship, create jobs, protect its environmental resources, and attract foreign investors.
- **Mission Objective 3.2:** Montenegro is a stronger economic partner for the United States.

Mission Goal 4: Montenegro contributes to resolving global and regional security challenges.

- **Mission Objective 4.1:** More capable, stronger Montenegrin government institutions improve regional security, including human and environmental security, and border control, thereby enhancing shared responsibilities in promoting regional and global security.
- **Mission Objective 4.2:** Strengthened Montenegrin capacity to actively participate in NATO, EU, and UN exercises and operations; Montenegro plays a significant role in supporting NATO's goals.
- **Mission Objective 4.3:** Montenegro's cyberspace is protected.

(U) Management Objective 1: An effective workforce supports Mission goals through improved support programs and personnel initiatives.

(U) Management Objective 2: Embassy Staff are successfully moved to the NOB.

(U) Management Objective 3: New technologies better support modern diplomacy and facilitate mobile work.

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3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1 | Strengthened democratic institutions support Montenegro's EU candidacy.

Description | After joining NATO in June 2017, Montenegro's next strategic goal is to accede to the European Union. The United States will continue to fully support this effort, using a range of tools to strengthen the rule of law and build the capacity of Montenegrin institutions to fight corruption and organized crime, two key areas identified by the EU in its October 2022 report on Montenegro's progress toward meeting accession benchmarks. The United States will also support electoral reform, transparency, and other initiatives aimed at building resilient and accountable democratic institutions in Montenegro.

Objective 1.1 | Strengthened Montenegrin institutions achieve measurable progress in combatting entrenched corruption, bolstering effective rule of law, transparency, and good governance, in accordance with Euro-Atlantic standards.

- **Objective 1.1 Justification** | Montenegro launched accession negotiations with the EU in 2012. As of June 2020, it had opened 33 screened chapters of the EU acquis, provisionally closing three of them. Slow progress in rule-of-law reform and combatting corruption and organized crime has effectively stalled progress, even before the historic August 2020 elections. Corruption remains prevalent in many areas. The new EU accession methodology, which Montenegro accepted in June 2021, means that progress on the interim benchmarks set in the rule of law Chapters 23 and 24 will be key to making further progress in the overall negotiations, since no further chapters will be provisionally closed before this milestone is reached. The Mission will use a wide range of policy tools ranging from training to equipment donations to sanctioning corrupt actors to build the capacity of Montenegrin institutions to combat corruption and organized crime and bolster the political will to use that capacity.

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- **Objective 1.1 Linkages** | State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) Goal 3: Strengthening democratic institutions, upholding universal values, and promoting human dignity. EUR Joint Regional Strategy (JRS) Goal 2: Strengthen Democracy and Rule of Law Throughout Europe and Eurasia. Pillar Five of the U.S. Strategy on Countering Corruption: Improving diplomatic engagement and leveraging foreign assistance resources to achieve anti-corruption policy goals.
- **Objective 1.1 Risks** | If Montenegro is unable to make significant progress on combatting corruption, it risks further disillusionment and disengagement of citizens from the democratic political process, as some may conclude that democratic institutions are unable to meet this challenge. Corruption and crime not only undermine public confidence in government institutions, but also scare off U.S. and other investors, further hampering economic growth and exacerbating brain drain. They also reduce the resilience of Montenegro to malign foreign actors and criminal groups which work against U.S. interests in the region and even threaten the U.S. homeland.

Objective 1.2 | An empowered pro-European, civic-oriented government and more capable civil society, political parties, and like-minded allies foster an accountable, resilient democracy.

- **Justification** | Despite the emergence of numerous NGOs, Montenegro still lacks an effective and credible counterbalance to the government, which became increasingly clear after the defeat of the previous government in the August 2020 parliamentary elections. Much of the public welcomed the defeat of the former ruling DPS party, which had controlled the country for 30 years and is widely regarded as deeply corrupt. But the internally divided and inexperienced new government proved unable to effectively advance key reforms needed to move ahead with EU accession. Civil society and centrist political parties lacked the capacity either to drive those reforms or to effectively moderate increasing social and political tensions. The government deadlock for much of 2021 encouraged the growth of cynicism and pessimism about the country's institutions and future prospects.

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- **Linkages** | JSP Goal 3: Strengthening democratic institutions, upholding universal values, and promoting human dignity. JRS Goal 2: Strengthen Democracy and Rule of Law throughout Europe and Eurasia.
- **Risks** | If Montenegrin civil society and political parties are unable to leave behind the identity politics of the 1990s and advance a centrist, civic agenda, Montenegro risks becoming increasingly divided, which could undermine its democratic institutions.

Mission Goal 2 | The Montenegrin public understands and supports the values and the policies of the United States.

Description | While the majority of the Montenegrin public sees their country as part of the West, as evidenced by strong support for EU accession, Russian influence, which is buttressed by historic cultural and religious ties, remains strong. At the same time, there is a general lack of awareness about the effects of rising Chinese influence. Further complicating the picture, widespread disinformation sows discord and exploits societal divisions, threatening to derail Montenegro from its Euro-Atlantic path. Support for the United States and NATO consistently trails support for Russia and China. Finally, much of the public has not internalized many of the values which characterize liberal democracies.

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Objective 2.1 | Societal polarization is moderated by building support for tolerance, diversity, and inclusion.

- **Justification** | Once seen as a model of multiethnic tolerance in the Western Balkans, since the end of 2019 when parliament adopted a controversial religious freedom law, society has become increasingly polarized in Montenegro, breaking down along ethnic lines. The historic 2020 parliamentary elections marked the first change in government since the establishment of a multi-party political system in the early 1990s, and while the change was crucial for the development of Montenegro's democracy, it went hand in hand with rising tensions. Incidents of hate speech and violence have become increasingly frequent – which, in addition to targeting ethnic and religious groups, seeks to further marginalize women and members of the LGBTQI+ community. Discouragingly, youth are often the perpetrators of this divisive behavior, while polling shows that the majority of youth would like to emigrate – further fueling the country's brain drain. Through various programs and grants, Post will seek to build broad support for values prized by Western democracies, including tolerance, diversity, and inclusion, with a focus on empowering youth.
- **Linkages** | JSP Goal 1: Renew U.S. leadership and mobilize coalitions to address the global challenges that have the greatest impact on Americans' security and well-being and JSP Goal 3: Strengthen democratic institutions, uphold universal values, and promote human dignity. EUR JRS Goal 2: Strengthen Democracy & the Rule of Law throughout Europe and Eurasia.
- **Risks** | If Post is unable to build support for key values associated with Western democracies, society will remain divided, thereby providing fertile ground for Russia, China, and other anti-democratic forces to imperil Montenegro's Euro-Atlantic path and, in particular, slow its EU accession process and degrade Montenegro's NATO capacity. Moreover, rising intolerance could lead to violent incidents, which could, in turn, further destabilize the country and the wider region.

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Objective 2.2 | Civil society, media, and the broader public have an improved ability to recognize and push back against malign foreign influence and domestic anti-democratic forces.

- **Justification** | During a critical period for Montenegro's democratic development, the country remains largely vulnerable to foreign malign influence, with a weak media sector continuing to be a high-value target for exploitation. Moreover, the lack of professional, independent outlets impedes the ability of the media to hold the authorities to account, including by exposing corruption. At the same time, low levels of media literacy make the public highly susceptible to disinformation, much of which has historically been backed by malign actors in an effort to erode trust in the West. As public education does not emphasize critical thinking skills, citizens of all ages are potential targets for disinformation originating both from abroad and domestically, including state-sponsored propaganda. Post will advance efforts to strengthen independent, professional journalism and improve media freedom through various programs and outreach activities. We will also seek to build media literacy skills among the public in order to counter the destructive effects of disinformation and propaganda.
- **Linkages** | JSP Goal 3: Strengthen democratic institutions, uphold universal values, and promote human dignity. EUR JRS Goal 2: Strengthen Democracy & the Rule of Law throughout Europe and Eurasia. EUR JRS Goal 4: Leverage Alliances and Partnerships to Address Global and Regional Threats and Challenges.
- **Risks** | If media remain unable to hold the authorities to account, corruption will continue to flourish, further stalling progress in the EU accession process. At the same time, if the media and the public are unable to identify and effectively counter disinformation and propaganda, the country will remain vulnerable to efforts designed to sow discord and to derail Montenegro from its Euro-Atlantic course.

Objective 2.3 | The bilateral partnership is broadened and mutual understanding advanced by fostering people-to-people ties through exchanges and other activities, especially engaging youth, and emerging leaders.

- **Justification** | Low levels of public support for both the United States and NATO jeopardize U.S. policies and the strength of the bilateral partnership. Experience has shown that exchange programs and people-to-people engagements are among our most effective tools in creating long-term partners and advocates of the United States. Through support for robust and growing exchange programs, especially focused on youth, we will foster champions of the bilateral relationship. We will also capitalize upon popular English language programming to engage with diverse populations throughout the country. Through Consular outreach, we will support travel to the United States, and we will highlight the benefits from our security partnership through various activities.
- **Linkages** | JSP Goal 1: Renew U.S. leadership and mobilize coalitions to address the global challenges that have the greatest impact on Americans' security and well-being. Protect the lives and the interests of U.S. citizens in Montenegro and provide consular services as required. JSP Goal 3: Strengthen democratic institutions, uphold universal values, and promote human dignity. JSP Goal 5: Serve U.S. Citizens around the world and facilitate international exchange and connectivity. EUR JRS Goal 2: Strengthen Democracy & the Rule of Law throughout Europe and Eurasia.
- **Risks** | If we are unable to increase support for the United States among the public, we will lose ground to non-democratic countries, like Russia and China, which already enjoy a strong foothold in Montenegro and, in the case of China, are rapidly ramping up engagement across not just the economic, but also the educational and cultural fronts. At the same time, if Montenegro's EU accession prospects continue to falter, we can reasonably expect that alternatives to Western partners will become increasingly attractive.

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Mission Goal 3 | A broadly prosperous and economically resilient Montenegro.

Description | Economic growth improves the quality of life for Montenegro's people and creates opportunities for American companies thereby increasing societal stability and cohesion, making the country a more resilient Ally and partner. As the country's economy rebounds from the pandemic, the United States will collaborate with the Government of Montenegro, the private sector, and other partners to facilitate more opportunities for U.S. trade and investment. Montenegro has made some strides in improving its economy, yet more must be done to improve the business environment and remove barriers to investors and entrepreneurs and increase youth employment, including better enforcement of contracts, creation of a more predictable tax and regulatory regime, and increased transparency in public procurement. Youth employment is especially important for the future economic growth of Montenegro and the reduction of brain drain. Embassy Podgorica will continue to encourage the Government of Montenegro to implement necessary economic, environmental, labor, judicial, and other policy reforms to create a level playing field for U.S. investors and a more favorable destination for U.S. exports.

Objective 3.1 | Montenegro's economic policies and business climate promote equitable, inclusive growth and entrepreneurship, create jobs, protect its environmental resources, and attract foreign investors.

- **Justification |** Montenegro will require increased and equitable economic growth and entrepreneurship to recover from the devastating pandemic, raise living standards, become a more attractive partner for U.S. businesses, sustain its bid for EU membership, and most importantly, keep its talented young people from emigrating. In addition, the country must do more to mitigate environmental degradation and pollution, which negatively impact not only human health, but also economic growth. The strain put on both the healthcare system and the economy by the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the importance of prioritizing health security to advance economic prosperity. Montenegro will not be able to develop its economy fully until businesses

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and investors have greater confidence in the country's legal institutions and regulatory system. The country must establish a transparent framework for contracts and procurements that the legal system enforces evenly. Reduced corruption and bureaucratic blockages will increase business and investor confidence and improve the environment for foreign businesses. Stronger commercial and administrative courts that more efficiently resolve commercial disputes will also improve the business environment and boost economic growth.

- **Linkages** | JSP Goal 2: Promote global prosperity and shape an international environment in which the United States can thrive. JSP Goal 2.2: Support inclusive and sustainable economic growth and opportunity for communities across the globe. EUR JRS Goal 3: Promote deeper trade, investment, and energy cooperation, and forge a united front on non-market and coercive economic practices.
- **Risks** | If the goal is not achieved, the business climate may remain non-transparent discouraging investors and leaving high unemployment to further weaken the economy and therefore the government budget. Further risks include illicit revenues being used by organized crime to acquire legitimate businesses, expanding their influence over a broad array of matters and fueling tremendous corruptive influence. A lack of economic growth also opens Montenegro to foreign malign influence and generally weakens institutions necessary to improve the rule of law, fight corruption and keep Montenegro on its EU path.

Objective 3.2 | Montenegro is a stronger economic partner for the United States.

- **Justification |** Montenegro has made notable strides in transforming its economy over the past two decades. Yet more must be done to improve the business environment and remove barriers to investors and entrepreneurs, including better enforcement of contracts, creation of a more predictable tax and regulatory regime, and increased transparency in public procurement. The Mission will continue to support U.S. businesses seeking opportunities in the country and encourage the GoM to implement necessary reforms, including, most critically, judicial reform, to create a level playing field for U.S. investors and a more favorable destination for U.S. exports.
- **Linkages |** JSP Goal 2: Promote global prosperity and shape an international environment in which the United States can thrive. JSP Goal 2.1: Promote a global economy that creates opportunities for all Americans. EUR JRS Goal 3: Promote deeper trade, investment, and energy cooperation, and forge a united front on non-market and coercive economic practices.
- **Risks |** Risks include a non-transparent business climate; unemployment remaining high, with COVID and its impact on tourism further weakening the economy and the government budget; illicit revenues from crime being used by organized crime to acquire legitimate businesses, expanding their influence over a broad array of matters and fueling tremendous corruptive influence; pervasive corruption, rule-of-law deficiencies, and a lack of media freedom delaying Montenegro's EU accession and inhibiting foreign direct investment; external malign influences from Moscow and Beijing; cyber vulnerabilities; threats posed by weak institutions and potential democratic backsliding.

Mission Goal 4 | Montenegro contributes to resolving global and regional security challenges.

Description | As NATO member and EU aspirant, Montenegro can play an increasingly helpful role globally and regionally to support Euro-Atlantic institutions, processes, and values. On the global level, Montenegro has done much in the last decade to contribute to global security, providing assistance in NATO operations and international peacekeeping missions. As an EU front-runner, Montenegro should continue to effectively align its foreign policy with the EU. A relative island of stability in a turbulent region, Montenegro should continue to effectively leverage its good relations with neighboring states to play a leadership role in solving regional challenges, particularly in working against transnational organized crime, terrorism, illicit border flows, and maritime crime. With one of the highest mortality rates per capita due COVID, Montenegro needs to improve its health infrastructure and increase vaccination uptake. By building a healthy domestic population, Montenegro will also contribute to strengthening global health. Finally, a self-proclaimed “ecological state” in its 2006 constitution, Montenegro should do more on the global level and at home to address climate change.

Objective 4.1 | More capable, stronger Montenegrin government institutions improve regional security, including human and environmental security, and border control, thereby enhancing shared responsibilities in promoting regional and global security.

- **Justification |** Montenegro’s positive relations with all of its neighbors is a unique distinction and places it in a position to exercise regional leadership in addressing these challenges. As an EU aspirant, Montenegro can also enhance its internal law enforcement procedures, strengthen anti-corruption measures, build a cadre of trained law enforcement personnel, and maintain strong border controls at five shared border control locations.

- **Linkages** | JSP Goal 3: Strengthen democratic institutions, uphold universal values, and promote human dignity. JSP Goal 5: Serve U.S. citizens around the world and facilitate international exchange and connectivity. JRS Goal 2: Strengthen Democracy and the Rule of Law throughout Europe and Eurasia. National Security Pillar III: Preserve Peace Through Strength.
- **Risks** | Failure to achieve this objective leaves space for the growth of organized crime, transnational terrorism, and illicit drug flows, while making U.S. borders more vulnerable to the illegal entry of goods and persons.

Objective 4.2 | Strengthened Montenegrin capacity to actively participate in NATO, EU and UN exercises and operations; Montenegro plays a significant role in supporting NATO's goals.

- **Justification** | Montenegro is the second newest member of NATO, joining in 2017. Initially the country had staunch support within its policies in readiness capability improvement and NATO interoperability and commitments. Since the change of government in 2020, they continue towards their 2024 NATO capability targets, but budget shortfalls due to the economic consequences of COVID hamper the Ministry of Defense's ability to carry out their readiness improvement plans. Through various programs, grants, engagements, and exercises, Post will seek to enhance Montenegrin security institutions and the capability of the Armed Forces to meet NATO goals and effectively contribute to regional security.
- **Linkages** | JSP Goal 1: Renew U.S. leadership and mobilize coalitions to address the global challenges that have the greatest impact on Americans' security and well-being. JRS Goal 2: Revitalize European Alliances and Partnerships. Department of Defense's EUCOM Country Plan.

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- **Risks** | If Post is unable to build capacity and support for Montenegrin security institutions and country's commitments to NATO, they will not be seen as a reliable contributing member and could be subject to malign influence and possible hybrid/kinetic actions, destabilizing the country and regional security. Without a stable and capable military and support structure in place, US and Allied access and cooperation in country and combined operations are facing risk in the case of future conflict.

Objective 4.3 | Montenegro's cyberspace is protected.

- **Justification** | The protection of Montenegro's cyber ecosystem is vital to national defense, delivery of services, economic stability, and citizen confidence in democratic institutions. Montenegro remains at a nascent stage of cybersecurity capacity with key challenges including political will; talent development, recruitment and retention; intragovernmental coordination; and cybersecurity awareness. Although the GoM itself must lead on defending Montenegro's cyberspace, even modest, well-applied Allied partnership can yield substantial results.
- **Linkages** | Joint Strategic Plan 1.4.2: Promote a Stable Cyberspace, "sustain and enhance international cooperation to promote the U.S. vision of an open, interoperable, reliable, and secure internet and a stable cyberspace; and strengthen the capacity of U.S. and partner nations to detect, deter, mitigate, and respond to international cyber threats and incidents."
- **Risks** | Failure to achieve this objective leaves Montenegro vulnerable to cyber-attacks from state and non-state actors with possible material damage, disruption to civil and military operations, loss of citizenry confidence, illicit gains to TCOs, and damage to economic interests, including investor confidence.

4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1 | An effective workforce supports Mission goals through improved support programs and personnel initiatives.

- **Justification** | As the Embassy significantly expands its operations and footprint in Montenegro, there is a need to improve support services and programs within the embassy. Since 2007, the number of USDH employees has increased by 194 percent and the number of LE employees has increased by 200 percent. This number is expected to increase more as we move into the NOB. Overall, the need to rightsize ICASS Staffing is essential. The Management Section added its first USDH Facilities Manager in the fall of 2022 and we are expected to add 20+ net new LE employees to manage the NOB. In addition, Post MGMT operations must ensure that we have the necessary programs in place to support the continued surge in growth.
- **Linkages** | JSP Goal 4: Revitalize the diplomatic and development workforce and institutions.
- **Risks** | The risk of not revitalizing the workforce is that Post will be less capable of achieving the strategic goals in country and the MGMT platform will be less prepared to support such goals.

Management Objective 2 | Embassy Staff are successfully moved to the NOB.

- **Justification** | Construction of the New Office Building (NOB) in Podgorica began in the fall of 2021. Phase 1 of the project is scheduled to be finished in Spring 2024 and Phase 2 scheduled to be finished in fall 2025. During the time leading up to the completion date of phase 1, MGMT must prepare for the move to the move building.
- **Linkages** | JSP Goal 4: Revitalize the diplomatic and development workforce and institutions.
- **Risks** | Failure of not successfully moving into the new building has far-reaching negative ramifications that directly impact all areas of Embassy operations.

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Management Objective 3 | New technologies better support modern diplomacy and facilitate mobile work.

- **Justification |** The enduring pandemic has drastically changed the way in which the Department works. To ensure that U.S. Embassy Podgorica continues to meet our strategic goals, the embassy must adapt innovative technologies and communication systems that provide a robust and flexible platform to complete our work.
- **Linkages |** This goal is linked to various deployments of new DOS systems.
- **Risks |** This goal is limited to systems that are DOS approved.

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