



# Integrated Country Strategy

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## CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

**FOR PUBLIC RELEASE**

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## 1. Chief of Mission Priorities

The U.S. Mission in the Central Africa Republic (CAR) advances two mutually reinforcing goals: **increasing stability** and **providing humanitarian assistance to Central Africans in need**. CAR remains one of the world's poorest and most unstable countries, despite decades of international and U.S. support to bring peace and stability. We base our strategy on U.S. national security priorities, including ending long-standing conflicts, promoting democracy, countering our adversaries, providing education and health as stabilizing factors, and alleviating food insecurity. Our partnerships with international organizations, like-minded countries, non-governmental organizations, and the Government of the Central African Republic (CARG) will help us achieve these goals.

The United States continues to partner with the CARG on efforts to bring peace and stability to its five million people. Since the last Mission CAR ICS in 2018, little progress has been made. President Touadera's decision to bring Russian Private Military Company (PMC) personnel into the Presidency, defense, customs, and increasingly the security forces will continue to limit the United States' ability to engage while Central Africans' vulnerability increases. In addition, his decision makes it increasingly difficult for the international community to effectively do peacekeeping, humanitarian, and development assistance activities. The United Nations has an 15,700-strong peacekeeping force, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSCA), in CAR since September 2014.

The December 2020 presidential elections marked a turning point, as they were disrupted by violence following the Constitutional Court's disqualification of former President Francois Bozize because of UN and U.S. sanctions and his pending international arrest warrant. Bozize's coalition of armed groups (CPC) prevented voting in approximately two-thirds of the country's districts and nearly overran Bangui in early 2021. The Constitutional Court however ruled that the elections were legitimate and Touadera was the winner.

As the 2020 election violence began, Touadera requested Russian Private Military Company (PMC) fighters from the Wagner Group. Wagner had been in CAR since 2018 but after their role in ending the 2020-2021 violence, the CARG increasingly relies on them for additional defense,

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offensive operations, and security support. MINUSCA, which lost seven peacekeepers during early 2021 fighting, also played a key role in countering the CPC offensive.

Over the course of 2021, PMC elements, working ever more closely with CAR's Armed Forces (FACA), dealt the rebel coalition serious military setbacks. But PMC/FACA battlefield gains came at an exorbitant cost in human rights violations. In many cases, CAR's minority Muslim population was disproportionately targeted. The CARG took small steps to acknowledge the problem in an October 2021 Commission of Inquiry report, but the leaked report triggered very few prosecutions and convictions.

The PMC influx also drove armed groups to new tactics and weapons, including increased use of explosive devices. Their use disproportionately impacts civilians and limits provision of humanitarian assistance. In addition, the Wagner Group personnel infiltrated CAR's financial, customs, trade, and national security sectors, and mineral resources. Wagner also intensified wide-ranging disinformation campaigns to discredit and harass MINUSCA and the French Embassy and has succeeded in turning large parts of the populace against traditional CAR partners.

As a result, traditional partners have scaled back assistance programs, especially budget support and the security sector. After numerous end-use monitoring violations of donated materials, the United States suspended most cooperation with the FACA in mid-2021. Prior to the United States move, France severed relations with the FACA for similar reasons and ended budgetary support. The European Union suspended its military training mission (EUTM) in December 2021 citing "reputational risk" of training CAR soldiers who would subsequently deploy under Russian command and commit human rights violations. While the EU resumed "education" work with the FACA in February 2022, it is likely to withhold budget support in 2023.

The civil unrest following the 2020 elections also suspended work under the 2019 agreement for peace and reconciliation (APPR) and under the 2016 RCPCA (National Rebuilding and Peace Consolidation Plan) until late 2021. In addition, the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) initiated its own process notionally designed to bring the CPC rebel groups back

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into the APPR fold. The CARG however failed to define processes links, timelines, donor support requirements, and outcomes. Commitments under these processes proceeded slowly.

The fallout from the December 2020 presidential elections will affect the U.S./CAR bilateral relationship through 2025, the end of President Touadera's five-year term. The combination of work on humanitarian, human rights, and justice issues under our Strong Institutions/Effective Forces (IDFE) bilateral framework agreement and countering Wagner's influence together with our international partners will generate additional lines of effort. While the CARG is open to alternatives to Wagner and the international community is looking at possible alternatives, whether political will and funding exists remains to be seen.

The fluid environment and the transition to a New Embassy Compound currently scheduled for completion in 2027 will drive increased staffing needs across sections in Management, the United States Agency for International Development, Political/ECON, and the Regional Security Office.

Over the 2022 – 2026 horizon, we have three objectives:

**Increase Stability through International and Regional Community, MINUSCA, and CAR Government (CARG) Engagement:**

As the peace process (APPR) enters its fourth year, momentum has faded as the CARG favors a Wagner Group-led military solution to the CPC rebellion, despite the human rights, governance, and other fallout that choice entails. The Mission will focus on ensuring CARG stakeholders remain committed to working on solutions to CAR's political and security crises. The USG and other partners, including MINUSCA, the EU, the World Bank (WB) have supported virtually all aspects of the APPR process, from government/armed group negotiations to Demobilization, Disarmament, Reintegration, and Repatriation work. It is important that this involvement continues.

MINUSCA will continue to play the lead role in safeguarding security in CAR for civilians and humanitarian workers. Mission Bangui will continue to work to ensure through engagement with the Department's Bureau of International Organizations and our United Nations Mission

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that MINUSCA's mandate is responsive and that it receives the resources (the United States contributes approximately 28 percent) and troop numbers it needs to accomplish its objectives. Local engagement with leading regional partners will also be critical to drive creative thinking designed to develop effective, African-led security alternatives that will enable the CARG to slow and reverse its growing reliance on Russian PMCs.

Bolstering the Rule-of-Law is another critical component in increasing stability. The State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs should continue to invest to improve the Police, the Gendarmerie, corrections, and the judiciary. Through the Regional Security Office (RSO), the Special Program for Embassy Augmentation and Response (SPEAR) should continue to increase interoperability and foster relationships with Police and Gendarmerie to provide enhanced law enforcement training. But for the foreseeable future, we will need to evaluate continued engagement against reputational risk which will increase demands on Mission resources.

**Humanitarian Assistance Reaches Central Africans in Need:**

The United States remains CAR's single largest humanitarian donor, with approximately \$180 million in assistance provided primarily by the United States Agency for International Development's Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs and the State Department's Bureau of Populations, Migration, and Refugees. There are approximately 680,000 Internally Displaced People (IDP) in CAR and another approximately 700,000 CAR refugees sheltering primarily in the DRC, ROC, Cameroon, and Chad. CAR is a dangerous security environment for local populations and humanitarian workers. These groups are often subject to physical violence, theft, and harassment.

CAR's complicated situation calls for a strategy focused on conflict response and post-conflict recovery. We must also consider transition to longer-term reconstruction and development initiatives where appropriate. The U.S. government (USG) expects to continue to provide water, food, sanitation, hygiene, logistics, health, shelter support for IDPs and refugees; while taking into consideration the USG agenda on biodiversity conservation, climate change, and community development around protected areas in CAR and the Congo Basin. We will

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continue to focus on the return and resettlement of these populations. Additionally, health development programming will improve access to quality maternal and child health care; fight against infectious diseases; strengthen immunization coverage and the broader health system; improve care-seeking behaviors for critical health services; and build resilience and self-reliance by supporting facility- and community-based interventions. A new sector for the USG will be education, which is sorely needed, as CAR's children have an average of four years of schooling and a primary completion rate of 41%.

**Move to a New Embassy Complex, Ensure USDH and LE Staff Staffing Levels Permit the Forwarding of USG Policy Objectives, Align Post Operations with Department Best Practices:**

Over the 2022 – 2026 period, Embassy Bangui will likely remain an unaccompanied, Special Incentives Post where personnel receive significant hardship, danger pay, and cost-of-living compensation. Post will remain small and difficult to staff even as substantive challenges multiply and become more complex.

Post purchased land for a New Embassy Complex (NEC) in 2019 with the hope that a new NEC will be finished by 2027. Post envisions some Facilities difficulties continuing even with a NEC, since finding trained technicians to operate new building automation systems (BAS) and sourcing their replacement parts will be difficult in Bangui.

## 2. Mission Strategic Framework

**Mission Goal 1:** Increase Stability through international and regional community, MINSUCA, and CARG engagement.

- **Mission Objective 1.1:** International community work on all peace process components is coordinated.
- **Mission Objective 1.2:** Help improve Central Africans' security environment by empowering CARG security forces and state institutions to fully assume their responsibilities.
- **Mission Objective 1.3:** Central African Government efficiency and accountability improve in all sectors, particularly in the justice and internal security lanes.

**Mission Goal 2:** Assistance reaches Central Africans in need.

- **Mission Objective 2.1:** Increased USAID Mission staffing responds to growing humanitarian and development challenges.
- **Mission Objective 2.2:** International partner coordination maximizes effectiveness of humanitarian and development activities and minimizes waste and duplication of effort.
- **Mission Objective 2.3:** Engagement of a diverse representation of civil society ensures the needs, interests, and contributions of the most at risk or marginalized (gender equality, LGBTQI+, persons with disabilities) are addressed.

**Management Objective 1:** Embassy Bangui is appropriately staffed to meet Mission Goals and Management Objectives.

**Management Objective 2:** Post Operations Align with Department Best Practices.

**Management Objective 3:** Mission CAR facilities Operate Safely and Securely.



### 3. Mission Goals and Objectives

**Mission Goal 1** | Increase stability through international, regional, MINSUCA, and CARG engagement.

**Description** | While Mission CAR recognizes our important convening role and multilateral influence, which we can use to coordinate the international community's engagement on CAR's peace process and influence the role MINUSCA plays in CAR, our discrete investments in the justice sector can also help improve the quality of judicial institutions, thus strengthening rule of law. In the long term, these efforts will support greater stability.

**Objective 1.1** | International community work on peace process components is coordinated.

- **Justification** | Peace process activities have too often overlapped, impacting timelines, creating redundancies, and reducing efficiency.
- **Linkages** | AF JRS Objective 1.1 and 1.2; Interim NSS Priority: "Recommitting to Alliances and Partnerships to Tackle Crisis and Challenge"
- **Risks** | Lack of coordination leads to inefficiencies that reduce the effectiveness of international community contributions to peace processes.

**Objective 1.2** | Help improve Central Africans' security environment by empowering CARG security forces and state institutions to fully assume these responsibilities.

- **Justification** | It appears unlikely the CARG will be able to provide for security in-county over the life of the 2022 – 2026 ICS strategy.
- **Linkages** | AF JRS Objective 1.2 and 3.1; Interim NSS Priority: "Realizing and Defending Democratic Values"
- **Risks** | Lack of trained CARG security forces and capable, mature state institutions prevent or slow improvements in CAR's security environment and restoration of state authority.

**Objective 1.3** | Central African Government efficiency and accountability improve in all sectors, particularly in the justice and internal security lanes.

- **Justification** | CAR's criminal justice system suffers from inadequate staff who are poorly trained, inadequately equipped and funded. Ongoing and significant engagement in these lanes will be required to address these shortcomings.
- **Linkages** | AF JRS Objective 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, and 3.1; Interim NSS Priority: "Realizing and Defending Democratic Values"
- **Risks** | Failure to bolster justice and security sector institutions slows or prevent improvements in CAR's security situation, hinders extension of state authority, and worsens the overall human rights situation in-country.

**Mission Goal 2** | Assistance reaches Central Africans in need.

**Description** | Maintain principled humanitarian assistance based on needs and create a strong coordination with development and other programs working to address the root cause of the crisis.

**Objective 2.1** | Increase USAID Mission staffing to respond to growing humanitarian and development challenges.

- **Justification** | USG leadership is needed to ensure efficiency of humanitarian and development assistance in CAR by participating in donor and government coordination, oversight of multilateral contributions, and program design and monitoring.
- **Linkages** | AF JRS Objective 1.4, 4.1, and 4.3; Interim NSS Priority: "Recommitting to Alliances and Partnerships to Tackle Crisis and Challenge"
- **Risks** | USG budgetary and personnel constraints hinder Embassy Bangui's ability to respond effectively to CAR's humanitarian and development challenges.

**Objective 2.2** | International partner coordination maximizes effectiveness of humanitarian and development assistance and minimizes waste and duplication of effort.

- **Justification** | USG contribution to building CAR institutions is key during 2022-2026, in order to stabilize the country and make sure CARG owns its development strategies.
- **Linkages** | AF JRS Objective 1.4, 4.1, and 4.3; Interim NSS Priority: “Recommitting to Alliances and Partnerships to Tackle Crisis and Challenge”
- **Risks** | Lack of coordination leads to gaps and overlaps in international community contributions to humanitarian and development assistance which could cause an already-alarming humanitarian and development situation to worsen.

**Objective 2.3** | Engagement of a diverse representation of Civil Society ensures the needs, interests, and contributions of the most at risk or marginalized (gender equality, LGBTQI+, persons with disabilities) are addressed.

- **Justification** | Addressing the needs of CAR’s most vulnerable populations passes through increased engagement with stakeholders from those communities.
- **Linkages** | AF JRS Objective 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3; Interim NSS Priority: “Realizing and Defending Democratic Values”
- **Risks** | Absent tailored engagement, discreet and urgent needs of these at-risk communities may go unmet.

## 4. Management Objectives

**Management Objective 1 |** Embassy Bangui is appropriately staffed to meet Mission Goals and Management Objectives.

- **Justification |** Mission CAR relies heavily on LE Staff for continuity of operations because over 75 percent of the U.S. Direct Hire (USDH) workforce serves 12 months tours of duty. Mission CAR benefits from long-serving, competent, standards of conduct-abiding LE staff who provide continuity, expertise, and contacts with local authorities and partners. Mission CAR likewise benefits from a full USDH workforce complement with the right skill sets to thrive in Bangui.
- **Linkages |** AF JRS MGMT Objective
- **Risks |** USG budgetary and personnel constraints, along with DOS SIP compensation packages, lead to less than full, at-grade staffing.

**Management Objective 2 |** Post Operations Align with Department Best Practices.

- **Justification |** One-year USDH tours of duty, uneven staffing, at-times inadequate training, and significant gaps between assignments even when positions are encumbered increase the incidence of fraud, waste, and abuse among local staff. Adherence to Department best practices will mitigate some of this downside.
- **Linkages |** AF JRS MGMT Objective
- **Risks |** Understaffed USDH positions result in less than adequate oversight and management controls.

**Management Objective 3 | Mission CAR facilities Operate Safely and Securely.**

- **Justification** | Maintaining a high-functioning and secure diplomatic platform is critical in Bangui's high-threat environment.
- **Linkages** | AF JRS MGMT Objective
- **Risks** | Understaffed USDH positions result in less than adequate oversight and management controls.