



Integrated Country Strategy

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

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1. Chief of Mission Priorities

The United States wishes Equatorial Guinea (EG) to be a reliable partner that is secure, prosperous, and well governed.

To achieve that end, Mission Malabo has three strategic goals:

- Strengthen Regional Security and Safeguard U.S. Interests
- Promote Economic Prosperity and Human Development
- Encourage Good Governance and Respect for Human Rights

Strengthen Regional Security and Safeguard U.S. Interests

Strengthening maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea is vital to the economic wellbeing of all Atlantic Ocean states and is critical to EG's core economic engine, its offshore oil and gas industry. That industry has strong U.S. connections, as most of the companies with ongoing hydrocarbon exploration and development are either American or supported by American financial institutions. Malabo, located on Bioko Island in the middle of the Gulf of Guinea, is a key strategic location for enhancing regional maritime security, and at the same time is vulnerable. A 2020 attack on EG's Punta Europa gas complex on Bioko starkly illustrated that vulnerability and prompted the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea (GREG) to take initial steps to improve its defenses. The Mission will work the GREG to strengthen the country's capacity to monitor and patrol its territorial waters. We will encourage greater security coordination and collaboration with EG's neighbors and the private sector to confront the transnational threats of piracy and illicit trafficking. We will seek cooperation on mutual legal assistance and extraditions, which will enhance efforts to counter human trafficking and other transnational crimes.

Up to 500 U.S. citizens live in Equatorial Guinea at any given time. The safety and well-being of Americans is our highest priority. The Mission will continue to provide high quality consular and business advocacy services to all U.S. citizens throughout the country. We will combat visa fraud, protect U.S. borders, and encourage legitimate travel.

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Promote Economic Prosperity and Human Development

Declining oil and gas output has made economic diversification an urgent priority for EG, but the government has made little concrete progress to date. There is potential for investment and growth driven by the agriculture and tourism sectors which would require policy reforms as well as significant improvements in the business operating environment.

Equatorial Guinea will only attract and retain foreign investment if it takes steps to improve its governance and business climate. As a middle-income country, EG is not eligible for development assistance from international institutions or foreign donors and often relies on the social responsibility projects of U.S. companies. In the past 15 years, the GREG has invested heavily in infrastructure. The country has modern highways, airports, ports, power-generating facilities, communications networks, government buildings, and government backed housing developments. EG's economy, however, shares many similarities of a lower income economy, with widespread unemployment, poverty and inadequate social services. In particular, a lack of investment in education and health care have led to worsening indicators. Overall, inadequate human capital development is impeding the country's development.

The Mission will support youth and women entrepreneurs and encourage the GREG to improve the doing business indicators to remove impediments to growth. We will seek opportunities for U.S. investment, including in areas outside the energy sector. We will continue efforts to promote English language learning, including through a popular community instruction program, to enhance EG's connection to global markets and increase economic opportunity. We will deepen our partnerships with the private sector and leverage our alumni networks to identify and support local changemakers who are working to transform EG society for the better.

Encourage Good Governance and Respect for Human Rights

The United States has serious concerns about civil liberties, governance, and respect for the human rights of citizens and resident foreigners in the country. The ruling Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea (PDGE) controls virtually all aspects of political and economic life in EG. The

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few genuine opposition parties and civil society organizations in country face severe restrictions on their activities and are frequently prevented in public meetings from expressing their sentiments about improving the conditions in country. The media and the judiciary are not fully independent and are susceptible to government and political interference and influence.

The government uses several tactics to suppress economic, political, and social liberties, including tight controls on expression, economic activity, and minimal investment in the education of its population in order to undermine political activism. The government has no tolerance for actual or perceived dissent, which hampers not only political freedoms, but the country's ability to develop its potential.

The Mission will continue to encourage the GREG to engage in dialogue with civil society. We will support civil society leaders and assist NGOs to build their institutional capacity. We will encourage youth participation in community development and civic participation. Our highly professional embassy operations provide a concrete model of transparency and good governance in action that EG's citizens can observe as they interact with us.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: Strengthen Regional Security and Safeguard U.S. Interests

- **Mission Objective 1.1:** The GREG strengthens its military and maritime security capability to combat piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.
- **Mission Objective 1.2:** EG improves its adherence to its existing international commitments toward issues of global concern, including trafficking in persons, climate change, corruption, and human rights.

Mission Goal 2: Promote Economic Prosperity and Human Development

- **Mission Objective 2.1:** The GREG's policies eliminate obstacles to fair and transparent business practices, encouraging both domestic entrepreneurship and greater foreign investment.
- **Mission Objective 2.2:** Increased private-sector growth promotes a diversified economy, including in agriculture and tourism, and drives investment in human capital.
- **Mission Objective 2.3:** The GREG strengthens its ability to provide for the basic needs of its population, including social services, healthcare, education, and utilities.

Mission Goal 3: Encourage Good Governance and Respect for Human Rights

- **Mission Objective 3.1:** The GREG increases its adherence to existing human rights commitments, including the rights of women, LGBTQI+ individuals, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and immigrants.
- **Mission Objective 3.2:** Independent media outlets and civil society organizations improve their capacity to operate as watchdogs to increase governmental and fiscal transparency and promote good governance.

Management Objective 1: Improve the Embassy compound infrastructure to ensure continued operations and uphold quality of life for personnel.

Management Objective 2: Acquire adequate space to meet current and growing staffing needs.

Management Objective 3: Invest in training and skill-building for embassy staff to address gaps unique to local conditions.

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1 | Strengthen Regional Security and Safeguard U.S. Interests

Description | Equatorial Guinea is frequently isolated, both by choice and by actions seen as against international norms. Its geography in the midst of the Gulf of Guinea and on the African continent as part of the Congo Basin make it a strategically important beyond its small territorial size. The waters around Bioko Island are a major source of offshore oil and gas, while at the same time one of the most dangerous maritime regions for piracy in the world. The Congo Basin meanwhile is one of the planet's "lungs," and therefore a major element in tackling global climate change. But the GREG approaches potential international partners with great suspicion: more than once since its independence from colonial rule, attempts to overthrow the ruling regime have occurred with external backing. By identifying areas of mutual concern, such as protection of the nation's offshore oil and gas facilities and defense against piracy that also pose a threat to internal stability, we can make progress with EG toward our own policy priorities. In addition, by encouraging a stronger adherence to international norms and a greater participation in the international community, Equatorial Guinea's record on human rights, corruption, fiscal transparency, trafficking in persons, and maritime security could be improved.

Objective 1.1 | The GREG strengthens its military and maritime security capability to combat piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

- **Justification |** Maritime security is an important aspect of peace and prosperity for both the region and the United States. By improving maritime security, the embassy is better able to address the needs of numerous U.S. oil and gas companies, secure a strategic shipping environment, contribute to regional stability and prosperity, and enhance EG's potential to diversify the economy through safer trade routes.
- **Linkages |** JSP Goals 1.3, 1.4, 2.3

- **Risks** | Participation in international and regional agreements has been available to the GREG for several years, and the GREG has demurred at best and at worst signed agreements and then reneged.

Objective 1.2 | EG improves its adherence to its existing international commitments toward issues of global concern, including trafficking in persons, climate change, corruption, and human rights.

- **Justification** | The GREG is already a signatory to several important international commitments on issues of global concern. By encouraging the GREG to create and implement policies that bring those commitments into force, the embassy can work to improve the GREG's behavior on a variety of issues. TIP has been an area where progress has been seen on developing a National Action Plan, but much of those efforts have been driven by embassy personnel providing embassy programs and funding. By making inroads in economic and social areas the GREG deems "benign," we have the greatest chance of progress on more substantial constructive change.
- **Linkages** | JSP Goals 1.3, 1.4, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2
- **Risks** | While senior GREG officials seek greater legitimacy in the eyes of the global powers, they are unwilling to risk any loss of the regime's hold on power domestically.

Mission Goal 2 | Promote Economic Prosperity and Human Development

Description | Currently, the EG economy depends almost entirely on oil and gas. The business environment is opaque, and success in doing business depends mostly on personal connections rather than business acumen. The GREG also has a reputation for not honoring contracts or paying its debts, which reduces interest in investment. By working to diversify the economy away from oil and gas, the embassy can help create an economy more able to withstand global economic shocks and oil price fluctuations, as well as increase opportunities for individuals to earn livings in a variety of sectors. An entrepreneurial and stable economy is also an environment more conducive for U.S. business.

Objective 2.1 | The GREG's policies eliminate obstacles to fair and transparent business practices, encouraging both domestic entrepreneurship and greater foreign investment.

- **Justification |** Improving EG's business environment will reduce opportunities for corruption, increase opportunities for U.S. businesses, and create incentives for participation in the private sector, creating a more robust economy less dependent on specific sectors like public administration and oil and gas.
- **Linkages |** JSP Goals 1.3, 2.2, 2.3, 3.3
- **Risks |** Business interests are centralized in individuals with political power. Opening the business environment may threaten those individuals' incomes and therefore meet with some resistance at the ministry level. The GREG's non-payment reputation continues to disincentivize investment.

Objective 2.2 | Increased private-sector growth promotes a diversified economy, including in agriculture and tourism, and drives investment in human capital.

- **Justification |** Private sector growth will be key to promoting investment and participation beyond the oil and gas sector. Investment in human capital – more feasible in the private sector than in the overburdened public sector – is key to sustaining any investments in the private sector.
- **Linkages |** JSP Goals 1.3, 2.2, 2.3, 3.3
- **Risks |** Private sector growth depends on favorable business conditions, many of which will depend on government action and could be seen as competition.

Objective 2.3 | The GREG strengthens its ability to provide for the basic needs of its population, including social services, healthcare, education, and utilities.

- **Justification |** Current gaps in service provision mean that there are significant basic needs going unmet throughout the county. Coupled with corruption and a high tolerance for bucking international condemnation and norms, the GREG is not meeting the physical needs of its population – food, water, shelter, electricity, internet,

healthcare, education – are all lacking. There are significant opportunities for partnering with the GREG to build its capacity to provide services.

- **Linkages** | JSP Goals 1.3, 2.2, 2.3
- **Risks** | There are large gaps between the needs of the population and the ability of the government to meet those needs. There are risks that the government will not be able or willing to invest appropriate training or resources into the necessary areas to make a significant change.

Mission Goal 3 | Encourage Good Governance and Respect for Human Rights

Description | While Equatorial Guinea is classified as an upper middle-income country, its population has the same needs as a low-income country's population. By working to encourage the government's capacity and willingness to fulfil its obligations to the economic, political, and social needs of its population, the embassy will build increased government credibility and accountability, as well as increased prosperity for Equatoguineans.

Objective 3.1 | The GREG increases its adherence to existing human rights commitments, including the rights of women, LGBTQI+ individuals, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and immigrants.

- **Justification** | As previously noted, the GREG has already agreed to many flagship human rights conventions. It has not, however, fulfilled most of the obligations under those conventions. By holding the GREG accountable to its existing commitments, conversations around human rights can be tangible, specific, and actionable. Progress will be measured in increments in the near term.
- **Linkages** | JSP Goals 1.3, 2.2, 2.3
- **Risks** | Human rights and working with civil society have historically been sensitive areas of engagement for the GREG. Paranoia-driven oversight of civil society organizations as well as widespread harassment of human rights defenders limit the embassy's ability to act.

Objective 3.2 | Independent media outlets and civil society organizations improve their capacity to operate as watchdogs to increase governmental and fiscal transparency and promote good governance.

- **Justification** | Media and civil society organizations face significant obstacles as accountability checks on the GREG. By partnering with those organizations on building capacity, the embassy can begin to lay a foundation for future engagement under less-strict regimes, as well as begin patterns and cultures of engagement in the current operating environment.
- **Linkages** | JSP Goal 3.3
- **Risks** | Civil society organizations are subject to harassment and face obstacles in achieving their goals. Most activists engage in civil society work in addition to commitments as employees in private sector companies. Journalists operating in a media environment of near-total censorship, both self-censorship and due to fear of reprisals. There are only two pseudo-independent digital media outlets, but the most widespread outlets with the greatest reach are state-run or state-owned.

4. Management Objectives

The Management Team is working to address infrastructure and operational priorities to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and service delivery. The Mission needs to support current space requirements along with additional growth by coordinating with the State Department's Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO). Post urgently needs additional office space and workspace, and improved warehouse space and functionality. While these plans are created and executed, the Management Team is working to identify ways to support current requirements within existing space constraints.

Management Objective 1 | Improve the Embassy compound infrastructure to ensure continued operations and uphold quality of life for personnel.

- **Justification |** Current Embassy compound is a Standard Secure Mini-Compound opened nine years ago. Deterioration of wood structures, electrical systems and plumbing are affecting the usability of residences and facilities. Recreation facilities that are unique to Malabo are in disrepair. Security systems and gates need replacement or refurbishing.
- **Linkages |** AF Joint Regional Strategy Goal 4 -Revitalize the diplomatic and development workforce and infrastructure; DS/C IM to OBO/PRE, Overseas Security Policy Board (OSPB) Standards' Application to New Leases dtd March 19, 2018; 21 STATE 64090 dtd June 21, 2021 –High Threat High Risk (HTHR) Post for 2021-2022.
- **Risks |** Failing infrastructure impacts on-compound residences, which make up the majority of USDH housing including six townhomes, the DCMR and the CMR. Some failures have affected the habitability of residences and contributed to pest infestations. Failures in the CAC limit access to the compound and perimeter lighting/monitoring systems leaving the compound exposed to external threats.

Management Objective 2 | Acquire adequate space to meet current and growing staffing needs.

- **Justification |** Design of the Embassy was limited in scope and does not adequately support current or projected mission requirements. Every available closet and some hallways have been converted to temporary offices and post still cannot provide space for current positions. Facilities has no workspace and very limited storage space. Current warehouse does not adequately protect inventory, has no dedicated receiving area, and is not configured to optimize space
- **Linkages |** AF Joint Regional Strategy Goal 4 - Revitalize the diplomatic and development workforce and infrastructure; DS/C IM to OBO/PRE, Overseas Security Policy Board (OSPB) Standards' Application to New Leases dtd March 19, 2018; 21 STATE 64090 dtd June 21, 2021 –High Threat High Risk (HTHR) Post for 2021-2022.
- **Risks |** Staff productivity and morale is limited by lack of desk space. Facilities cannot effectively support maintenance without workspace. Lack of proper receiving area challenges accurate inventory accountability and poor warehouse space leads to inefficient property management.

Management Objective 3 | Invest in training and skill-building for embassy staff to address gaps unique to local conditions.

- **Justification** | Education and training opportunities in Equatorial Guinea are limited and generally do not produce a professional workforce. Two years of COVID restrictions have limited DoS training opportunities. Mission has used internal training to the extent feasible, but to address shortcomings requires additional training.
- **Linkages** | JSP 4.1; Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce (EO 14035); Executive Order on Establishment of the White House Gender Policy Council (EO 14020); Memorandum on Revitalizing America's Foreign Policy and National Security Workforce, Institutions, and Partnerships; Executive Order on Protecting the Federal Workforce (EO 14003).
- **Risks** | Without sufficient training, staff performance and effective internal controls are limited.