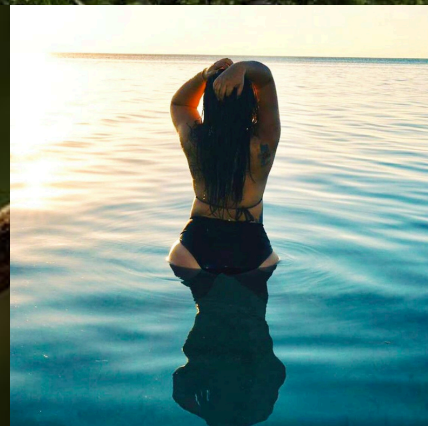
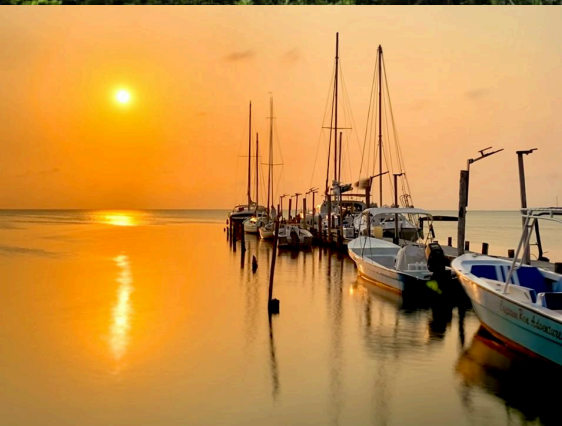


# NATIONAL TOURISM SECURITY STRATEGY 2025 - 2030



belize

## NATIONAL TOURISM SECURITY STRATEGY - FIVE YEAR PLAN

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### Acronyms

ATM	Actun Tunichil Mucnal
BATSUB	British Army Training Support Unit Belize
BCG	Belize Coast Guard
BDF	Belize Defence Force
BFD	Belize Fisheries Department
BMA	Belize Management Agency
BPA	Belize Port Authority
BPD	Belize Police Department
BTB	Belize Tourism Board
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CPR	cardiopulmonary resuscitation
GoB	Government of Belize
JET	Joint Enforcement Team
PPP	public-private partnerships
NEMO	National Emergency Management Organisation
NICH	National Institute of Culture and History
NTSS	National Tourism Security Strategy
OAS	Organisation of American States
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
TGs	Tour Guides
TOs	Tour Operators
TSTF	Tourism Security Task Force
TPU	Tourism Police Unit



**Hon. Anthony Mahler**

**Message from the Minister of Tourism, Youth, Sports  
and Diaspora Relations**

Tourism is the lifeblood of Belize's economy, a driver of growth, and a source of pride for every Belizean. As the Minister of Tourism, Youth, Sports and Diaspora Relations, I am acutely aware of the critical importance of ensuring that every visitor who graces our shores experiences not only the beauty of our country but also the safety and security we owe to them as our honored guests.

This **National Tourism Security Strategy** represents more than a policy document; it is a testament to our government's **unwavering commitment** to preserving Belize's position as a premier global destination. Our tourism sector stands as a beacon of opportunity, creating jobs, stimulating economic activity, and enhancing our national identity. Yet, as we strive to elevate this industry to new heights, we must also confront the challenges that threaten its continued success.

Since this administration took office, we have prioritized collaboration and innovation to address the unique risks posed by crime, natural disasters, and cross-border threats. We recognize that the security of our tourism sector cannot be achieved in isolation. It requires the active participation of all stakeholders: from the Belize Defence Force and the Police Department to our private sector partners and international allies.

This strategy marks a bold and decisive step forward. It outlines the path to strengthen our Tourism Police Unit by 60% over the next five years, ensuring that our security forces have the resources and training to meet today's challenges. It establishes the framework for formal joint response teams to act swiftly in times of crisis and builds the capacity of our personnel to be not only protectors but also ambassadors of Belize.

Let us be clear: the safety and security of our tourism sector are not negotiable. We will not allow criminal elements, natural disasters, or any other threats to undermine the economic progress and opportunities tourism provides for our people. Our government is committed to deploying every resource necessary to protect this vital pillar of our economy and to ensure that Belize remains a destination where visitors can explore, relax, and immerse themselves in the beauty of our country without fear.

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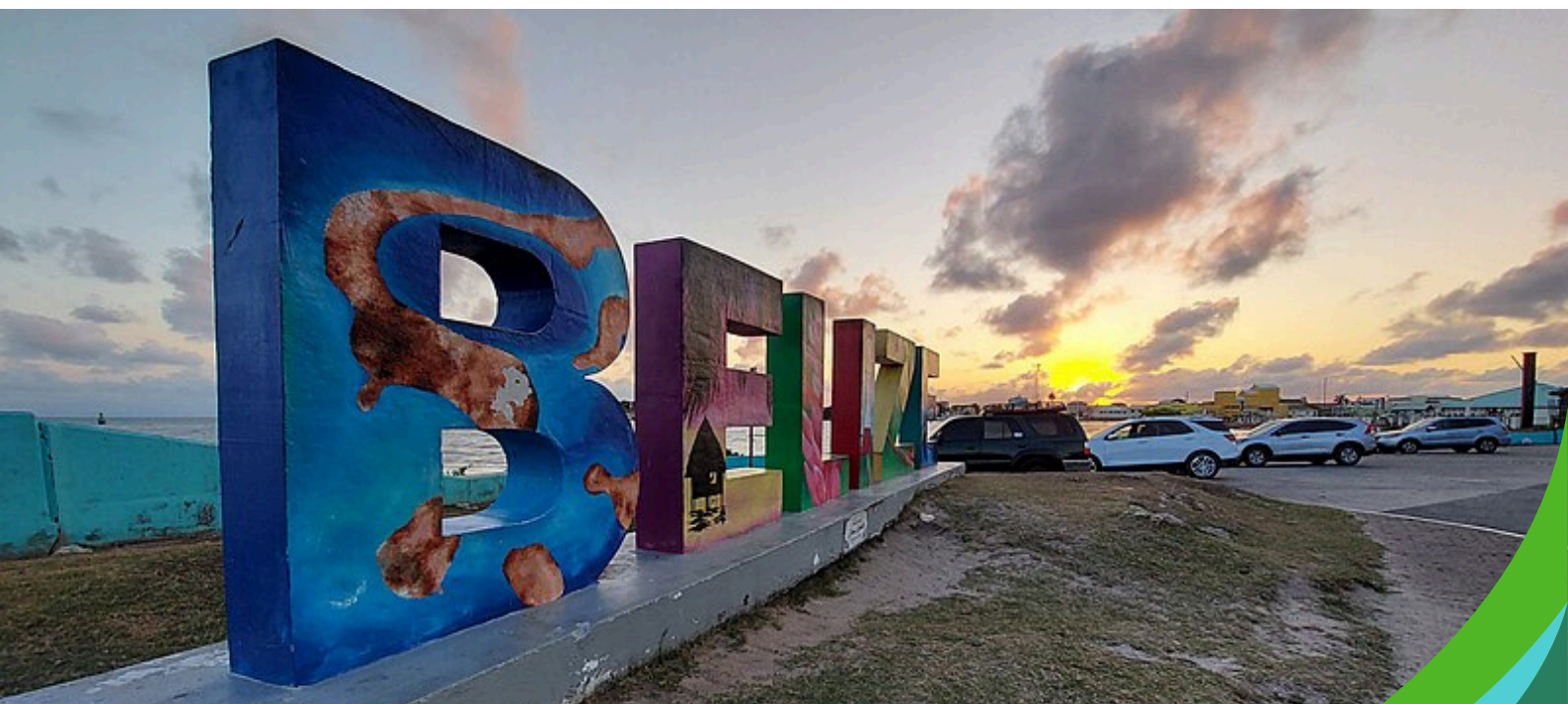
To the people of Belize, I say this: your Government stands resolute in its dedication to fostering a tourism industry that benefits all. Every Belizean, whether in the cities or rural areas, shares in the wealth and opportunity that tourism brings. And to our international visitors and partners, I assure you that Belize will continue to be a safe, welcoming, and unforgettable destination.

This strategy is not just a plan—it is a promise. A promise that Belize will continue to rise, stronger and more secure, ready to meet the demands of a dynamic global tourism landscape.

Together, let us build a future where tourism thrives as a source of pride, prosperity, and unity for all Belizeans.

**Hon. Anthony Mahler**

*Minister of Tourism, Youth, Sports and Diaspora Relations*  
Government of Belize





**Mr. Evan Tillett**  
Director of Tourism

### **Foreword**

As Director of Tourism, it is my privilege to present the National Tourism Security Strategy, a critical initiative that underscores our collective commitment to safeguarding Belize's vibrant and growing tourism industry. Tourism is not only a cornerstone of our economy but also a gateway through which the world experiences our rich cultural heritage, pristine natural landscapes and the warm hospitality of our people.

Since 2012, Belize has taken significant strides to strengthen security measures in its most remote and vulnerable tourist destinations. The establishment of the Tourism Police Unit and the collaboration between the Belize Police Department, the Belize Defence Force, and various public and private stakeholders have contributed to meaningful progress. However, as the scope and scale of tourism expand, so do the complexities of ensuring its safety and sustainability.

This Strategy serves as a roadmap for addressing an evolving range of challenges, from criminal activities and cross-border threats to natural disasters and the illicit exploitation of our cultural and ecological assets. It lays the foundation for a modernized, coordinated, and multi-agency approach to preemptive risk management, immediate response, and long-term capacity building.

The National Tourism Security Strategy outlines a comprehensive framework to enhance safety and security at all levels of the tourism sector. By realigning philosophies, formalizing response mechanisms, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement, this Strategy aims to modernize the tourism security apparatus over the next five years.

Key objectives include:

- A 60% increase in the strength of the Tourism Police Unit;
- A coordinated effort to address gaps in education, training and resources for security personnel;
- The establishment of standing joint response teams to manage incidents with precision and efficacy.

## NATIONAL TOURISM SECURITY STRATEGY - FIVE YEAR PLAN

These measures reflect our shared vision for a tourism sector that is resilient, secure, and capable of adapting to emerging challenges. Through this Strategy, the Belize Tourism Board reaffirms its dedication to working hand-in-hand with national and international partners to preserve the safety of both visitors and citizens while protecting the natural and cultural treasures that make Belize a world-class destination.

On behalf of the Belize Tourism Board, I extend my gratitude to all who contributed to the development of this essential document. Your expertise and unwavering commitment have ensured that the National Tourism Security Strategy is not merely a response to today's challenges but a proactive framework for tomorrow's opportunities.

Together, let us safeguard the future of tourism in Belize, ensuring that it continues to thrive as a pillar of our national identity and economic prosperity.

**Mr. Evan Tillett,**  
*Director of Tourism,*  
Belize Tourism Board



## NATIONAL TOURISM SECURITY STRATEGY - FIVE YEAR PLAN

### 1.0 Introduction

#### 1.1 Background

Since 2012, security measures in Belize's more remote tourist destinations, particularly in the western regions, have been strengthened through the involvement of the country's security forces. The Belize Police Department (BPD), with support from the Belize Defence Force (BDF), has collaborated with both public and private partners to address security concerns. Criminal activities in these areas were typically carried out by small groups of cross-border criminals targeting remote resorts, roads and waterways.

To improve safety in the tourism sector, the Tourism Police Unit (TPU) was established to provide civil security in tourism areas, respond to incidents, and implement proactive measures to prevent future crimes. As a result, criminal incidents have significantly decreased, although there are still risks, especially in the more isolated regions. In urban areas, occasional gang-related crimes have spilled over into tourist areas. Criminal gangs, often modeled after those in the United States, are responsible for a significant portion of the country's violent crimes, including murders.

Tourist destinations near the border with Guatemala face specific risks, including human trafficking, drug smuggling, and illegal activities like the looting of artifacts and the destruction of local wildlife, unless properly addressed.

Natural disasters also pose a threat to Belize, with floods and hurricanes being the primary concerns during the Atlantic Hurricane Season (June to November). Wildfires are a seasonal issue as well. While the country has experienced close calls in recent years, a multi-agency approach has effectively managed these risks.

In response to these challenges, the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) is taking proactive steps to formalize and strengthen collaboration among stakeholders. This includes creating a clear strategy to address potential threats to the tourism industry, ranging from immediate, manageable issues to long-term concerns requiring national efforts. Through this Strategy, the BTB aims to ensure that all stakeholders are prepared to manage and mitigate risks, providing contingency plans at all levels to guarantee the safety and security of Belize's tourism industry.

## NATIONAL TOURISM SECURITY STRATEGY - FIVE YEAR PLAN

### 1.2 Aim

The aim of this **National Tourism Security Strategy (NTSS)** is to provide a framework for the safety and security of the tourism industry in Belize and capture the support systems responsible to operationalize the effective, calculated, and pre-emptive actions necessary to mitigate risks associated with the industry. Where those risks persist, the strategy will identify response mechanisms to address such persistence while mending associated capability gaps through a multi-stakeholder approach. Consequently, the tourism security apparatus will continuously strengthen and modernize to address the security challenges of today and in the future.

### 1.3 Scope

This Strategy is national in scope and designed to achieve its vision within five years of implementation (2025 - 2030). It will define and substantiate the risks/threats associated with the tourism industry through analysis and assessments conducted over a period of time. Furthermore, it will look at the broad perspective of resources and security specialist shortages across those organizations currently responsible for tourism security. These qualifications confined the scope to identifying the following:

- a. The necessary realignment of the attitudes and philosophies underlying the security and safety of the tourism industry in Belize,
- b. The formal coordination of standing joint response teams to address security incidents of tourists,
- c. The core attributes, education, training experiences and self-development required by security personnel in the future,
- d. An implementation strategy for developing the tourism industry security apparatus over the next five years.
- e. A sixty percent increase in strength of the Tourism Police Unit over the next five years.

## NATIONAL TOURISM SECURITY STRATEGY - FIVE YEAR PLAN

### 1.4 Pillars

Belize's National Tourism Security Strategy (NTSS) adopts a proactive approach to safeguarding the country's tourism industry while integrating international efforts to address national security concerns. The NTSS is structured around three key pillars: **prevention, protection and intensification**.

Within these categories, specific objectives have been identified to counter immediate and long-term threats to the tourism sector, including risks from cyber threats, climate change, irregular migration and emerging geopolitical challenges. These measures represent an anticipatory and preventive strategy aimed at securing Belize's tourism-dependent economy while addressing broader security implications.

The NTSS emphasizes collaboration with regional and global partners to strengthen Belize's security infrastructure. It draws inspiration from strategies such as the Counterterrorism Framework, the National Cybersecurity Agenda, and environmental adaptation programs akin to the **Delta Programme**. These efforts reflect a modern, effective, and forward-looking approach that prioritizes preventive action while maintaining robust response capabilities when necessary.

#### THE DELTA PROGRAMME

The Delta Programme is a long-term strategy implemented by the Netherlands to manage water resources and protect the country from the risks of flooding, water scarcity and the impacts of climate change. Given the Netherlands' low-lying geography and vulnerability to rising sea levels, the program is a vital national initiative.

##### *Why it is relevant:*

The Delta Programme serves as a global model for climate resilience and water management. It reflects a proactive, rather than reactive, approach to addressing environmental risks. Other nations, especially those vulnerable to climate change and rising sea levels, have studied and adapted elements of the program for their own use.

## NATIONAL TOURISM SECURITY STRATEGY - FIVE YEAR PLAN

### 1.5 Key Elements

#### Addressing the root cause of potential threat's to Belize's tourism

#### Real Threats to Tourism Security in Belize

Tourism security in Belize faces several real threats, including petty theft, violent crime, and unregulated tourism activities in high-traffic areas. Additional concerns stem from natural disasters, such as hurricanes and flooding, as well as emerging risks like cyberattacks targeting tourism businesses. Human trafficking, illicit cross-border activities, and insufficient emergency response infrastructure further highlight the need for a comprehensive and proactive approach to safeguarding the tourism sector.

#### Key elements of the NTSS includes:

- **Prevention:** Addressing the root causes of potential threats to Belize's tourism, including environmental vulnerabilities, economic inequality and regional instability. Efforts will focus on mitigating risks related to climate change, organized crime, and irregular migration that could disrupt the tourism industry.
- **Protection:** Strengthening the safety and security framework for tourists, tourism workers and businesses with measures such as the expansion of the Tourism Police Unit, enhanced cybersecurity for tourism operations, and improved emergency response mechanisms to protect visitors and operators in times of crisis.
- **Intensification:** Establishing and maintaining strategic alliances with regional and global partners to create a credible deterrent against external threats. This includes fostering greater cooperation with organizations like CARICOM, the OAS, and the UN to uphold international norms and promote collective security measures.

The NTSS also recognizes the interconnected nature of national and international security. Events beyond Belize's borders, such as climate change impacts, economic shifts, and migration patterns, can significantly affect the country's security and tourism. As such, the NTSS highlights the importance of a secure connection between Belize and its regional and international partners, enhancing resilience through multilateral cooperation and adherence to the rule of law.

By focusing on both the foundations of security and the promotion of an effective multilateral system, the NTSS ensures Belize remains a safe, attractive, and sustainable destination for tourists while contributing to global security efforts. This integrated approach reaffirms Belize's commitment to safeguarding its national interests and the vital tourism industry that underpins its economy.

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## 2.0 The Development Process

The development of Belize's National Tourism Security Strategy was rooted in a comprehensive understanding of the country's unique challenges and past incidents that have negatively impacted the tourism industry. As part of this process, the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) conducted a thorough assessment of key tourism security corridors.

This initiative brought together a wide range of stakeholders, including tourism operators, community leaders, government agencies, Mayors, and Village Chairpersons, fostering a collaborative approach to addressing security concerns. These engagements provided valuable local insights into the current gaps in response mechanisms and helped identify the future needs of the industry.

Building on this foundation, a proactive and long-term strategy was crafted to strengthen and reform the nation's tourism security framework. The process culminated in the development of a tailored implementation strategy, designed to be launched no later than 2025, ensuring a safer and more resilient tourism sector for Belize.

## 2.1 Visionary Framework

The creation of **Belize's National Tourism Security Strategy (NTSS)** reflects both a local and international understanding of the critical role that security plays in sustaining and enhancing Belize's position on the global tourism stage. Guided by the Government of Belize's strategic prioritization of tourism as a pillar of national development, this Strategy aligns with the vision established in the **National Sustainable Tourism Master Plan 2030** and the **National Tourism Policy 2017**, which emphasize sustainability, authenticity and the enhancement of quality of life for all Belizeans.



## NATIONAL TOURISM SECURITY STRATEGY - FIVE YEAR PLAN

Central to the NTSS’s development was an assessment of tourism security corridors conducted by the Belize Tourism Board. Their insights and contributions were instrumental in identifying key security gaps and crafting a robust framework to address them.

Recognizing Belize’s increasing prominence as a global destination, the NTSS also incorporates international best practices and a commitment to fostering strong public-private partnerships (PPP). These measures are designed to strengthen the Tourism Police Unit (TPU), combat human trafficking, and establish a comprehensive disaster and crisis management plan, all of which underscore Belize’s dedication to providing a safe and secure environment for visitors and residents alike.



By embracing both local expertise and global perspectives, this Strategy ensures that Belize continues to develop as a world-class tourism destination, offering authentic experiences within a safe and sustainable environment. This mission, aligned with the broader objectives of the Government’s Plan Belize 2.0 positions Belize not only as a leader in regional tourism but also as a key player on the international tourism stage.



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### 2.2 Mission

The Government of Belize will deliver a formidable Belize Tourism Board-led, private sector-driven, and community-based tourism security strategic plan in order to address the fundamental security and safety risks affecting tourists visiting Belize.

This mission emphasizes a unified approach to tourism security, integrating leadership from the Belize Tourism Board, active participation from the private sector, and engagement with local communities (see **figure 1**). By addressing critical security challenges collaboratively, the Strategy aims to create a safer environment for tourists, ensuring their well-being while boosting the country's tourism appeal and reputation.



**Figure 1:** *Multisectoral Approach to Address Critical Security Challenges*

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### 2.3 Strategic Goals

The global security landscape has evolved dramatically in recent years, characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. This changing environment necessitates a dynamic and forward-thinking approach to ensuring tourism safety and security in Belize. Unlike a decade ago, the challenges we face today are multifaceted, requiring not only vigilance but also innovative and adaptable solutions. The success of Belize's tourism industry, a cornerstone of the nation's economy, hinges on our ability to mitigate security threats effectively.

While predicting criminal activity with precision is inherently difficult, leveraging cutting-edge technologies and fostering a whole-of-government approach will be key in addressing these challenges. This means that collaboration across public and private sectors, coupled with strategic use of modern tools, will be the foundation of efforts to secure the tourism sector and enhance Belize's global standing as a premier destination.

To this end, the following strategic goals have been established:

1. **Reduce Crime Impacting the Tourism Industry:** Implement targeted measures to diminish criminal activity affecting tourists and the tourism sector;
2. **Enhance Belize's Brand Image in Terms of Safety and Security:** Position Belize as a safe and secure destination by addressing security concerns and strengthening the country's positive reputation;
3. **Foster Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration:** Build a unified framework that brings together public and private stakeholders to address tourism security challenges collectively;
4. **Strengthen Public Confidence in Government's Role:** Reinforce trust in the government's ability to safeguard the nation's economy, society, and visitors by effectively addressing key security issues;
5. **Create a Model for National Crime Reduction:** Develop an exemplary model for crime reduction that can be scaled across Belize, benefiting both citizens and visitors;

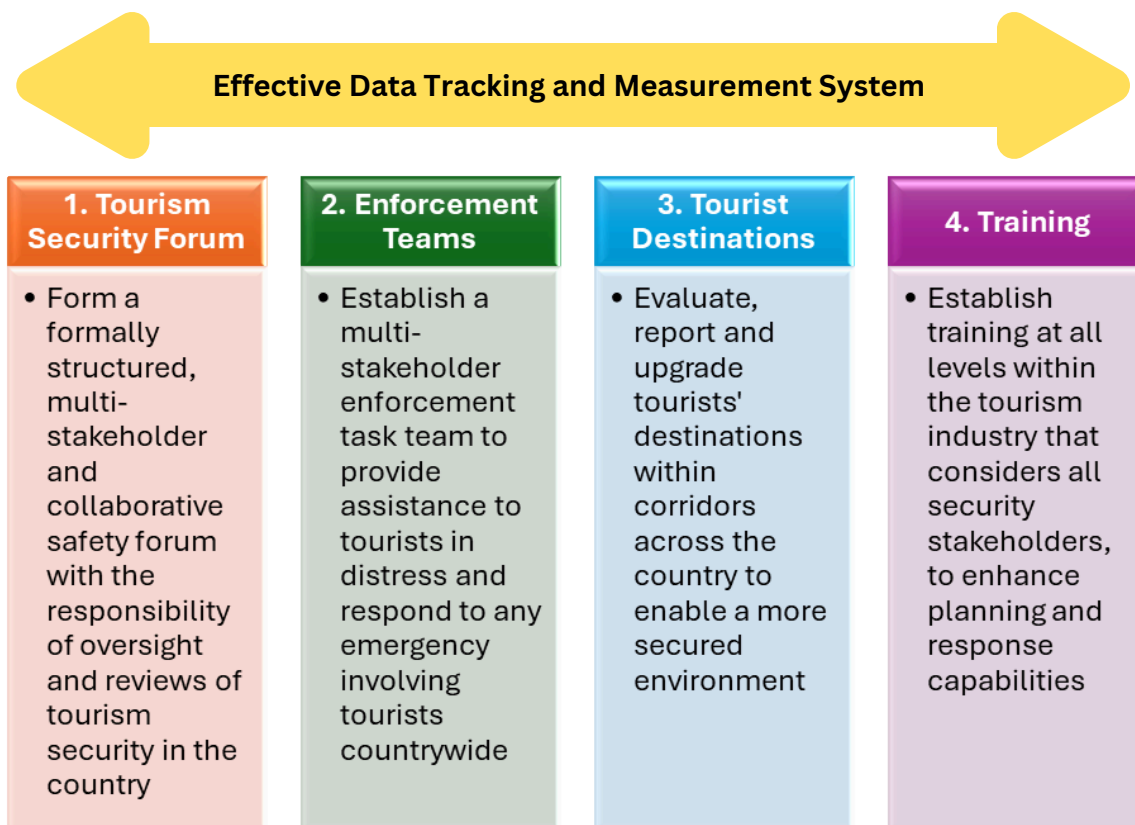
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- 6. **Enhance Tourism Sector Readiness for Emergencies:** Bolster the industry's preparedness for emergencies, ensuring safety and security during national crises;
- 7. **Strengthen the Tourism Police Unit:** Enhance the unit's capacity, resources, and responsiveness to effectively resolve security challenges in the tourism sector.

This strategic framework underscores Belize's commitment to adapting to the evolving security environment and prioritizing the safety and well-being of all who visit and reside in the country. By embracing innovation and collaboration, Belize can position itself not only as a world-class tourism destination but also as a global leader in tourism security and resilience.

### 2.4 The Four Levers Approach

To advance these goals and achieve country-wide security, the Tourism Security Strategic Plan establishes four levers (see **figure 2**). They are as follows:



**Figure 2:** Four Levers for Effective Tracking & Measurement

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### 2.4.1 Lever 1 - Tourism Safety Forum

**Strategic Outcome I:** A proactive response to tourist crime prevention that protect the tourism industry, and so positively impacts the Belizean economy at large.

#### **Intermediate Goals:**

1. Re-structure the Tourism Police Unit (TPU) to achieve leadership autonomy;
2. Conduct and host quarterly security checks protocol along all tourism corridors utilizing partner agencies and/or the BTB Security Office. The Tourism Security Task Force may also be involved in the conduct;
3. Install and monitor all-weather night vision camera systems within corridors;
4. Improve lighting in all tourism corridors countrywide;
5. Communicate actionable intelligence among the Security Task Force;
6. Create a comprehensive communications platform and mandate its use across remote tourist destinations;
7. Mandate contingency planning for all stakeholders and security agencies to include medical scenarios;
8. Formalize the Tourism Security Task Force within the National Security Directorate's Framework.

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BTB will see to the formation of a formally structured, multi-stakeholder and collaborative safety forum where all stakeholders in the tourism safety system will be represented. These forums will formulate contingency plans for crimes against tourists and recommend to the Tourism Security Task Force and the Belize Tourism Board the requirements to stem these threats or lower the probability of occurrences along tourism corridors countrywide. The Tourism Security Task Force will in turn coordinate efforts with the respective security agencies, depending on the nature of the threat, to directly curb or manage the associated risks.

### 2.4.2 Lever 2 - Enforcement Teams

**Strategic Outcome II:** The formation of decentralized Enforcement Teams comprised of members of the Tourism Police Unit (TPU) and supporting agencies charged with policing and responding to security threats within Tourism Corridors countrywide.

#### Intermediate Goals:

1. Establish security teams among different agencies capable of policing and responding to security threats in the tourism corridors countrywide;
2. Create and revise semi-annually Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to govern the authority, areas of responsibility, and the reporting protocols of the teams;
3. The appropriation of budget annually to realize mobility, kit and equipment for the Enforcement Teams in order to maintain relevance and effectiveness when responding to tourism industry security issues;
4. Establish a centralized command meet quarterly to ascertain progress, sort inadequacies, and share information to maintain a common operating picture within the corridors;
5. Establish periodic check points at remote destinations and maintain on site security during peak seasons;
6. Conduct dedicated vehicle patrols (all equipped with radio communications and GPS capability) within corridors consisting of multi-agency security personnel;
7. Partner with neighborhood watches and other community policing initiatives within corridors;

## NATIONAL TOURISM SECURITY STRATEGY - FIVE YEAR PLAN

8. Partner with National Prosecuting Authority for Prosecution Enforcement when necessary;
9. Partner with consulates and embassies in country to facilitate ease of information passage and other post incident/emergencies actions.

The Tourism Security Task Force will see to the selection, training and management of multiple enforcement teams countrywide. These teams will be administered under their respective organizations however they will specialize in tourism security and when the need arises, they will be expected to respond to any threats to tourists within the country of Belize. The nature of their individual organizations will dictate the domain in which they operate whether it is terrestrial or maritime; remote or urbanized. The teams will support tourists in distress and provide practical and emotional support where possible. They will maintain a 24/7 response capability, 7 days a week. The team lead will facilitate liaison with all key role-players and tourism stakeholders. See Annex 6 for an exhaustive list of responsible agencies.

### 2.4.3 Lever 3 - Infrastructure/ Installations

**Strategic Outcome III:** The upgrade of the tourism industry security infrastructure within the corridors.

#### **Intermediate Goals:**

1. Encourage the use of security cameras and the availability of medical aid kits (inclusive of defibrillator) at all tourist destinations countrywide;
2. Build awareness, influence policies, and encourage participation of all stakeholders to commit to public and private installations upgrade;
3. Incorporate radio communications systems at all remote tourist destinations countrywide;
4. Incorporate a helicopter landing pad at all remote tourist destinations countrywide;
5. Establish portable fire pumps with Belize Port Authority, Belize Coast Guard and the Belize Defence Force Special Boat Unit;
6. Improve lighting in all tourism corridors countrywide;
7. Communicate actionable intelligence among the Security Task Force.

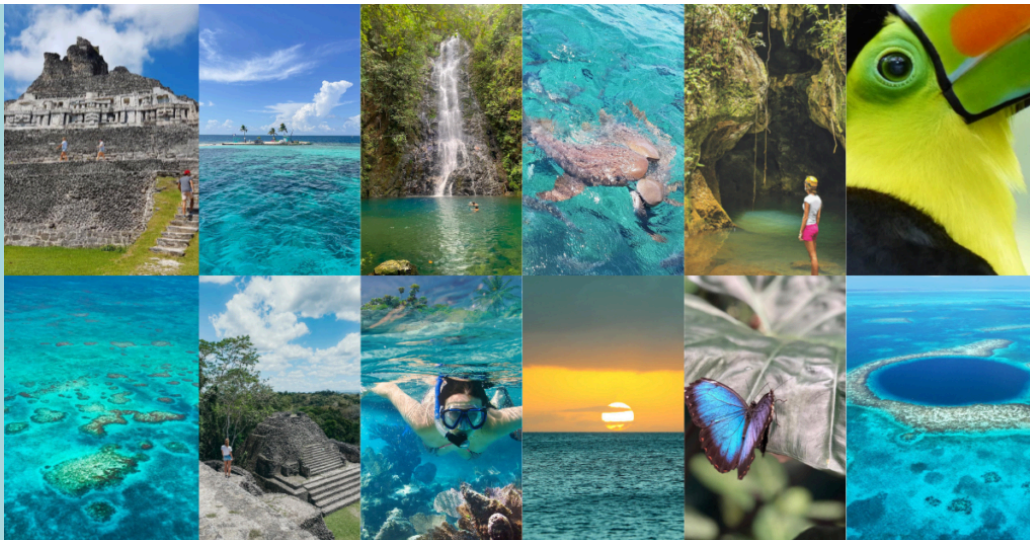
## NATIONAL TOURISM SECURITY STRATEGY - FIVE YEAR PLAN

### 2.4.4 Lever 4 - Training

**Strategic Outcome IV:** Enable funding through program budgeting and cross-platform initiatives for skills developments for enforcement teams and stakeholders; both public and private.

#### Intermediate Goals:

1. Develop and source training needs package for the Tourism Security Task;
2. Encourage other public and private partners to enhance their capabilities in order to better secure the tourist and tourist destinations;
3. Collaborate between partners to ensure equipment and logistics are sufficient for training;
4. Forecast cross agency annual training to enable readiness of all partners in the security of tourists;
5. Develop and exercise scenarios for enforcement teams to practice countrywide on a quarterly basis;
6. Mandate short arms training and use for security elements at remote tourist destinations across the country;
7. Incrementally implement compulsory basic first aid, advanced first aid, high-angle rescue training and swift water rescue training and encourage self-defence training for tour operators and security agencies involved in tourism at all sites.



## 3.0 Consequences of the Security Corridors Assessment

### 3.1 Key Assumptions

The survey of the Tourism Security Corridors brought out the following key assumptions that could have an impact on tourists visiting Belize:

#### Natural Disasters/Emergencies

1. Effective resolution to the security dilemma faced by tourists during natural disasters and emergencies will depend on many factors beyond the control of Government of Belize (GoB) and the National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO);
2. The security environment during disasters will be diverse, unpredictable and multifaceted. There will be an increase in demand for a range of security skill sets and apparatus;
3. The increasing presence and reporting of the media will impact on the conduct of operations and personnel;
4. The tourism security environment will be greatly expanded in the sea and land domains and therefore will see an increased requirement for combined capabilities across stakeholders.

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### Transitional Crimes

1. Trafficking and smuggling of persons may increase and spread across the tourism industry environment and therefore will require security considerations and contingencies to mitigate associated danger;
2. The movement of illicit drugs and persons across the borders of Belize with Guatemala to the south and west and Mexico to the north is cause for concern to the safety of tourists visiting Belize. The trend may increase and will require a whole of Government approach to mitigate;
3. Due to the weak judicial system in Belize, mainly due to the low conviction rate annually, the country will be deemed a safe haven/hideaway from transnational criminals;
4. Tourist destinations with remote access and those near border areas will see an increase in illicit activity as the adjacent border communities' criminal elements grow.

### Gang Violence

1. Internal aggression will persist across the country, but more so in the Belize City area due to the socio-economic conundrum prevailing in the different sectors of the city;
2. Collateral damage to the image of the tourism product due to prevailing disputing factions will continue until the gang situation is neutralized.

### Technology

1. Cyber-crime is a complex security paradigm that will continue to increase worldwide. This will continue to affect tourists if the right defence mechanisms are not employed to minimize the risks it poses;
2. Technological expertise to be used to the advantage of those involved in tourism security will remain a high priority.

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### Belizean Society

1. Belizean demographics will change dramatically as a result of ethnic influences from migration which may cause a shift in values and morals in respect to safety and security;
2. Interaction between Belizeans and tourists visiting the country of Belize will increase exponentially as services and products are increased across the country.

### Remote Destinations

1. Improved and proactive security services in remote destinations will remain a high priority for the Government of Belize (GoB) and all stakeholders to ensure the safety and security of visitors to these places;
2. Joint agencies patrols will cover most, if not all, remote destinations and where this security coverage is not possible daily, periodic checks will be made quarterly to assess security of the area;
3. Radio communications will exist at all such destinations in order to alert developing emergencies to the respective authorities.



## NATIONAL TOURISM SECURITY STRATEGY - FIVE YEAR PLAN

### 3.2 Implications

The following implications for the security of tourism corridors across the country were derived from the key assumptions:

- a. The Tourism Industry Security Task Force and the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) needs to understand the role it plays in the security of tourists during natural disasters and must work closely with the National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO) to annexed contingency plans for tourists within the national disasters plans, should those tourists be in Belize when disaster strikes;
- b. Tourism Police Unit (TPU) and other security stakeholders will have to be versatile, adaptable, skilled and knowledgeable to understand the myriad of security threats and make rapid decisions; they will have to recognize the potentially far-reaching consequences of their actions;
- c. Roles and tasks of the Tourism Police Unit (TPU) will change, sometimes significantly, under the influence of changing operations, structure and technology;
- d. The Tourism Police Unit (TPU) and the Tourism Security Task Force Enforcement Teams must be capable of operating jointly with a range of allies, especially the Belize Defence Force (BDF);
- e. The Tourism Police Unit (TPU) will continue to be responsible to provide fit, multi-skilled officers to meet an increasingly broad range of tasks;
- f. The actions and decisions taken by the Belize Tourism Board (BTB), the Tourism Security Task Force, the Tourism Police Unit (TPU) and the Enforcement Teams will have an immediate impact on public opinion because of an increasing capability of media sources and their wider distribution;
- g. There will be an increasing requirement to consider security factors external to what is already known and thus the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) will have to understand and interact more with other Government agencies and private partners equally concerned about tourism security;

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- h. Retention and recruiting will become more important for the Tourism Police Unit (TPU) and the Enforcement Teams as the competition for security knowledge workers increases;
- i. Continual, rapid pace of change, in general, and in technology, in particular implies continual professional development for the tourism security apparatus if it is to remain current and relevant;
- j. Annual sensitization and awareness training for stakeholders within the Tourism Security Corridors is essential to maintain information sharing.

### 3.3 Strategic Imperatives

The strategic imperatives below reflect the scope and direction of actions needed to respond effectively to an uncertain global future whose overall impact on the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) could be dramatic. These strategic imperatives provide the core elements of the vision for the safety and security of tourists visiting Belize and the supporting security system required to maintain such an environment:

**Security Enforcement:** Develop and sustain a Tourism Industry Security Enforcement apparatus, through training, experience and education that is skilled in responding to situations characterized by risk and uncertainty. This team should be empowered with the necessary tools to quickly resolve security issues across the spectrum of safety operations to include search and rescue, hostage recovery, confined operations, cyber-crimes remediation among others;

**Professional Tourism Security Task Force:** Create an empowered Tourism Security Task Force that is governed by professionalism, accountability, grounding in the rule of law, outstanding expertise, and an embrace of the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) values and social responsibility;

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**Harnessing Technology:** Develop an arm to the Tourism Police Unit (TPU) and/or the Enforcement Team capable of exploiting the opportunities afforded by advanced technology. The use of drone technology and geographic information system for crime mapping and hazard mitigation are relevant examples for this strategic imperative;

**Control Center:** Develop a comprehensive innovative, coordinated governance system to manage and direct safety and security operations daily. The Center's Director must be capable of thoughtfully examining and adapting to changing or non-traditional roles to keep tourists safe. Furthermore, coordinated and joint security operations must be planned and executed through this Center;

**Public Private Partnership:** Develop a dynamic, flexible, responsive, innovative, and timely delivery system under the public private partnership (PPP) concept, capitalizing on individual organizational capabilities to enhance the overall safety and security of tourists visiting Belize.

## 4.0 Defining the Capability Gap

### 4.1 Key Supporting Activities

As part of the analysis to determine the capability gap in providing effective safety and security to tourists visiting Belize, a number of resources were reviewed. These ranged from scholarly works to discussion with consultative groups. A series of tourism security task force meetings and work groups including table top exercises were also convened. Moreover, during the gap analysis process, certain key study days proved highly valuable in achieving the research objective.

The countrywide mapping of the Tourism Security Corridors along with consultation with public and private stakeholders within those corridors proved critical in achieving data to determine where the security gaps exist across the country. It is by defining those gaps that it was determined whether or not the capability to close those gaps existed or needs to be created. The ranges of steps thereafter were ideally to sight the resources, although not exhaustive, that were needed to close the existing gap. The foundation of the discussions was to see an end state of a safe and secured tourism product; the likes of which if threatened, would see a proactive response from a highly trained and flexible security apparatus.

## 4.2 Harmonized Security Skill Sets and Professional Development

In general, there is a need for a document that will define and substantiate the professional development requirements for the personnel that will be charged with tourism security. This will provide an aiming mark for current and future reforms. As such, determining the capability gap does not attempt to evaluate the adequacy of ongoing reforms or speculate on any planned developments, but instead it anticipates that so long as it is security-based, skills sets must be harmonized. This action will allow for synchronicity between agencies participating in tourism security operations and training.

## 4.3 Gap Analysis

The first step of the security corridors assessment analyzed trends, developed a vision, and provided a concept of “where we want to be.” This section examines each of the Strategic Imperatives listed in section 3.3, using a gap analysis to identify gaps between where we are and where we want to be. Deficiencies were identified by posing the basic question “If we did nothing more than present, what gaps or deficiencies would we have in achieving the vision of the strategy?”

## 4.4 Strategic Imperatives and Associated Capability Gaps

**Security Enforcement:** Currently security enforcement for tourists visiting Belize is conducted through a haphazard system of key stakeholders, directed under separate authorities, and accountable to their parent organization. This has caused confusion over the years as the response mechanism to incidents is delayed by the uncertainty of sequencing. Additionally, across the separate domains, there is more uncertainty as to exactly which organization, Government or private, responds or whether a coordinated response is required. There is a lack of certainty as to who takes the lead in the respective domains and who concludes the response to the incident and the reporting mechanism. Furthermore, there is no existing operating procedures for the response teams to work in synchronicity without compounding the situation. Finally the demand for certain specialists among the response mechanism and their associated skill sets is completely lacking in some domains and vaguely exists in others. For example, Belize does not have hostage negotiators among any of their security services nor do they have a mature cyber-security apparatus. It is therefore imperative that this capacity be developed over time to remediate this anomaly.

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**Professional Tourism Security Task Force:** The Tourism Security Task Force was formed in 2022 and have since had a myriad of stakeholders, public and private, that have partnered to one end; the safety and security of the tourists visiting Belize across the separate domains. Over time, the Task Force has learned from incidents and slowly captured joint experiences in order to respond and properly coordinate security threats. Notwithstanding, the team has not garnered the full support of all the essential security players and have not been fully complemented by those that can play vital roles in addressing the security of tourists. Additionally, there is no governing legislation to ensure commitment from all parties involved, thus, leaving room for complacency within the team.

**Harnessing Technology:** Technology will continue to produce rapid changes in the environment for safety and security operations at a rate previously not encountered. Belize lacks a universal ability to exploit the advantages of advanced technology. It lacks a common education and training standard for the broad range of emerging technologies that need to be addressed. Education and training on these technologies must be dynamic and embedded within the incident response mechanism and the Tourism Security Task Force to ensure that the team is prepared to take full advantage of the opportunities afforded by technology. These initiatives combined will help to create a modern response to safety and security threats within the industry.

**Control Center:** While the response to safety and security incidents involving tourists are primarily addressed under the auspices of the Belize Police Department (BPD) in conjunction with the Belize Tourism Board (BTB), from time to time there may be reasons, including remote locations and availability of human resources, where the two organizations may be either lacking capacity or simply out of reach to curb the threat. Consequently, control would be handed over to a relevant partner organization that can more effectively address the incident and it would be at this point that timely information flow and updates to the situation may be slow in coming to the BTB and the BPD.

**Public Private Partnership (PPP):** The relationship between the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) and the public and private entities focused on safety and security of tourists visiting Belize has improved over the years but needs to be formalized. Strategies must exist amongst partners to allow for a clear understanding of the roles that each individual organization plays. This is essential for solving problems, joint training exercises, and mitigating confusion in responding when there is an incident involving tourists. Additionally, formalizing processes will ensure that there is no duplicity of efforts among private and public partners and allow for accurate information sharing.

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## 5.0 Closing the Capability Gap

With the capability gap having been identified and quantified against five strategic imperatives, a strategy was developed to close the overall gap. This was done by first identifying solutions in a general sense to indicate the scope of the effort needed to close each gap. An analysis of these broad solution statements resulted in end-state-like objectives and a second grouping suggesting ways that progress could be assured. Those of the first group are called “strategic objectives”; those of the second, “key initiatives.” General solutions were further refined to produce concrete, measurable activities contained in each key initiative. The strategic objectives and key initiatives provided the basis for a five year strategy, although some activities may need to change over time.

The ends-ways matrix delineates the five strategic objectives and five key initiatives that formed the framework of this strategy. The cells of the matrix correspond to initial sets of activities as described in **figure 3**.

Key Initiatives (Ways) \ Strategic Objectives (Ends)	Create Command Center for Tourism Security Operations	Formalize Joint Enforcement Teams (JET)	Formalize Criteria-Rated Site Inspections for Destinations	Professional Development - Safety & Security Training	Exercise & Revise Strategy/ Contingency Plans Periodically with Stakeholders
Effective Security Enforcement	High Priority (2025-2026)	Medium Priority (2026-2028)	Not Applicable	Low Priority (2028-2030)	Low Priority (2028-2030)
Professional Tourism Security Agency	Not Applicable	Low Priority (2028-2030)	Low Priority (2028-2030)	Low Priority (2028-2030)	High Priority (2025-2026)
Modernized Security Apparatus	High Priority (2025-2026)	Not Applicable	Low Priority (2028-2030)	High Priority (2025-2026)	Not Applicable
Modernized C2 Cell	Low Priority (2028-2030)	High Priority (2025-2026)	Not Applicable	Low Priority (2028-2030)	Low Priority (2028-2030)
Multi-Sector Public & Private Partnership	Low Priority (2028-2030)	Low Priority (2028-2030)	Low Priority (2028-2030)	High Priority (2025-2026)	Not Applicable

- High Priority (2025-2026)
- Medium Priority (2026-2028)
- Low Priority (2028-2030)
- Not Applicable

**Figure 3: BTB’s Safety & Security Implementation Matrix**

## NATIONAL TOURISM SECURITY STRATEGY - FIVE YEAR PLAN

### 5.1 Strategic Objectives

The strategic objectives falls out of the defining of the imperatives that, when defined, illustrated the capability gaps. The strategic objectives therefore, must be attained over the five years period of the strategy in order to realize the safety and security of tourists visiting Belize. As listed in **figure 3**, these objectives are as follows:

- a. Establish Effective Security Enforcement;
- b. Establish a Professional Tourism Security Agency;
- c. Modernize the Security Apparatus;
- d. Establish a Modernize Command and Control Cell;
- e. Establish Multi-stakeholder Public Private Partnership.

### 5.2 Key Initiatives

In order to achieve the strategic objectives listed above, the following key initiatives must be initiated and governed promptly:

- a. Create a Command Center for Tourism Security Operations;
- b. Formalize Joint Enforcement Teams (JET);
- c. Formalize criteria-rated site inspections for destinations;
- d. Establish Professional Development – Safety and Security Training;
- e. Exercise and Revise Strategy and Contingency Plans periodically with stakeholders.

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### 5.3 Aligning and Defining Key Initiatives under Strategic Objectives

Under the following section, the key initiatives that have implications on the achievement of the strategic objectives will be aligned and then defined.

**Establish Effective Security Enforcement:** In order to achieve this objective, the following key initiatives are applicable:

- a. Create a Command Center for Tourism Security Operations;
- b. Formalize Joint Enforcement Teams (JET);
- c. Establish Professional Development – Safety and Security Training;
- d. Exercise and Revise Strategy and Contingency Plans.

**Establish a Professional Tourism Security Agency:** In order to achieve this objective, the following key initiatives are applicable:

- a. Formalize Joint Enforcement Teams (JET);
- b. Formalize Criteria-rated Site Inspections;
- c. Professional Development – Safety and Security Training;
- d. Exercise and Revise Strategy and Contingency Plans.

**Modernize Security Apparatus:** In order to achieve this objective, the following key initiatives are applicable:

- a. Create a Command Center for Tourism Security Operations;
- b. Formalize Criteria-rated Site Inspections;
- c. Professional Development – Safety and Security Training.

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**Establish a Modernize Command and Control Cell:** In order to achieve this objective, the following key initiatives are applicable:

- a. Create a Command Center for Tourism Security Operations;
- b. Formalize Joint Enforcement Teams (JET);
- c. Professional Development – Safety and Security Training;
- d. Exercise and Revise Strategy and Contingency Plans periodically with stakeholders.

**Multi-sector Public Private Partnership:** In order to achieve this objective, the following key initiatives are applicable:

- a. Create a Command Center for Tourism Security Operations;
- b. Formalize Joint Enforcement Teams (JET);
- c. Formalize Criteria-rated Site Inspections for Destinations;
- d. Professional Development – Safety and Security Training.

## 6.0 From Strategy to Implementation

### 6.1 Moving Towards Implementation

The Belize Tourism Board (BTB) is the lead agency in the education and awareness campaign, editing, ratification, and implementation of the literature herein. The lead is responsible to implement the objectives realistically to ensure that they are met within the next five years and where necessary, revision is made in accordance with the security needs of the industry. Implementation therefore should be no later than 30 June 2025 with quarterly revisions by the Tourism Security Task Force. An independent Evaluation Team is to be solicited by the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) to measure the effectiveness of the strategy and make recommendations to keep the document relevant.

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It is expected that all Government-based security organizations inclusive of the Belize Police Department (BPD), the Belize Defence Force (BDF), Belize Coast Guard (BCG), Belize Customs and Excise Departments and the Belize Immigration Department dedicate efforts to the implementation and execution of this Strategy through Liaison Officers to the Belize Tourism Board (BTB). Once this is realized, the Board will conduct a budget exercise to decide how it will dedicate funding to the Strategy and define the focus areas for the next five years (2025 - 2028); ensuring that the strategic outcomes delineated herein are met. Table top exercises and cross-training among the different organizations will be important to ensure that, at all levels of authority, strategy implementation is clear and those designated Liaison Officers are capable and has the capacity of supporting the objectives.

### 6.2 Oversight Framework

The oversight of the National Tourism Security Strategy rests with the **National Security Directorate**, acting through the **Tourism Security Task Force** (TSTF). This body is charged with the strategic coordination, implementation, and monitoring of all activities under the plan. The TSTF is chaired by the designated **Task Force Lead**, who serves as the primary liaison between national security agencies and the Ministry of Tourism, Youth, Sports and Diaspora Relations.

The **responsibilities of the Task Force** include:

- Ensuring inter-agency coordination and communication across all phases of the strategy;
- Mobilizing support from partner agencies, including law enforcement, regulatory bodies, and the private sector;
- Conducting regular assessments to track progress, address challenges, and refine operational plans;
- Providing periodic updates to the National Security Council and the Ministry of Tourism, Youth, Sports and Diaspora Relations.

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Participating agencies such as the **Belize Police Department (BPD)**, **Belize Defence Force (BDF)**, **Belize Coast Guard (BCG)**, **Immigration Department**, and the **Department of Transport** will operate within their legal mandates while contributing operational support aligned with the strategy's objectives. These agencies are expected to:

- Lead enforcement and compliance initiatives within their respective jurisdictions;
- Share intelligence and incident reports to support proactive risk mitigation;
- Assign designated liaisons to the Task Force for streamlined decision-making and response.

The strategy also provides for oversight reporting, which includes incident logs, outcome-based metrics, and an annual review to evaluate effectiveness and determine areas for adjustment. This multi-agency, multi-layered approach is key to reinforcing Belize's international reputation as a safe, secure, and well-managed tourism destination.

### 6.3 Critical Success Factors

In order to move the strategy forward and achieve the objectives herein over the next five years, the Tourism Police Unit (TPU) must be given authority to operate autonomously and must be increased in size by no less than sixty percent (60%). Additionally, funding must be appropriated for the setup of a control center and the formation of Enforcement teams, properly kitted, to respond to security issues across the Tourism Industry.

## 6.4 Defining Domains' Responsibilities

While the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) is the lead agency in tourism security coupled with the Belize Police Department (BPD), within the different operational domains, there must be a lead tactical organization. Depending on the nature of threat, and the zone or corridor in which the threat is predicted to be imminent or has occurred, the respective professionals will be sought out to provide assistance as follows:

**The Cayes, Littoral Waters, and Rivers** – The Belize Coast Guard (BCG), Belize Fisheries Department (BFD) and Belize Port Authority (BPA), and the Belize Defence Force (BDF) Special Boat Unit & Explosive Ordnance Department and Astrum Helicopters;

**Land Spaces** – Urban, Rural and Remote – The Belize Police Department (BPD) Tourism Police Unit (TPU), The Belize Defence Force (BDF), National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO), British Army Training Support Unit Belize (BATSUB), Customs and Excise Department, Immigration Department, Border Management Agency (BMA) and Astrum Helicopters.

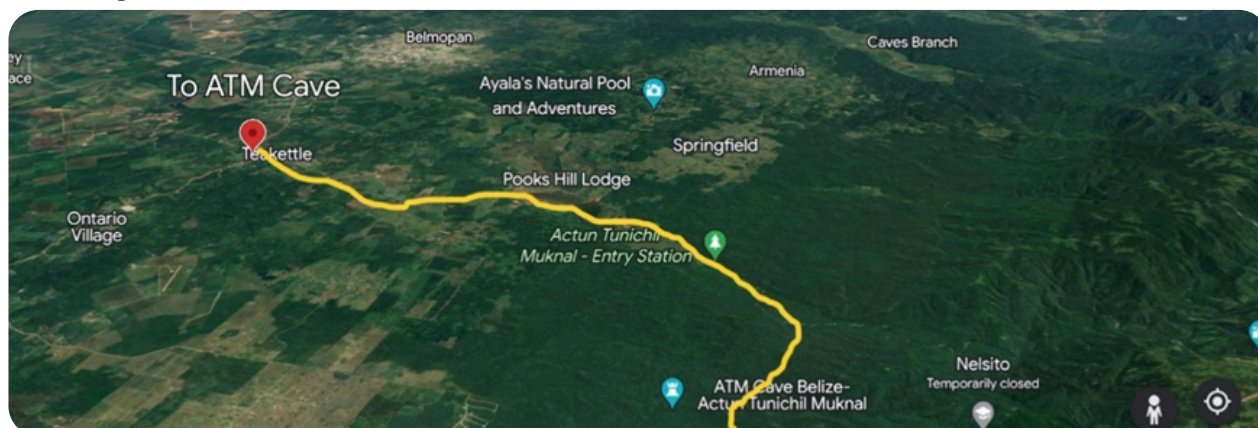
**Air Spaces/Aviation** – Belize Civil Aviation Department, Belize Defence Force (BDF) Air Wing, Belize Police Department (BPD), Astrum Helicopters, Tropic Air, and Maya Island Air.



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**ANNEX 1: ACTUN TUNICHIL MUCNAL (ATM) CAVE  
TOURISM SECURITY CORRIDOR  
(Zone E - Corridor #22)  
Western Region # 1**

1. ATM cave is located 7 miles from the George Price Highway in Teakettle Village, Cayo District.
2. This main access road to the site is mostly a winding dirt road.
3. Midway through the journey, there is a wooden bridge. At the time of the assessment for this Strategy (i.e. June 18, 2023) a new bridge was being built.
4. An alternate route – a diversion away from private property is also being built.
5. There are four (4) National Institute of Culture and History (NICH) Rangers that live on the site and provide the necessary security presence.
6. There is no electricity (except for a small solar panel) that provides lighting to the Rangers' accommodations.
7. There is a backup electricity generator on site.
8. No telephone service.
9. There is a data collection system (via a log) that collects information on tour guides, number of guests, etc.
10. Rangers have access to a firearm.



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The Actun Tunichil Mucnal (ATM) Cave in Belize presents several security and safety threats due to its natural environment, location, and activities involved. These threats can be categorized into natural hazards, health risks, and security concerns:

### 1. Natural Hazards.

- **Flash flooding:** sudden rainfall can lead to rapid flooding of the cave, endangering tourists and guides;
- **Trapped inside the cave:** collapse of rocks, disorientation, or unexpected water rise may trap individuals;
- **Slip and fall:** slippery surfaces, uneven terrain, and steep inclines pose risks of injury;
- **Drowning:** navigating through water-filled passages without proper swimming skills or equipment or specialized tour guide puts tourist at greater risk.

### 2. Health and Wildlife Risks.

- **Snake and insect bites:** venomous or aggressive wildlife inside and outside the cave;
- **Hypothermia or fatigue:** long periods of exposure to cold water or physical exertion;
- **Respiratory issues:** dust, guano, or mold in the cave may trigger allergies or respiratory conditions;
- **Infections from cuts:** sharp rocks or minor injuries may result in infections in a moist environment.

### 3. Security Concerns.

- **Armed robbery:** isolated nature of the location makes tourists vulnerable to theft or assault.
- **Vehicle breakdowns:** Remote access roads may lead to delayed help in case of vehicle malfunctions;
- **Terrorism or sabotage:** though rare, intentional harm to infrastructure or tourists cannot be dismissed.

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### **Preventive Measures (To be applied to all cave systems in Belize)**

Mitigating risks at **Actun Tunichil Mucnal (ATM) Cave**, which is a popular archaeological and natural site in Belize, involves addressing several categories of risks: safety for visitors and guides, environmental preservation, and the protection of cultural and archaeological artifacts. Below are the key assets and measures authorities to be regulated; tour operators and tour guides should have these in place and on standby:

#### **1. Emergency Response and Safety Equipment**

- **First aid kits:**
  - Fully stocked, portable kits for treating minor injuries such as cuts, abrasions, or insect bites;
  - Includes oxygen tanks for potential respiratory emergencies;
- **Rescue equipment: (Rescue Teams)**
  - Ropes, harnesses, and carabineers for water crossings and potential falls;
  - Stretchers or body boards for immobilizing injured persons during evacuation;
  - Life vests for visitors and guides, particularly in wet or flooded areas;
- **Communication devices:**
  - Radios or satellite phones for guides to communicate with authorities or rescue teams in case of emergencies, as cell service may be unavailable;
- **Lighting equipment:**
  - Waterproof flashlights, headlamps, and backup batteries for guides and visitors;
  - Emergency lighting systems in key areas of the cave.

## NATIONAL TOURISM SECURITY STRATEGY - FIVE YEAR PLAN

### 2. Safety Considerations

#### Flooding:

There is a system in place to monitor rising river levels.

- On a typical rainy day, the National Institute of Culture and History (NICH) Ranger starts the process of monitoring the river levels.
- When the rising water is measured between 10 to 12 inches, the Ranger cautions NICH that the river level is rising.
- When the river level rises to 14 inches, the NICH administration goes on alert and prepares to close the reserve.
- When the river level rises to 16" NICH gives the order to suspend visitation to the site.



### 3. Trained Personnel

#### Certified Cave Guides:

- Guides trained in caving techniques, first aid, CPR, and emergency evacuation procedures;
- Knowledge of cave conservation practices to educate visitors on minimizing impact;



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- **Search and Rescue Teams:**
  - Standby personnel trained in cave rescue operations, including navigating tight passages and underwater rescues;
- **Medical Professionals:**
  - Nearby medical staff on call, particularly during peak tourism times;

### 4. Environmental and Cultural Protection

- **Environmental monitoring equipment:**
  - Sensors for measuring water levels, air quality, and potential flooding risks;
  - Signage to restrict access to fragile areas and guide visitors on designated paths;
- **Archaeological security measures:**
  - Barriers or protective covers for sensitive archaeological features like the skeletal remains of the "Crystal Maiden;"
  - Surveillance systems to monitor visitor behavior in restricted areas;

### 5. Risk Assessment and Prevention

- **Weather monitoring tools:**
  - Real-time weather forecasting to anticipate flooding risks, particularly during the rainy season;
  - Evacuation protocols for severe weather events;
- **Regular inspections:**
  - Frequent checks of cave infrastructure, such as ladders, ropes, or guide equipment, to ensure they are in good condition;
- **Visitor screening:**
  - Guidelines for visitor fitness and ability to navigate the physically demanding terrain;
  - Age and health restrictions to prevent accidents;

## NATIONAL TOURISM SECURITY STRATEGY - FIVE YEAR PLAN

### 6. Support Infrastructure

- **Shelter and staging areas:**
  - Safe areas near the cave entrance for staging rescues or providing first aid;
  - Shelter for visitors in case of sudden rain or flooding;
- **Transportation:**
  - Vehicles or boats for quickly evacuating injured visitors or guides;
  - Helicopter landing zones for severe emergencies requiring airlift;

### 7. Public Awareness and Education

- **Visitor briefings:**
  - Mandatory pre-visit orientations on safety protocols, environmental conservation, and rules of conduct;
- **Clear signage:**
  - Warning signs about risks like slippery surfaces, falling rocks, or deep water;
  - Marked trails to prevent visitors from wandering into unsafe or restricted areas.

## Implementation Plan

- Collaborate with local authorities, environmental agencies, and cultural organizations;
- Conduct regular drills and training exercises for emergency scenarios;
- Establish partnerships with hospitals or clinics nearby for streamlined medical support;
- Maintain contingency funding for emergencies or rapid equipment replacement.

By combining these physical assets with trained personnel and proactive planning, the authorities can significantly reduce risks at ATM Cave while ensuring the safety of visitors and preserving its invaluable cultural and natural heritage:

1. **Equipment:** Helmets, life jackets, ropes, and canoes;
2. **Emergency Supplies:** First-aid kits, satellite phones, and rescue gear;
3. **Guide Training:** Trained guides to manage emergencies and educate tourists;
4. **Monitoring Systems:** Weather tracking and security checkpoints.

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It is not known if NICH would still allow a tour to proceed even though the water level is 12 inches. This is considering that crossing the river is approximately 30 minutes. Then there is a second river crossing followed by trekking for another 45 minutes to an hour before reaching the cave. Once at the cave, the actual tour takes about an hour and a half. All in all, the overall tour from start to finish takes about two and a half to three hours.

### Additional Safety Concerns:



1. Are there written protocols or guidelines in place to inform Rangers when not to allow a tour to proceed?
2. What happens if a tour is already at the cave when the river has risen to the 16 inches' mark (flash flood)?
3. Given that there is no communication/cell service, what form of communication will be used to contact tour guides at the cave should a cave closure is triggered?
4. Is there a rescue plan in place?
5. There is no first aid kit on sight.
6. While there is a requirement for height, there is no requirement for the heaviness of a person.
7. There is a safety concern about the weight/size of the river crossing rope and also the unsafe manner both ends are fastened on either side of the river. During the inspection, a guest was allowed to cross the river using a rope that spanned the river that is not strong enough and was not properly anchored on either side of the banks of the river.

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8. The debate is: Is a 350 pound individual in good physical health?
9. In order to avoid an incident with over-weight individuals, tour operators (TO), and tour guides (TG) should be educated on this question.
10. There should always be two secured ropes: (1) a primary rope and (2) a secondary rope secured a few feet downriver. This is in the unfortunate event of a guest losing his/her grip on the primary rope, a secondary rope allows a guest to grasp the second secured rope and avoid a safety incident.
11. NICH may consider upgrading its solar system to handle a base radio to be used in the event of an emergency.



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**Recommendations:**

1. Secure the river crossing safety rope with proper anchoring of the rope on both ends on the banks of the river;
2. Install a secondary safety rope;
3. Put together a rescue box consisting of ropes, a flashlight, maps of the area, and a layout of the cave;
4. Put in place a base radio to improve communication at the site;
5. Develop and publish a written safety, security, and emergency management plan for the site;
6. Sponsor training on evacuation plans with TO's and TG's.

<b>RISKS/THREATS</b>	<b>PRIORITY ASSETS</b>
<b>Flash floods</b>	<b>Life jackets/helmets</b>
<b>Drowning</b>	<b>First-aid kits</b>
<b>Armed robbery</b>	<b>Ropes</b>
<b>Slip &amp; fall</b>	<b>Canoes</b>
<b>Vehicle break down</b>	
<b>Terrorism</b>	
<b>Trapped cave</b>	

## ANNEX 2: CAVES BRANCH

### TOURISM SECURITY CORRIDOR Zone F - Corridor #22 Central Region #2

#### Caves Branch, Belize

Caves Branch is one of Belize's most popular natural attractions, known for its intricate limestone cave systems, scenic river passages, and rich historical and cultural significance. The site offers an adventurous blend of eco-tourism, archaeological intrigue, and natural beauty.

#### Location

Caves Branch is located in the **Cayo District, Belize**, approximately 12 miles south of Belmopan, the nation's capital. The caves are situated within the **Nohoch Che'en Caves Branch Archaeological Reserve**, a protected area that is part of Belize's expansive karst landscape. Visitors typically access the site via the **Hummingbird Highway**, with the reserve being well sign-posted and easily reachable by car or guided tours.

#### Key Features

##### 1. Limestone Cave System:

- The caves are part of a vast underground network formed by centuries of water erosion through the region's limestone;
- Features include massive caverns, narrow passages, stalactites, stalagmites, and underground waterfalls;

##### 2. Cave Tubing:

- One of the most popular activities, cave tubing involves floating on an inner tube along the Caves Branch River, which flows through the cave system;
- The journey offers a mix of calm sections and light rapids, providing a unique way to experience the caves;

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### 3. Archaeological Significance:

- The caves were once used by the ancient Maya for ceremonial purposes, including sacrifices and offerings;
- Artifacts such as pottery shards, altars, and carvings have been discovered within the caves;

### 4. Ecological Richness:

- The surrounding jungle is teeming with biodiversity, including tropical birds, iguanas, and lush vegetation;
- Bats are common inhabitants of the caves, playing a critical role in the ecosystem

## Activities and Experiences

### Guided Tours:

- Professional guides lead visitors through the cave tubing experience or specialized cave exploration tours;

### Adventure Caving:

- Includes climbing, crawling, and swimming through more challenging parts of the cave system;

### Birdwatching and Nature Walks:

- The Reserve's trails provide opportunities to explore the diverse flora and fauna of the surrounding jungle.



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### Accessibility and Visitor Information

- **Opening Hours:** The site is generally open daily, with tours starting in the morning.
- **Facilities:** The reserve provides basic amenities such as changing rooms, restrooms, and picnic areas;
- **Tour Operators:** Many licensed tour operators offer packages that include transportation, gear, and guides;
- **Safety Gear:** Life jackets, helmets, and headlamps are mandatory for all cave tours.

### Cultural and Natural Importance

Caves Branch Caves exemplify the intersection of natural wonders and historical heritage, reflecting Belize's unique cultural and environmental wealth. The site not only provides thrilling recreational opportunities but also educates visitors about the ancient Maya civilization and the need for conservation.

### Best Time to Visit

The best time to visit Caves Branch is during the **dry season (December to May)** when the water levels in the river are manageable, and the weather is ideal for outdoor activities.

By blending adventure, education, and nature, Caves Branch stand out as a must-visit destination for both thrill-seekers and history enthusiasts exploring Belize.

**NATIONAL TOURISM SECURITY STRATEGY - FIVE YEAR PLAN**

**ANNEX 3: CONSEJO, COROZAL DISTRICT**

**TOURISM SECURITY CORRIDOR**

**Corridor #1**

**Northern Region**

1. Tourism Security Corridor consisting of:

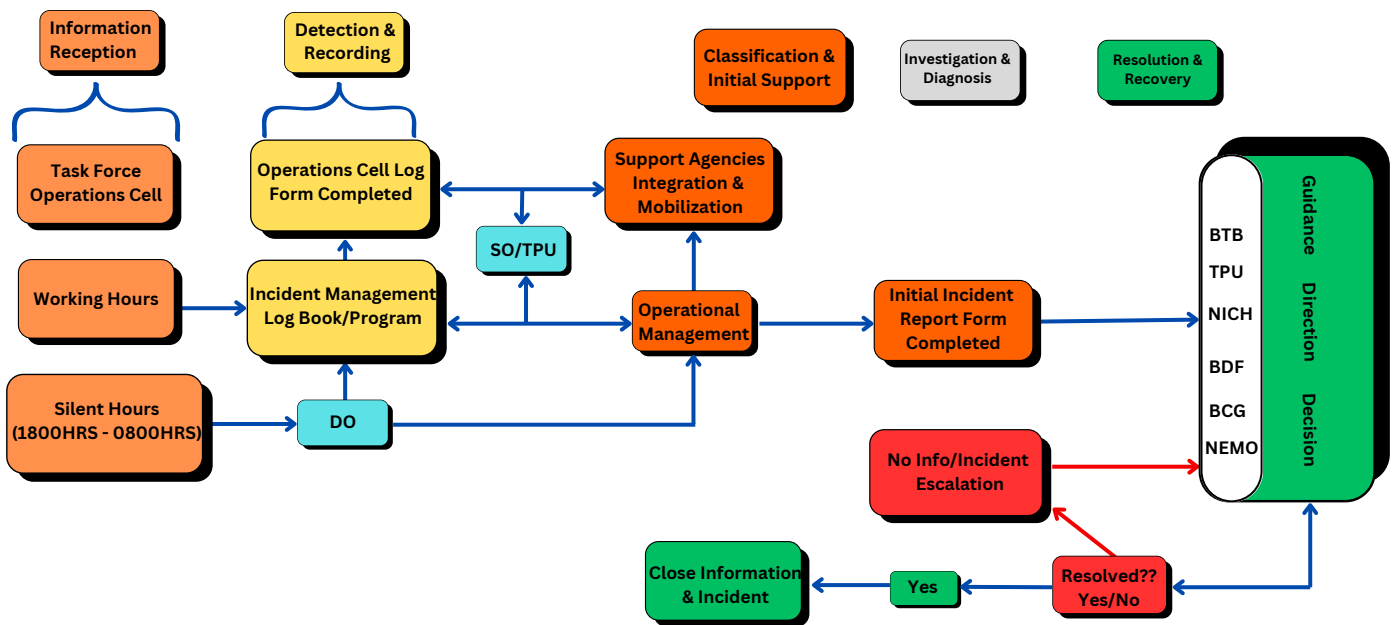
- hotels
- churches
- restaurants and bars
- palapas
- golf courses
- piers

<b>RISK/THREATS</b>	<b>PRIORITY ASSETS</b>
<b>Robbery</b>	<b>Hotels</b>
<b>Home invasions</b>	<b>Restaurants &amp; bars</b>
<b>Assaults/rapes</b>	
<b>Petty crimes</b>	
<b>Poor lighting/dark areas</b>	

NATIONAL TOURISM SECURITY STRATEGY - FIVE YEAR PLAN

ANNEX 4: INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

SECURITY TASK FORCE INCIDENT MANAGEMENT MATRIX



**NATIONAL TOURISM SECURITY STRATEGY - FIVE YEAR PLAN**

**ANNEX 5: CONTINGENCY PLANS & TEMPLATES**

The Contingency Plans for Tourism Related Incidents will be annexed to this document upon completion of revision with all stakeholders in order to mitigate duplicity of effort among the agencies and ensure an effective and coordinated response to all incidents. However, the table below defines the respective national disaster plans associated with particular emergencies and the responsible lead organization should such emergency threaten the tourism industry as a consequence of threat pose to the country.

SER	EMERGENCY	NATIONAL PLAN	RESPONSIBLE AGENCY
01	Natural Disasters	National Hurricane Plan	National Emergency Management Organization/BTB
02	Lost/Stranded	National Search & Rescue (SAR) Plan	Belize Defence Force/Astrum/BTB
03	Forest Fire	National Fire Plan	Forest Dept/Fire Service/Astrum
04	Air Incidents/Emergencies	BCAA Strategy	Belize Civil Aviation Authority (BCCA)/Belize Defence Force/Astrum/BTB
05	Road Traffic Accidents	BPD Strategy	Belize Police Department (BPD) and Transport Dept/BTB
06	Maritime Incidents/Emergencies	BCG Strategies	National Emergency Management Organization/Belize Coast Guard/BTB
07	Kidnap/Murder/Rape/Robbery/Assault/Accidental Death	BPD Strategies	Belize Police Department/BTB
08	Incidents/Accidents at Destinations	Service Provider Contingency Plan	Dependent on nature of incident/accident; respective agencies respond

NATIONAL TOURISM SECURITY STRATEGY - FIVE YEAR PLAN

Contingency Planning Template Example

Scenario	Trigger	Response	Who to inform?	Key Responsibilities		Timeline	
				Who?	What?	Who?	What?
Air Accident - PGIA	Accident involves tourists from different countries visiting Belize	Use response matrix for immediate action	HOD	HOD	Oversee Situation	Alert HOD	As soon as accident is confirmed
			Director	Director/Manager	Maintain contact, assess situation, offer support	Manager/Director and team to be informed of situation and actions	ASAP
			Response Agencies	Team Members	Coordinate response, concerns to director/manager	Assess and distribute tasks according to priorities	ASAP

## **Annex 6: National Institute of Culture and History (NICH) Role and Deployment Strategy**

### **Introduction**

Tourism is a vital pillar of Belize's economy, offering visitors from around the world unparalleled experiences amidst our natural wonders and cultural treasures. As we prioritize the safety and security of tourists and uphold Belize's reputation as a premier travel destination, the National Tourism Security Strategy outlines the critical role of the National Institute of Culture and History (NICH) in safeguarding our tourism industry and responding to national emergencies.

### **Role in Tourism Security**

NICH is responsible for preserving Belize's cultural and historical heritage while ensuring visitor safety at national landmarks and archaeological sites. Key responsibilities include:

#### **1. Site Security and Management:**

- Implement security measures at cultural and historical sites to prevent vandalism, looting, and other crimes;
- Ensure sites are equipped with adequate surveillance systems and trained personnel;

#### **2. Visitor Safety and Education:**

- Provide clear signage, emergency protocols, and trained guides to enhance visitor safety;
- Raise awareness of heritage preservation among tourists and locals;

#### **3. Collaboration with Law Enforcement:**

- Work with the Belize Police Department and community groups to address site-specific threats.
- Support investigations related to cultural theft or artifact trafficking.

## NATIONAL TOURISM SECURITY STRATEGY - FIVE YEAR PLAN

### Deployment Strategy in National Emergencies

- **Heritage Protection:** Secure artifacts and cultural treasures during natural disasters or crises;
- **Emergency Coordination:** Collaborate with NEMO and local stakeholders to protect and restore sites affected by emergencies;
- **Public Outreach:** Inform visitors and communities about the status and safety measures for cultural sites.

## Annex 7: Belize Police Department (BPD) Role and Deployment Strategy

### Introduction

The Belize Police Department ensures the safety of tourists through law enforcement, crime prevention, and community engagement. This annex outlines their critical role in supporting the National Tourism Security Strategy (NTSS).

### Role in Tourism Security

#### 1. Tourism Policing:

- Deploy the Tourism Police Unit to provide a visible and responsive presence in high-traffic areas;
- Address theft, fraud, and other crimes targeting tourists;

#### 2. Community Policing Initiatives:

- Build trust with local communities to encourage crime reporting and proactive problem-solving;
- Partner with tourism stakeholders to identify and address security vulnerabilities;

#### 3. Crime Investigation and Intelligence:

- Conduct thorough investigations of incidents involving tourists;
- Utilize intelligence networks to address organized crime and cross-border threats;

### Deployment Strategy in National Emergencies

- **Crisis Management:** Provide crowd control, traffic management, and public safety during emergencies;
- **Rapid Response:** Mobilize specialized units to support evacuation efforts and address emerging security concerns;
- **Post-Crisis Support:** Collaborate with tourism operators to rebuild confidence and ensure a safe environment for visitors.

## **Annex 8: Belize Port Authority (BPA) Role and Deployment Strategy**

### **Introduction**

The Belize Port Authority ensures the safety and security of maritime entry points, cruise terminals, and port facilities. This annex outlines their role within the National Tourism Security Strategy (NTSS).

### **Role in Tourism Security**

#### **1. Port Security and Surveillance:**

- Monitor and manage the safety of maritime entry points, ensuring secure docking and passenger processing for cruise ships and other vessels;
- Conduct regular patrols and inspections to prevent illegal activities;

#### **2. Maritime Incident Response:**

- Coordinate responses to maritime emergencies, including search and rescue operations and environmental threats such as oil spills;
- Provide technical expertise and resources to assist in crisis management;

#### **3. Collaboration with Stakeholders:**

- Work closely with Customs, Immigration, and other law enforcement to streamline operations and enhance security at ports;
- Engage with cruise lines and private port operators to establish best practices and share critical information.

## NATIONAL TOURISM SECURITY STRATEGY - FIVE YEAR PLAN

### Deployment Strategy in National Emergencies

- **Preparedness Measures:** Maintain readiness through regular drills, staff training, and updated contingency plans;
- **Strategic Mobilization:** Deploy personnel and assets to affected ports, prioritizing passenger safety and operational continuity;
- **Interagency Collaboration:** Partner with NEMO and international agencies to coordinate disaster response efforts.

## Annex 9 : Belize Coast Guard Role and Deployment Strategy

### Introduction

The Belize Coast Guard plays an essential role in maritime security and disaster response, ensuring the safety of Belize's waters and coastal areas. This annex details their contributions to the National Tourism Security Strategy (NTSS).

### Role in Tourism Security:

#### 1. Maritime Patrols and Surveillance:

- Conduct regular patrols to deter illegal fishing, smuggling, and other maritime crimes;
- Monitor marine protected areas and tourist hotspots;

#### 2. Search and Rescue Operations:

- Respond to distress calls and maritime emergencies, providing lifesaving assistance to tourists and locals;
- Maintain specialized equipment and trained personnel for effective response;

#### 3. Environmental Protection:

- Assist in preventing and mitigating pollution incidents;
- Collaborate with environmental agencies to preserve marine ecosystems.

### Deployment Strategy in National Emergencies

- **Crisis Preparedness:** Maintain an active readiness posture with pre-positioned assets;
- **Disaster Response:** Deploy teams to assist with evacuations, deliver supplies, and provide security in affected areas;
- **Coordination with Partners:** Work closely with the Belize Port Authority, NEMO, and international organizations to enhance response efforts.

## Annex 10: Belize Civil Aviation Department Role and Deployment Strategy

### Introduction

The Belize Civil Aviation Department ensures the safety and security of the nation's airspace and aviation facilities. This annex describes their role within the National Tourism Security Strategy (NTSS).

### Role in Tourism Security

#### 1. Airport Security:

- Implement security protocols to protect passengers, staff, and facilities at airports;
- Conduct regular audits and inspections to ensure compliance with international standards;

#### 2. Emergency Preparedness:

- Develop and maintain contingency plans for aviation emergencies;
- Coordinate with airlines and airport operators to manage disruptions effectively;

#### 3. Air Traffic Management:

- Ensure the safe and efficient movement of aircraft within Belize's airspace;
- Provide real-time information to support emergency response efforts.

### Deployment Strategy in National Emergencies

- **Pre-Crisis Coordination:** Establish communication with airlines and stakeholders to anticipate challenges;
- **Incident Management:** Deploy resources to support search and rescue operations, evacuations, and humanitarian aid delivery;
- **Post-Incident Recovery:** Facilitate the restoration of normal operations and assist affected passengers.

## Annex 11: National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO) Role and Deployment Strategy

### Introduction

NEMO coordinates national preparedness and response efforts for natural disasters and emergencies, ensuring the safety of tourists and local communities alike. This annex outlines their strategic role within the National Tourism Security Strategy (NTSS).

### Role in Tourism Security

#### 1. Early Warning and Preparedness:

- Disseminate timely information on hurricanes, floods, and other threats;
- Develop and distribute emergency preparedness guides tailored for the tourism sector;

#### 2. Disaster Response and Recovery:

- Coordinate evacuation, sheltering, and resource distribution efforts in affected areas;
- Work with the tourism board to assist stranded tourists during emergencies;

#### 3. Stakeholder Engagement:

- Partner with local and international organizations to enhance disaster response capacity;
- Provide training and resources for tourism operators to integrate into national emergency plans.

### Deployment Strategy in National Emergencies

- **Pre-Deployment:** Position resources and personnel in high-risk areas ahead of emergencies;
- **On-the-Ground Response:** Deploy teams to manage shelters, logistics, and communication during disasters;
- **Post-Event Support:** Lead recovery and restoration efforts in affected regions, prioritizing the tourism sector.

## Annex 12 : National Security Directorate Role and Deployment Strategy

### Introduction

The National Security Directorate provides overarching guidance and coordination for all agencies involved in Belize's security infrastructure. This annex describes their role in ensuring a unified approach to the National Tourism Security Strategy (NTSS).

### Role in Tourism Security

#### 1. Strategic Oversight:

- Develop and maintain a comprehensive security framework for the tourism sector;
- Monitor and evaluate agency performance to ensure alignment with national goals;

#### 2. Interagency Coordination:

- Facilitate collaboration among law enforcement, military, and civilian agencies;
- Act as the central hub for intelligence sharing and operational planning;

#### 3. Policy Development:

- Advise on legislative and regulatory measures to enhance tourism security;
- Support capacity-building initiatives across agencies.

### Deployment Strategy in National Emergencies

- **Unified Command:** Establish a joint command structure to coordinate response efforts;
- **Resource Allocation:** Ensure efficient distribution of personnel, equipment, and funds during crises;
- **Post-Emergency Assessment:** Lead reviews of emergency response effectiveness and implement lessons learned.

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