



# Integrated Country Strategy

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## AFGHANISTAN

**FOR PUBLIC RELEASE.**

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## 1. Chief of Mission Priorities

Two years after the Taliban takeover in August 2021, Afghanistan now suffers under an extreme form of religious authoritarianism that uses military force and its secret police as governance instruments of choice. Its people are starving. Many Afghans are ripe for radicalization and face horrific choices: sell their children or their organs to feed their families. Joining ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K) is a third horrific option; ISIS-K threatens Taliban credibility, Afghanistan's security and, if unchecked, the wider region. Predatory powers like Iran, China and Russia seek strategic and economic advantage or at a minimum to put the U.S. at a disadvantage. As defined in the National Security Strategy, our longstanding interests are as important as ever: to ensure Afghanistan is never again used for attacks against the U.S. and its allies and to reduce Afghanistan's dependency on U.S. assistance. The Taliban's brutality, misogyny, and racism mean true stability for the country – and the full realization of U.S. interests – requires meaningful dialogue among and between Afghans and confidence-building measures among and between Afghans, including the Taliban, as well as the international community.

To reduce the suffering of the Afghan people, uphold our security, political, and economic interests and keep America's promise to Afghan allies who are eligible for relocation assistance, we work with multiple stakeholders: the Taliban themselves, Afghan diaspora, the international community and, together with colleagues in the interagency, American citizen advocates for Afghanistan. Even as – and for as long as – the United States does not recognize the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan, we must build functional relationships that advance our objectives and further our understanding of the Taliban's readiness and ability to fulfill their commitments to us. At the same time, we meet Afghans where they are – including but not limited to in Pakistan, Central Asia, Türkiye, and the UAE – coordinating with U.S. missions in those countries, on private sector engagement, education initiatives and a future political process among Afghans. Finally, we lead collaboration among a core set of like-minded countries that maintain Afghanistan-specific missions in Doha, in the region and back in Kabul.

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Our interests cannot be fully realized without incorporating diversity, equity, and inclusion into our implementation strategies. Women and girls are bearing the brunt of Taliban ideology: they have diminishing access to life-saving assistance and health care and are shut out of public spaces, the workplace, and – devastatingly – the education system. They have been disadvantaged in the relocation process. Clear, constant advocacy on their behalf is an imperative, as is coordination on messaging and action in the international community. Amid disinformation sponsored by America’s enemies, conspiracy theories fueled by Afghan mistrust and the still high emotions among the many players seeking to make sense of the collapse of our 20-year investment, public diplomacy informs all our strategies.

**To achieve an Afghanistan that is at peace with itself and its neighbors and does not pose a threat to the United States or its partners,** we pursue appropriate CT cooperation bilaterally and in regional or multilateral fora. The Taliban opposes ISIS-K, creating opportunities for synergy and confidence-building measures. Sustainable security in Afghanistan does not depend on killing its enemies, but on the meaningful participation of all of Afghanistan’s citizens in Afghan life. With the Taliban, human rights must be framed as a national security imperative. With diaspora Afghans, we discourage support for a new armed conflict through resistance group proxies in Afghanistan – more violence or regime change is not the solution to the Taliban. Strategic public diplomacy campaigns that include like-minded allies, the UN family, Muslim majority countries and Afghanistan’s neighbors are crucial to counter disinformation and promote dialogue.

**To alleviate suffering, build economic self-reliance, and transition to a private-sector-led economy,** we must simultaneously pump unprecedented amounts of humanitarian assistance into the country, convince the Taliban to adopt international economic norms and advocate tirelessly for education. We work with likeminded countries, regional countries, and international organizations to mitigate the effects of internal displacement and migration and offer protection to those Afghans with compelling protection concerns. Along with other donors, we collaborate on sustainable frameworks that reflect the realities of shrinking assistance. Reflecting those funding realities and to break Afghanistan out of its dependency

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paradigm, we develop economic confidence-building measures, advocate for an independent Afghan Central Bank, and advise Afghan banks seeking access to the international financial system. We prioritize private sector development, as does the Taliban, to encourage Afghan and regional investment; we urge the Taliban to see the necessity of economic opportunity that offers marginalized populations, particularly women, equity in the workplace. Counternarcotics is a shared interest with the Taliban. Alternative livelihoods for farmers must accompany the elimination of processing sites for refining methamphetamine precursors. Our economic messaging strategy explains – even as it distinguishes – U.S. actions and interests from those of China and other geo-political competitors.

Education is as much an economic imperative as it is a human right. To sustain any economic recovery in Afghanistan, we must promote meaningful access to education for women and girls at all levels, for women's right to work, and for full rights for all minority and marginalized populations.

**To promote a reconciliation dialogue among Afghans inside and outside the country and the meaningful participation of Afghans in a political process**, we work with civil society and human rights defenders on confidence-building measures to support the meaningful participation of a broad range of Afghan citizens in discussions about the future of Afghanistan. Outreach to Afghan diaspora, youth, women and civil society groups is not meant to reinforce their ties to us, but to build bridges among them and the Taliban. Access to information and free media is crucial to Afghan efforts to reconcile among themselves. We work with the Special Representative for Afghanistan, the Special Envoy for Afghan Women, Girls, and Human Rights and the international community, on public messaging strategies to complement our efforts.

**To support American citizens in need in Afghanistan and Afghan nationals relocating to the United States**, we work with Embassy Doha and the Qatari Government via a Protecting Power Arrangement (PPA). We are establishing SOPs to guide passport, repatriation and emergency assistance for/to American citizens in Afghanistan and building in-country networks to reach American citizens. With the Taliban we advocate for consular access, transparency and

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accountability for Americans; we also support the work of the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs to obtain the release of Americans unjustly detained. To support the relocation of eligible Afghans, we engage the Taliban on freedom of movement for properly documented Afghans and we process Afghans for both Special Immigrant Visas and Immigrant Visas.

The Afghanistan Affairs Unit (AAU) operates out of Doha until conditions permit a return to Kabul. With Afghanistan now as much a global community as it is a country, we must travel frequently to engage Afghan diaspora communities, former leaders, activists, and students/alumni of U.S. exchange programs. As such, the AAU must be as nimble as possible in how it connects with the Afghan people. The disturbing reporting flowing from contacts in Afghanistan combined with the daily accumulation of negative stories relayed by Afghan SIV applicants, the uncertain policy and resource environment, and the still emotionally charged correspondence on the failure of U.S. policy has created significant mental health challenges for all AAU personnel, some of whom are Afghans.

**We have two core management objectives:**

To establish an embassy-in-exile platform in Doha and other locations as determined:

- Recruit inclusively for effective expeditionary diplomacy.
- Obtain sufficient resources for travel to engage diaspora and regional partners.
- Obtain appropriate mental health resources.
- Ensure strong communications with Doha MGT as an ICASS customer.

To participate in Return-to-Kabul planning:

- Establish best practices with like-minded missions on travel to and in Kabul.
- Implement PPA provisions related to oversight of USG facilities in Kabul.
- Map interagency security capabilities to support travel to Kabul.
- Participate in prudent planning discussions with Washington and Doha-based colleagues.

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## 2. Mission Strategic Framework

**Mission Goal 1:** Afghanistan is at peace with itself and its neighbors and does not pose a threat to the United States or U.S. allies/partners.

- **Mission Objective 1.1:** U.S. engagement prevents the territory of Afghanistan from being used to conduct terrorist attacks on the United States or any other country.
- **Mission Objective 1.2:** U.S. engagement promotes cooperation between Afghanistan and regional countries on counterterrorism, border security, countering human trafficking, counternarcotics, combatting transnational crime, and limited and strategic information-sharing.
- **Mission Objective 1.3:** U.S. engagement supports a peaceful and enduring end to armed conflict inside Afghanistan.

**Mission Goal 2:** The United States promotes and contributes to an economically self-reliant Afghanistan that can one day meet its basic needs, integrate into the international economy, and spur private sector-led growth.

- **Mission Objective 2.1:** Promote practices and policies that increase the transparency and accountability of the Afghan banking system, expand public access to legitimate financial tools and resources, and enable Afghanistan's return to the international economy.
- **Mission Objective 2.2:** Promote the inclusion of a diverse and well-equipped Afghan workforce.
- **Mission Objective 2.3:** Sustain vulnerable Afghans' safe access to basic services that meet minimum quality standards while messaging that such assistance is not indefinitely sustainable.

**Mission Goal 3:** Afghans are engaged in dialogue inside and outside the country, focused on contributing to reconciliation, reaffirming Afghanistan's diversity and looking to the future.

- **Mission Objective 3.1:** U.S. engagement promotes the full participation of Afghan society, including women and members of minority groups, in a diverse and inclusive manner.
- **Mission Objective 3.2:** U.S. engagement maintains the Afghan people's access to accurate information that informs their perceptions of good governance, through independent media.

**Mission Goal 4:** The U.S. government develops the staff, relationships, and physical infrastructure necessary to safely support U.S. citizens in need in Afghanistan and Afghan nationals relocating to the United States.

- **Mission Objective 4.1:** Establish and strengthen working partnerships with Qatar-based counterparts and allies operating in-country to expand the mission's ability to provide essential American citizen services in Afghanistan.
- **Mission Objective 4.2:** The AAU builds out the appropriate physical infrastructure and secures the staffing necessary to safely and efficiently provide scalable visa services to Afghans identified for relocation to the United States.

**Management Objective 1:** The AAU maintains the diverse, skilled, and equipped staff needed, enhances the operational effectiveness of its management and security platform, knowledge management practices, and coordinates with Washington offices to safely advance current and future USG policies in Afghanistan and to ensure sufficient resourcing for AAU operations, whether physically based in Qatar, Afghanistan, or elsewhere.

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**Management Objective 2:** The AAU deepens awareness of the security and operating environment in Afghanistan and establishes the processes necessary to protect U.S. capital investments, assistance funds, and policy effectiveness in Afghanistan, including through intermittent travel to Afghanistan once/as approved by the Department of State.

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### 3. Mission Goals and Objectives

**Mission Goal 1** | Afghanistan is at peace with itself and its neighbors and does not pose a security threat to the United States or U.S. allies/partners.

**Description** | Goal 1 advances the National Security Strategy commitment to a stable and secure Afghanistan. It is thus in the vital U.S. interest to press Afghan leaders, including the Taliban, for fulfillment of Afghanistan's counterterrorism commitments. The U.S. interest is further advanced by a demonstrated and sustained commitment by the "relevant authorities" of Afghanistan to a strong foundation for rule of law and good governance, including fiscal transparency, to prevent violent extremism, radicalization, and threats to Afghans.

**Objective 1.1** | U.S. engagement prevents the territory of Afghanistan from being used to conduct terrorist attacks on the United States or any other country.

- **Justification** | In the Doha Agreement dated February 29, 2020, Afghanistan guaranteed "to prevent the use of Afghan soil by any international terrorist groups or individuals against the security of the United States and its allies." The Doha Agreement also set out as a goal "a sovereign, unified Afghanistan at peace with itself and its neighbors." Preventing the growth of terrorist groups in Afghanistan will bolster U.S. security and contribute to regional stability. Moreover, upon the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021, the White House committed to the American people that it would take steps to hold the "relevant authorities" in Afghanistan accountable for securing Afghan territory from use by terrorists.
- **Linkages** | The success of this objective is linked to the White House's 2022 National Security Strategy

- **Risks** | An external risk is that Afghanistan's capacity and approaches to counterterrorism are uneven and, as of mid-2023, based on Taliban assessments of risk versus usefulness, undermining a principled, uniform commitment. The worst potential outcome is an attack on the United States or a partner or ally. Post can mitigate those risks through monitoring and appropriate information-sharing among partners.

**Objective 1.2** | U.S. engagement promotes cooperation between Afghanistan and regional countries on counterterrorism, border security, countering human trafficking, counternarcotics, combatting transnational crime, and limited and strategic information-sharing.

- **Justification** | In the Doha Agreement, Afghanistan committed to preventing "any international terrorist groups or individuals, including al-Qa'ida and ISIS-K, from using Afghan soil to threaten the security of the United States, its allies and other countries." However, the porosity of Afghanistan's borders, institutional weakness of its security apparatus, economic interdependence with its neighbors, and cross-border familial/ethnic/tribal bonds have existed for years. These interlinkages introduce the possibility that insecurity in Afghanistan will have security implications for neighboring countries. Particularly for as long as the international community is not directly investing in the capacity of local security entities, but even beyond, regional cooperation will be required to prevent regional contagion.
- **Linkages** | The success of this objective is linked to Goals Two and Three. The outcome of Mission work on this objective could have a bearing on Management Objective Two.
- **Risks** | An external risk is historical mis/distrust between the Taliban and various neighboring countries (or specific groups within neighboring countries) that could undermine constructive, pragmatic cooperation between them or worse. Afghanistan's internal economic challenges could drive Afghans to pursue illicit means of income generation even if security personnel are committed to working against these means or if key decisionmakers oppose such illicit means of income generation.

**Objective 1.3** | U.S. engagement supports a peaceful and enduring end to armed conflict inside Afghanistan.

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- **Justification** | Decades of conflict combined with historical grievances, resource disparities, and differing views on the future of the country place Afghanistan at great risk of a return to internal conflict if not addressed. While any solution to Afghanistan's internal divisions must be Afghan owned and Afghan led, the international community can play a supporting role.
- **Linkages** | The success of this objective is linked to Goals Two and Three. The outcome of Mission work on this objective could have a bearing on Management Objective Two.
- **Risks** | An internal risk is that USG (or external) fingerprints on an intra-Afghan dialogue could delegitimize and reduce the efficacy of such a process. An external risk is that without international encouragement, Afghanistan's disparate constituencies may not choose peaceful means by which to express their grievances and/or seek change, risking the country's return to civil conflict and/or armed balkanization of the country.

**Mission Goal 2** | The United States promotes and contributes to an economically self-reliant Afghanistan that can one day meet its basic needs, integrate into the international economy, and spur private sector-led growth.

**Description** | Goal 2 advances the National Security Strategy commitment to invest in the economic development of other countries to reduce the likelihood of instability, violence, and mass migration. It is thus in the U.S. interest to promote a self-reliant, stable Afghan economy plugged into international financial networks that will facilitate cross-border trade, sustainable and inclusive economic opportunity and growth, and domestic job creation. Accomplishing this goal requires inclusion and participation by all members of society, giving Afghans the tools to be able to contribute to and sustain the national private sector, and deepening the connection between international norms and domestic fiscal policy decision-making.

**Objective 2.1** | Promote practices and policies that increase the transparency and accountability of the Afghan banking system, expand public access to legitimate financial tools and resources, and enable Afghanistan's return to the international economy

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- **Justification** | The stable, inclusive growth of the Afghan economy will depend on a healthy workforce with access to water, healthcare, and sanitation. The inclusive provision of basic services contributes to community and ultimately, national stability. Conversely, widespread disease, humanitarian needs, food insecurity, and population displacement weaken the workforce and, by extension, national economic growth and stability. Taliban-imposed restrictions on the movement, employment, and social participation of Afghan women and girls has limited that population's access to basic services and significantly worsened their living conditions and vulnerability.
- **Linkages** | Objective 2.1 supports three JSP Strategic Objectives: Strategic Objective 2.1, "Promote a global economy that creates opportunities for all Americans"; Strategic Objective 2.2 "Support inclusive and sustainable growth and opportunity for communities around the globe"; and Strategic Objective 2.4, "Strengthen U.S. and global resilience to economic, technological, environmental, and other systemic shocks."
- **Risks** | External risks of not accomplishing this objective are Afghanistan's continued economic decline, making it vulnerable to instability, pervasive civil unrest, state failure, state collapse, desperation, destitution, or ungoverned spaces that could become breeding grounds for extremism and radicalization. A companion risk is that the Taliban has openly eschewed international norms as the basis of its decisions, potentially undermining the use of international standards for AMF/CTF governance. Additionally, the Taliban has appointed 1988 Sanctions-listed persons in decisional positions, such as the so-called governor and so-called deputy governor of the Afghan Central Bank. Internal risks are a loss of political will to make frozen assets available to Afghanistan, such that financial decision-makers in Afghanistan will be less incentivized to taking action in furtherance of this objective.

**Objective 2.2** | Promote the inclusion of a diverse and well-equipped Afghan workforce.

- **Justification** | Afghanistan cannot achieve the economic sustainability or self-reliance necessary to preserve political and social stability without the full inclusion and participation of all members of society in its economy. Female entrepreneurs play a key role in economic recovery, adding substantially to economic growth and poverty reduction. Nearly one in five Afghans suffers from a congenital or conflict-induced disability. Taliban-imposed restrictions on the movement, education, employment, and social participation of Afghan women and girls have significantly worsened their living conditions and vulnerability, violated women’s rights, and prevented the development of the skilled workforce on whom a sustainable Afghan economy will rely. Taliban failure to view persons with disabilities not as capable contributors to the economy diverts their attention from providing reasonable accommodations that would enable this population to integrate into the workforce.
- **Linkages** | In addition to supporting JSP Strategic Objectives 2.1, 2.2, and 2.4, ICS Objective 2.2 also supports JSP Strategic Objective 3.2, “Advance equity, accessibility, and rights for all.” JSP Strategic 3.2 notes systemic inequality is a national security threat that exacerbates economic disparities and contributes to violent extremism.
- **Risks** | External risks include the fact that excluding such a significant portion of the population from education and the economy wastes talent, breeds resentment and disaffection, and exacerbates ethnic fissures among populations that harbor divergent attitudes towards the role of women and other vulnerable populations in society. An economy that does not enable entrepreneurship will stagnate and fail. Despite these known facts, another risk is that Taliban policies and/or negligence may continue to preclude women and other vulnerable populations’ full participation in the economy and/or access to education and workforce training. Internal risks are that funding, earmarks, or Taliban/security/other operational restrictions may hinder the AAU’s ability to meet as much need as exists.

**Objective 2.3** | Sustain vulnerable Afghans’ safe access to basic services that meet minimum quality standards while messaging that such assistance is not indefinitely sustainable.

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- **Justification** | The stable, inclusive growth of the Afghan economy will depend on a healthy workforce with access to water, healthcare, and sanitation. The inclusive provision of basic services contributes to community and ultimately, national stability. Conversely, widespread disease, humanitarian needs, food insecurity, and population displacement weaken the workforce and, by extension, national economic growth and stability. Taliban-imposed restrictions on the movement, employment, and social participation of Afghan women and girls has limited that population's access to basic services and significantly worsened their living conditions and vulnerability.
- **Linkages** | Objective 2.3 focuses on providing humanitarian and basic human needs to the most vulnerable Afghans, meeting critical needs and sustaining basic services through economic difficulties.
- **Risks** | Risks associated with not accomplishing this objective include rising poverty levels, preventable disease outbreaks, the possibility of famine, fewer opportunities for meaningful employment, and increased population displacement (both within the country and abroad). Simultaneously, there are risks to implementing partners who deliver this assistance in an environment rife with threats from the Taliban and/or criminal/extremist actors. Finally, there remains the risk that the Taliban will seek to covertly or overtly divert USG aid, contravening U.S. legislative restrictions.

**Mission Goal 3** | Afghans are engaged in dialogue inside and outside the country, focused on contributing to reconciliation, reaffirming Afghanistan's diversity and looking to the future.

**Description** | With this goal, the Mission seeks to support inclusive internal decision-making on the policies and resource allocations that govern daily life, establish or deepen the USG's connections to current and rising influencers with whom we can partner on U.S. priorities in Afghanistan, and promote the democratic values, rule of law, and transparent, representative, and responsive institutions that will enable Afghanistan's long-term peace, stability, and security and connectivity to/cooperation with the international community.

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**Objective 3.1** | U.S. engagement promotes the full participation of Afghan society, including women and members of minority groups, in a diverse and inclusive manner.

- **Justification** | Inclusive decision-making and international norm-informed policy making that upholds international human rights norms, raises awareness, and provides advocacy to challenges to human rights and fundamental freedoms not only honors the rights, needs, and perspectives of the various communities that make up Afghanistan, it reduces the likelihood that those communities will resort to the violence and/or extremist activity that makes Afghanistan (or groups operating from Afghanistan) a threat to the United States or its allies.
- **Linkages** | This goal is linked to Goals 1 and 2, as well as to the White House’s commitment to the American people, made following our withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021, that we would “continue to speak out for basic rights of the Afghan people, especially women and girls” and make “human rights will be the center of our foreign policy.”
- **Risks** | Internal risks include: many USG-trained civil society representatives have departed Afghanistan, reducing the subject matter expertise available to advocate for these constructive ways of working as well as organizations with which the Mission can partner on this work. The U.S. and other foreign assistance that sustained this work from 2001-2021 is also significantly reduced which, given the scope and scale of the need that exists in Afghanistan, means that the Mission will have to be especially judicious and creative in the use of its funds. External risks include: the current leadership of the country is extremely sensitive to international criticism and simultaneously dismissive of international norms, risking reactionary, destructive responses to the USG’s well-intentioned engagement and programmatic support. In the end, if Afghans have no say in their own government, there is a risk that they will resort to violence to achieve the ends they seek.



**Objective 3.2** | U.S. engagement maintains the Afghan people's access to accurate information that informs their perceptions of good governance, through independent media.

- **Justification** | The post-August 2021 leadership of Afghanistan has significantly curtailed Afghans' connectivity to the broader world, suppressing their access to independent barometers of their leaders' performance and reducing counterfactuals to harmful or extremist rhetoric. Information is key to the Afghan people's ability to make rational, data-based decisions about the administration of the country and how they should be ready to contribute to the country's construction.
- **Linkages** | This objective is linked to Goals 1 and 2, as well as the White House's 2022 National Security Strategy.
- **Risks** | Internal risks are that our messaging will still not resonate with a broad swathe of the Afghan people; many want us to exert more control over domestic Afghan affairs than we can or should. External risks are that the Taliban will, if it becomes even more draconian, infiltrate and/or restrict the internet on which access to independent information relies.

**Mission Goal 4** | The U.S. government develops the staff, relationships, and physical infrastructure necessary to safely support U.S. citizens in need in Afghanistan and Afghan nationals relocating to the United States.

**Description** | The AAU is charged with facilitating the White House priority of the safe relocation of tens of thousands of former U.S. Embassy Kabul Locally Engaged Staff and/or Afghans eligible for P1/P2 refugee status in the United States, while providing service to U.S. citizens in Afghanistan despite the suspension of USG operations in Afghanistan. In the short-term, this goal envisions contingency planning, resource dedication, and facility identification for a dedicated consular workspace, both in Qatar and, eventually, in Afghanistan as security and policy conditions permit.

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**Objective 4.1** | Establish and strengthen working partnerships with Qatar-based counterparts and allies operating in-country to expand the mission's ability to provide essential American citizen services in Afghanistan.

- **Justification** | Given the USG's physical absence from the country, the opacity of the legal, security, and general operational environment in Afghanistan, and U.S. citizens prerogative to inform the USG of their presence in Afghanistan or adhere to USG warnings against travel to Afghanistan, providing timely services to U.S. citizens in Afghanistan is fraught. To meet the need that may exist, the AAU will need to develop multiple inroads, vantage points, and sources of information with access to and/or influence in the new Afghan operating environment.
- **Linkages** | Objective 4.1 supports overarching State Department priority to provide essential services to American citizens abroad and to take all appropriate and necessary measures to ensure their welfare. Additionally, Objective 4.1 furthers current strategic objectives in Afghanistan including the free movement of people into, out of, and within Afghanistan. Improving and operationalizing the existing Protecting Power Arrangement with Qatar, key to achieving this objective, also assists in furthering security and management objectives included in this strategy as the PPA contains components touching on those key goals, as well.
- **Risks** | Risks associated with not accomplishing this objective include leaving the AAU under resourced to provide the necessary ACS activity required of the mission. Should we fail to establish and maintain the necessary relationships, we lose potential access points that are scarce to begin with. An additional risk is the behavior of the Taliban, as its detention of multiple American citizens could indicate a tactical shift in its strategy regarding U.S. government engagement. Uncertain and frequently changing policy guidance from Washington in this field, as well as often competing policy instruction from different Department elements, risks confusion and mixed messaging to our counterparts, undermining AAU's ability to achieve this objective.

**Objective 4.2** | The AAU builds out the appropriate physical infrastructure and secures the staffing necessary to safely and efficiently provide scalable visa services to Afghans identified for relocation to the United States.

- **Justification** | The AAU was initially established as a “pop-up” ad hoc consular operation following the Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation and closure of Embassy Kabul in August 2021. It has since become the lynchpin of the White House’s envisioned 10 year-long effort to relocate tens of thousands of Afghans to the United States. This more enduring operation requires a transition from the current posture, reliant temporarily assigned staff in a building not fit for purpose, into a facility and staffing pattern more common to Consular Affairs standards of safety, functionality, and development of expertise. An improved physical infrastructure should allow for the growth and surge capacity that the current AAU consular workspace cannot accommodate, but on which continued relocation facilitation will rely. As the relocation effort continues and process efficiencies are identified, and as circumstances on the ground in Afghanistan stabilize, the AAU may be called upon to offer consular services in Afghanistan.
- **Linkages** | This objective links to: the White House’s commitment to the Afghan people who faithfully offered support to U.S. government and partner government efforts to bring peace to and defend the Afghan people from 2002-2021; the NSC priority of the freedom of movement of the Afghan people; consular priorities of facilitating legitimate travel to the United States while protecting border and national security through vigorous screening of visa applicants, and; U.S. commitment to reunifying Afghan families separated during the USG’s rapid withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021.
- **Risks** | Internally, a paramount risk of not achieving this objective is the safety and health of AAU consular personnel subjected to unsatisfactory workspace, especially as the duration of the mission extends. AAU consular staff are currently commingled with the Afghan population, and many Afghans exhibit rising levels of disgruntlement, which could lead to physical altercations or worse. Not achieving this objective could exacerbate mental health concerns among AAU consular personnel and lead to obstruct implementation of relocation priorities.

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## 4. Management Objectives

**Management Objective 1** | The AAU maintains the diverse, skilled, and equipped staff needed, enhances the operational effectiveness of its management and security platform, knowledge management practices, and coordinates with Washington offices to safely advance current and future USG policies in Afghanistan and to ensure sufficient resourcing for AAU operations, whether physically based in Qatar, Afghanistan, or elsewhere.

- **Justification** | The August 31, 2021, suspension of operations at U.S. Embassy Kabul necessitated the establishment of a U.S. diplomatic presence that could effectively represent U.S. interests to and regarding Afghanistan, now known as the Afghanistan Affairs Unit. The AAU operates from the U.S. Embassy Doha compound. As an embassy in exile, the AAU was established as an ICASS Doha customer, reliant on the Embassy Doha management platform. Increased communication and collaboration between ICASS service providers and AAU customers, will ensure the delivery work towards a better understanding of how management platforms and security platforms work together (i.e., AAU and Embassy Doha). Human resources support tailored to the unique conditions under which the AAU works will sustain the Mission's workforce for years to come.
- **Linkages** | Given that while in Doha, AAU personnel are under the COM authority of Embassy Doha, and that the AAU is an ICASS customer reliant on the Embassy Doha platform, there are clear ties between the AAU MGT, CONS, and RSO sections and their counterparts. Given that a large portion of AAU's resource and operational decisions rest in Washington, there are also clear linkages between the AAU and NEA-SCA/EX, DS/High Threat Programs, and the Bureau of Consular Affairs in Washington.

- **Risks** | Post's operational resources are subject to budget constraints; space constraints limit the size of the AAU's staffing footprint in Doha; decisions about the future of Afghanistan engagement are inchoate and the purview of Washington, limiting post's ability to plan concretely; Embassy Doha is rapidly expanding to assume responsibility for the Camp As-Sayliyah operation, taxing the Embassy Doha ICASS platform at the same time that AAU may be seeking to expand its footprint.

**Management Objective 2** | The AAU deepens awareness of the security and operating environment in Afghanistan and establish the processes necessary to protect U.S. capital investments, assistance funds, and policy effectiveness in Afghanistan, including through intermittent travel to Afghanistan once/as approved by the Department of State.

- **Justification** | Decision-making in Afghanistan is becoming more opaque to the international community. The USG remains accountable for significant amounts of diplomatic property in Afghanistan, millions of dollars of assistance into Afghanistan, and the provision of services to U.S. citizens remaining in Afghanistan. Through eventual AAU travel into Afghanistan, the USG might develop connections to Afghan decision-makers that affect our ability to protect the aforementioned interests and more efficiently advance key policy and operational priorities in Afghanistan. This travel may include key leader and Afghan public engagement, delivery of visa and American Citizens Services, monitoring and evaluation of the delivery of U.S.-funded assistance, and surveys of residual USG property. In the meantime, as a new Mission, the AAU must establish and/or collate and preserve the foundational operational and security information upon which decisions about how to best monitor enduring USG interests in Afghanistan.
- **Linkages** | The Protecting Power Arrangement with Qatar is a unifying element of protection of USG operational and security interests in Afghanistan.

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- **Risks** | External risks include a deterioration of the security environment in Afghanistan and/or additional Taliban restrictions on the freedom of movement for foreign nationals. Internal risks include the potential for insufficient financial resources, which will constrain the AAU ability to marshal the interagency and/or private security support for travel into Afghanistan. Washington's decision against accepting the risks associated with travel would also constrain the AAU's travel.